Scribblings June 2020: Part 2

The horrors of Victory in Europe

THE 75th ANNIVERSARY of Victory in Europe Day was planned as a celebration. That the day was subdued by the Covid 19 pandemic probably helped bring home the background horrors that the German surrender yielded.

Scribblings takes this opportunity to examine some of the events of the last year of the Second World War plus its revelations, its victories, and tragedies. There is not as much information available as many would like in considering the front-line reporting of the war. While all three of Britain's armed forces employed publicity and photographic teams there is a dearth of coverage on the Royal Navy and RAF side.

The air force was known to be reluctant to carry correspondents on missions for the simple reason there was little room in a loaded bomber for a non-combatant, especially one who got in the way. Familiar names such as John Boulting and Richard Attenborough were, however, members of RAF Film Unit which produced propaganda films depicting RAF personnel and aircraft both on the ground and in aerial action from 1941 to 1945. Boulting and Attenborough flew camera missions over Europe including the Amiens raid.

One of its early successful propaganda films was Target for Tonight which showed the public how Bomber Command operated especially with a crew drawn from Britain, Australia and Canada. The film followed a Wellington crew (F for Freddie) bombing railway infrastructure over Germany. The film was a big success with the British public and its investment of £6,000 was brought back 12 times over as it took £73,000 at the cinemas.

While the Royal Navy rapidly expanded its qualified war cameramen the Battle of the Atlantic and the Arctic convoys get very little coverage. American journalist, Ed Morrow complained bitterly in a broadcast…*the curious thing about the battle is that no one knows anything about it. No information – not even general information concerning the sinking of American supplies is permitted to be revealed. Efforts by official American representatives to secure the release of information…have been unavailing. Nothing may be said to the Americans or to the British public about the battle which, we are told, will determine the destinies of free men for centuries.*

Relationships between the Armed Forces and the war correspondents were not always friendly.

The military was known to refer to correspondents who were averse to the front line while reporters were often disparaging of the public relations teams and particularly the escort officers.

Philip Knightley in *The First Casualty* says: *The conducting officers (during the Phony War of 1940) were outwardly polite to the war correspondents but actually hated them*. While one correspondent reciprocated with *…the conducting officers were such outstanding caricatures of British Army regular officers and upper classes as to be scarcely credible.*

Required reading of the military and media relationships throughout the Second World War, and, indeed, subsequent conflicts, includes both Philip Knightley's book and Greg McLaughlin's *The War Correspondent.*

Greg highlights the warning of one American press officer that…*when at large the warcos assumed the rank of field marshal and recognised no conventions. The warco had come to expect good treatment from the military without considering the cost in terms of professional integrity and independence.*

Awarded Silver Star

All, however, was not conflict between warco and press officers. The work of the Army publicity team at Arnhem has been singled out for praise. Not only did they probably have the only working radio in the airborne division they got film, photos and copy back safely even while swimming the Rhine. The team leader won the American Silver Star.

Knightley points out: *When the United States entered the war and assumed the major role on the Western Front, American methods of dealing with war correspondents began to intrude on the romantic attitude that had so coloured war reporting in the desert. Public relations of which war correspondents were considered a part, became another cog in the massive military machine the Americans constructed to defeat Hitler. The Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower, spelt it out very clearly 'Public opinion wins wars.*

The stark picture, above, of one survivor of the Bergen Belsen concentration camp discovered by 11 Armoured Division in the closing months highlights that global war and political fanaticism are hard to comprehend and even more difficult to report and explain.

From D-Day through Arnhem and onto VE Day, Scribblings has sought out alternate and revealing stories. For the men of the British Army Film and Photographic Unit and their counterparts in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force plus the war correspondents who covered the final months of the war there was an excess of stories and then jubilation at war-end. But the memories of what they endured to tell the world undoubtedly took their toll.

'What we achieved is almost unimaginable' - Second World War filmmakers and photographers tell all

By *Lucy Davies, Daily Telegraph, 16 May 2020: The AFPU shot the defining images of the Second World War. Here, the unit's five survivors tell their story.*

IT'S BEEN CALLED the greatest photograph of the Second World War, but hardly anyone knows who took it. An image of British soldiers alighting at Normandy on D-Day, 1944, the picture conveys powerfully both the confusion of combat and the chore of lugging kit over sand. One soldier in the frame cannot help but steal a glance at the camera. He seems eerily familiar – like someone you might know from work. The photograph was taken by a soldier, too. His name was Jimmy Mapham, and he was one of 11 men from the Army Film and Photographic Unit, or AFPU, who went in at dawn with the first wave of British troops, clambering down the ramps into the surf, their cameras in waterproof sacks.

Mapham, Jimmy Christie and Peter Handford were shooting stills. The others – Ian Grant, Billie Greenhalgh, George Laws, Richard Leatherbarrow, Ernest Walter, Norman Clague, Derrick Knight and Desmond O'Neill – cine film.

All wore special rimless helmets that would not obstruct their cameras and were trained to shoot with both eyes open. Even so, things did not run smoothly. Grant, who had been filming throughout the night of waiting, ran out of film moments after he hit the beach, and had to re-load on the run with wet, sandy fingers. O'Neill's camera jammed and seconds after he got it running again, he was hit by a shard of mortar. His extraordinary footage shows troops storming past, the camera tilting, then upside-down, boots kicking sand into the lens.

AFPU photographer Sgt Norman Midgley in his jeep, his official issue Super Ikonta camera at the ready during the assault on Caen, France, 1944. CREDIT: AFPU/IWM

Unpolished and soundless though they are, the AFPU D-Day reels – which are now kept in the Imperial War Museum, London, along with the rest of the unit's film and photographs – remain capable of making the hair on the back of your neck stand up.

Most of us are unaware that cameramen even filmed at D-Day, but the footage they collected is exceptional testimony. You might have seen a little of it at one remove: Steven Spielberg used AFPU reels as the basis for the opening sequence of Saving Private Ryan (1998) – still considered a landmark in the realistic depiction of combat. English director Joe Wright also consulted AFPU material for his 2017 film Darkest Hour.

Formed in 1941 to produce an official record of the British Army's role during the war – and to provide visuals for contemporary newsreels and newspapers – the AFPU amassed a staggering amount of material. In their five years of operation, and with just 397 men, they covered every operation and major battle: El-Alamein, Anzio, Monte Cassino, Caen, Calais, the crossing of the Rhine, the liberation of Paris and of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Seventeen AFPU men died in the process. A further 22 were wounded and six captured. And yet, to this day, their contribution has gone largely unrecognised.

"The War Office is not one for advertising its activities," says John Aldred, a former AFPU sound engineer, now 98, when we meet at his home near Goring-by-Sea. "We are rather a forgotten part of the Army – a very small part, but an important one."

Jimmy Mapham's shot of the D-Day landings CREDIT: James Mapham/AFPU

"What the AFPU achieved, with basic training, basic equipment and usually with muck and bullets flying overhead, is almost unimaginable," says Paul Clark, who filmed in the Far East and Allied-occupied Vienna, and who, at 93 ("and a half", he presses), is secretary of the AFPU veterans association.

From his home in Garforth, West Yorkshire, Clark works hard to secure the unit's place in history, tending to a heart-breaking mass of clippings, diaries, letters and snaps.

When a former cameraman dies, he tells me, the bereaved family post him parcels full of once-treasured memorabilia. So much of it is spread out in his living room when I visit that I struggle to find a place to sit.

Paul Clark in his jeep in Allied-Occupied Vienna, 1946 CREDIT: Courtesy Paul Clark

Misconceptions concerning the AFPU's material are rife. It has often been used in books, newspapers and documentaries such as Thames Television's The World at War (1973-4) but almost always without credit.

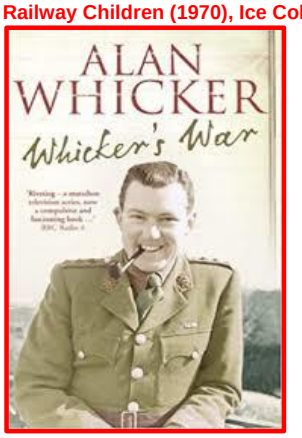
As recently as 2012, the correspondent John Simpson wrote that our idea of the 1940-43 North Africa campaign (the Allies' first victory against the Germans) comes mostly from footage "shot in studios rather than on location", when in fact, the opposite is true.

"If even newsmen show no interest in how the shots were obtained," says 93-year-old Desmond Davis, who filmed in Singapore and Palestine, "what hope do we have?" From his cottage in north London, he continues to write to publications every time AFPU material is miscredited.

Today, just five members of the unit survive. Besides Clark, Davis and Aldred there is Rex Ebbetts (95) and Jim Pople (93), who processed and edited the film back in Britain. Davis is one of the great number of AFPU veterans who went on to enjoy outstanding careers in film, broadcast or photography. Best known for directing the 1981 film Clash of the Titans, he also worked as a camera operator on A Taste of Honey (1961), The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner (1962) and the Oscar-winning Tom Jones (1963).

When I ask how what he learned in wartime might have contributed to his subsequent success, he says: "It was handy that post war there was a vogue for hand-held footage in the movies. But I was also rather well versed in anticipating movement."

Other films in which AFPU alumni had a significant hand include: Brighton Rock (1948), The Railway Children (1970), Ice Cold in Alex (1958), The Italian Job (1969), Kind Hearts and Coronets (1949), Billy Liar (1963) and Out of Africa (1985).



The unit's photographers, meanwhile, went on to shoot for Vogue, Harpers & Queen and Picture Post. Sidney Bernstein, who founded Granada Television, was ex-AFPU, as was Alfred Black, the theatre impresario. "He'd turn up to reunions in a black Roller," smiles Clark, "driven by his wartime driver, no less."

The late TV presenter Alan Whicker served with the AFPU, chiefly in Italy, where he photographed Mussolini's corpse. In his memoir, Whicker's War, he recalled how difficult it could be to persuade officers to allow cameramen in the first wave of an assault. "It was hard," he says, "to compete against fighting units, gunners or ambulances."

Generally, though, the AFPU were welcomed by their fellow soldiers, who nicknamed them the "Mickey Mouse Brigade" for the resemblance their shoulder flash, with its embroidered cine camera, bore to the Disney character.

To ease relations, the cameramen were given the rank of sergeant. "Any lower, and the top brass wouldn't talk to you," explains Nigel Smales. "And if you were top brass, the lower ranks wouldn't talk to you." Smales's father, Eddy, filmed in Europe and North West Africa; his footage of the second battle of El-Alamein can be seen in the Oscar-winning 1943 film Desert Victory.

Sergeant Eddy 'Smiler' Smales with his cine camera CREDIT: Courtesy Nigel Smales

The men were also aided by special "go anywhere" passes signed by President Eisenhower. Grant referred to these as "solid gold" and Aldred's saved his life after he was caught at the liberation of Calais by Canadian soldiers and mistaken for a German in disguise. "They were the most marvellous things to be armed with," agrees Davis.

The AFPU was formed in October 1941 on the urging of Ronnie Tritton, publicity officer for the War Office. Pre-war experience as head of PR at the Savoy Hotel had left him far more savvy about the public value of combat film than was common among the "muddled, haphazard operation" he joined at the War Office, for whom, he said, "an Army cameraman is a more sinister figure than a whole regiment of Germans."

"We were miles behind Germany at this point," says historian and senior IWM curator Toby Haggith. "As early as 1936 they were crowding the field with skilled propaganda."

The military's reluctance is strange. Photographing combat wasn't a new idea: cameras had served as a witness to war as early as the 1850s, for the Crimean and Opium conflicts. And The Battle of the Somme, a compilation of front-line footage released in cinemas in 1916, remains one of the most successful films ever made. "This is what war means" read one contemporary review, "and it is right that our people should be made to feel the horror of it."

Things began to look up for Tritton when he recruited David MacDonald, formerly assistant to the Hollywood director Cecil B DeMille, and Hugh Stewart, a film editor whose credits included Alfred Hitchcock's The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934).

They prevaricated over whether to recruit experienced cameramen or soldiers, before settling on men who were already in the Army but, prior to joining up, had worked in film or photography as clapper boys, projectionists and other junior roles. Stewart identified the chief qualities they looked for in their recruits as "self-reliance, initiative and courage… a certain solidity of character."

Davis, who as a child had built his own darkroom and spent weekends watching Humphrey Bogart films with his father at the Putney Palace, recalls how delighted he was to be transferred to the AFPU: "I had been sent to the armoured corps, where they were training me for tanks nicknamed "Ronsons" [after the cigarette lighters] because they caught fire so easily. It was one of the best days of my life when the sergeant major said, 'Right, Trooper Davis, you're to report to Pinewood, with all the film stars.'"

Pinewood Studios, in Buckinghamshire, was where the AFPU underwent training, and where the film and photographs they sent back from the front line were later edited. The studios and grounds had been requisitioned for their use (along with the Crown Film Unit and the smaller Royal Air Force Film and Photographic Unit) by the wartime government.

Sergeants Duggy Wolfe, Dennis Fox, Reg Morris & 'Smiler' Smales with driver Ray Bate in the Western Desert, Cairo, 1942 CREDIT: Roy 'Tubby' Palmer/courtesy Nigel Smales

In a six-week course, they were taught the principles of newsgathering, how to load and set up a camera on the run, and the building blocks of a conventional sequence: establishing shot, mid-shot, close-up. Stewart's recruits stuck to it religiously. "In the middle of incoming fire," Davis explains, "having to think about all that was a distraction."

He recalls how strange it was to be dropped off, quite alone, in Singapore, where preparations for the surrender ceremony were under way. "The place was mayhem. The prisoners had got out of Changi [jail] and were busy killing the Japanese. I'd be scared out of my wits now, but when you're 19, you feel immortal. I simply walked through the city with my camera."

Those cameras – either the American DeVry or the British Vinten Normandy – had to be wound up by hand every few feet of film and weighed between 10 and 20lbs. "At one reunion," says Clark, "someone brought a Vinten and I couldn't believe I used to be fit enough to chase around with it. But the camera was part of me."

AFPU cameramen Sgt Harry Oakes (left) and Sgt Bill Lawrie kneeling with their stills and movie cameras alongside a jeep. CREDIT: AFPU/IWM

The men were also supplied with a pistol, though none used it. "The most I shot was tin cans," says Davis. "I had seen what bullets did to a six-year-old boy."

Stewart always denied having issued guidelines on filming the dead and wounded (and the cameramen back him up), but Haggith points out that the cameramen "were always aware of the editors when they were shooting" and had a sense of "what would or what not be acceptable to cinema audiences."

Generally, there are very few shots of the dead in the early years of the war, but before long, sensibilities hardened. "I won't say they didn't find it upsetting, but they became more used to it," says Haggith.

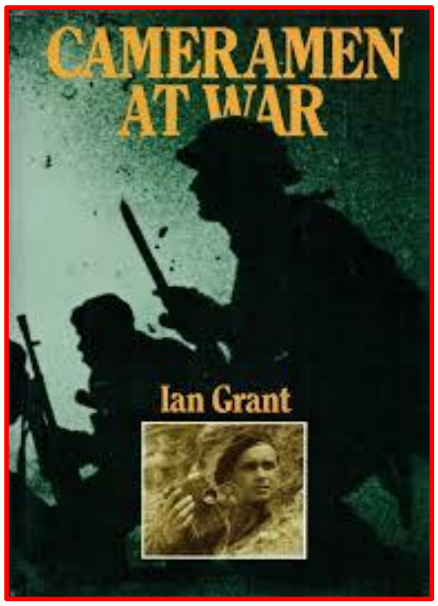
In an interview recorded by the IWM, Walter tells how he began including bloody bodies in his films because, "I knew it would be shown at least once… And I wanted somebody to share that with me." Laws felt the same: "I didn't think it would hurt people sitting in their comfortable armchairs at Pinewood to see what some of the horrors were."

It was photographs and film of Belsen that broke the mould. Stewart, Martyn Wilson, Harry Oakes, Harold Haywood, Bill Lawrie, Mike Lewis, Charles Hewitt and Roy Parkinson were at the liberation of the camp in April 1945, confronted with thousands of unburied dead and 60,000 starving prisoners. Oakes could bring himself to look on the scene in front of him only through his viewfinder. To look with the naked eye was too much to bear.

"Not long afterwards, he joined us in Vienna," says Clark, "and he'd sit in the mess, chatting, but he never once told us. I only found out years later he had been in there 16 days – can you imagine?"

Not all of the footage was quite so punishing or dramatic. For every tank battle there are whole days with the catering corp. In these humdrum scenes, the men sometimes jostle to be on camera. "Oh, they liked it," said O'Neill. "It was a great divertissement, you know, the Missus is going to see me back home in Wigan."

It wasn't until 1944 that anyone thought to capture sound in the field. "The War Office were quite happy with the silent footage that came back day after day," says Aldred. "It was Stewart who wrote advising them to get some [sound]."



As Lawrie pointed out: silent footage of troops crossing the river looked, uncannily serene, as if they were going for a picnic. "You don't see or hear the bullets, you don't get the atmosphere," he told the IWM. Recording sound was no easy matter. The "portable" equipment that Aldred and fellow sound engineer Handford required was so large it had to be hauled about in a Ford utility truck.

Their machine was lent free of charge by Western Electric, with the proviso that they didn't damage or lose it, which, says Aldred, "was quite an ask, all things considered".

Behind him on the wall are two framed Oscar nominations for Anne of the Thousand Days (1969) and Mary Queen of Scots (1971), though he is too modest to mention them.

He and Handford (later best man at his wedding) compiled an astonishing audio archive. "German machinery makes a different sound to English," he tells me, warming to his subject.

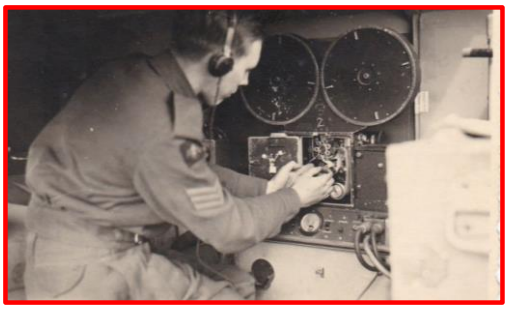
"Tanks on different surfaces – ice, road, in a field. Mortars make a nice sound, and the Germans had this special machine gun that fired twice as fast as ours. That sounded fearful."

After such excitement, it's no wonder that for many of the men post-war life was a comedown. "It took a lot of settling," admits Clark, who eventually found his footing as a commercial photographer. "It was a sad time for me," says Davis. "England was a mess. I had no money, I had to live with my parents. The Army is your mother, your father, your sister and brother. It clothes you, feeds you; tells you when to get up and to go to bed. It can be hard to leave."

The first AFPU reunion was in 1957 and was held for many years at the White Swan, off Fleet Street. Clark shows me in a notebook the names of those who have attended each year. Page by page, the lists shrink. Last year, he and Aldred were the only veterans present.

More recently, reunions have been held at Pinewood, where a memorial plaque commemorating the AFPU has been installed. "The IWM showed some of our footage, and I was quite delighted by the quality of it," says Clark. "Not proud," he clarifies, when I ask, "more the satisfaction you feel about good work. That was what we were there for."

None of it makes the lack of acknowledgement over the years any easier to bear. "These guys were making all the important decisions on the ground, setting the agenda for the editors, in really dangerous, pressurised conditions," Haggith says. "Why they've gone unrecognised for so long, when their contribution to our understanding of war is so great, is beyond us."



The scribblers get the by-lines, why not us?" Clark says, "and this has been a great source of resentment, great bitterness. Des tried for years to get a documentary made, but you know what? It's too late now. There are so few of us left."

Aldred came up with some nifty tricks, including a windshield for the microphone made from strainers and a stocking which was actually, he says proudly, "extremely efficient".

Sitting on a scoop: the story behind the V-E headlines of May 1945

The New York Times.

LATE CITY EDITION

THE WAR IN EUROPE IS ENDED!
SURRENDER IS UNCONDITIONAL;
V-E WILL BE PROCLAIMED TODAY;
OUR TROOPS ON OKINAWA GAIN

GERMANS CAPITULATE ON ALL FRONTS

American, Russian and French Generals Accept Surrender in Eisenhower Headquarters, a Reims School

By Christopher B. Daly: The Conversation.

THERE'S QUITE A STORY behind the story of the end of the fighting in World War II in Europe. As we observe another Memorial Day, it is worth remembering the events of that busy May of 1945, when the Allies achieved victory in Europe.

While much fighting remained to be done in the Pacific, by early May, the military leaders of the Allied forces could see that Germany's defeat was at hand. So, the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) command selected 17 correspondents from the world's press and flew them to Reims, France, to witness the German surrender on behalf of the rest of the press corps and the people of the world.

There were very few Americans in the group. The ones who were there represented the big wire services and syndicates. In fact, not a single reporter representing a US newspaper was present.

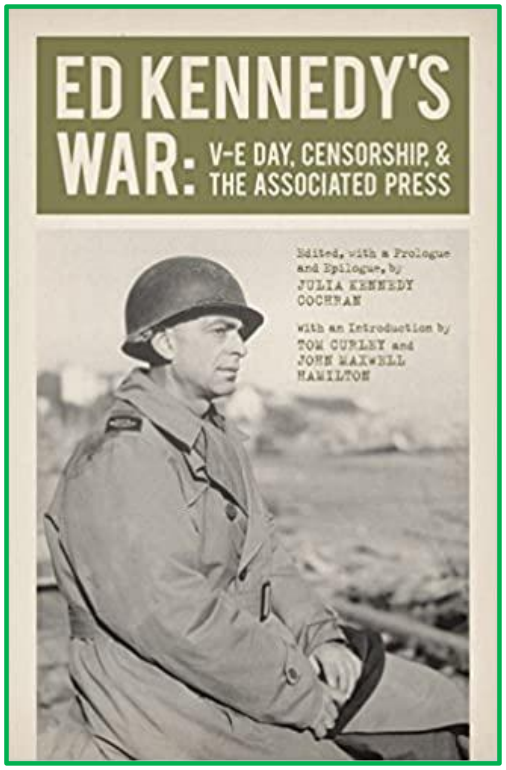
According to the Allied military commanders, the news was to be embargoed, and the reporters were coerced into accepting a deal. In exchange for access to the event, they had to agree to hold the news until the Army said they could release it.

On the flight from Paris to Reims, the SHAEF press officer declared: "I pledge each one of you on his honour as a correspondent and as an assimilated officer of the United States Army not to communicate [the news] until it is released on the order of the Public Relations Director of SHAEF."

It remains unclear what constitutes an "agreement" under such conditions – what were the correspondents supposed to do? Get up and walk out of an airplane? – but they proceeded to witness the ceremony.

The press officer announced that orders had come "from a high political level" to impose a news blackout until 8 pm the next day, when the news would be announced simultaneously in Paris, London, Moscow and Washington. (Turned out, Stalin was insisting on the delay so he could make a show in Berlin.)

In other words, all the correspondents who had been eyewitnesses would lose their scoops. Instead, some desk-bound rewrite man or editor would get all the glory. The reporters protested to the SHAEF press officer, but to no avail. The political leaders had decided.



Among the press corps, one of the most upset was Edward Kennedy – not the late Democratic senator from Massachusetts but a man by the same name who was the chief correspondent in Europe for the Associated Press (AP).

Bear in mind, Kennedy was in a special position. He had been burned earlier in the war when he cooperated with military brass. In 1943, Kennedy had agreed to suppress a story about Gen. George Patton and had been scooped by someone else. (I describe the incident in my book Covering America.)

Kennedy also knew that his account of the German surrender could probably reach more people on the planet more swiftly than any other news agency or government, since the AP supplied news stories to thousands of newspapers, radio stations and other customers worldwide.

He knew, too, that the AP – then and now – thrives on being first and that AP correspondents had gone to great lengths to be first to deliver the news.

Besides, he figured, no embargo on such a momentous story could hold for that long. (Nor, perhaps, should it.)

He was still fuming when the correspondents were marched back onto the military plane. They were flown from Reims to Paris. Still, the world knew nothing of the surrender. Still, soldiers in Europe kept shooting at each other.

When the press contingent landed, Boyd Lewis of United Press got into the first jeep from the airport to the Hotel Scribe in Paris, which had been serving as the outpost for most of the press corps. When Lewis got to the press centre, he tried to tie up all the available telegraph outlets. Next in line was James Kilgallen of the International News Service, who had beaten Kennedy to the hotel by throwing his portable typewriter at Kennedy's legs, slowing him down.

Kennedy was beside himself. Then he heard that SHAEF had ordered German radio to announce the surrender. Kennedy went to the censors and announced that he was breaking the embargo. Using a telephone, he called the AP bureau in London and dictated the following lead:

REIMS, France, May 7_Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Western Allies and the Soviet Union at 2:41 am French time today.

The surrender took place at a little red schoolhouse that is the headquarters of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower….

Within minutes, the news was flashed to the world, and wild celebrations began, marking V-E Day. At SHAEF, the top brass were furious and suspended AP filing facilities throughout Europe.

The rest of the press corps was furious, too. More than 50 correspondents signed a protest to SHAEF Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower, calling Kennedy's action "the most disgraceful, deliberate and unethical double cross in the history of journalism."

AP's president apologized to the nation. AP executives told Kennedy he could keep his job if he admitted he had done wrong. He wouldn't, and he was fired.

What might seem amazing today– aside from the lack of cell phones and other forms of instant global communication that we now take for granted – is how unanimously the correspondents fell in line with the military.

Today, I daresay, US reporters would be at least split about the ethics of holding off on reporting something they knew to be both true and life-saving.

Two weeks later, writing in The New Yorker on May 19, AJ Liebling, the great World War II reporter and press critic, took up the issue of Kennedy's firing in his column "The Wayward Press. Liebling's take:

The great row over Edward Kennedy's Associated Press story of the signing of the German surrender at Reims served to point up the truth that if you are smart enough you can kick yourself in the pants, grab yourself by the back of the collar, and throw yourself out on the sidewalk. This is an axiom that I hope will be taught to future students of journalism as Liebling's Law.

Liebling's media criticism continued:

I do not think that Kennedy imperilled the lives of any Allied soldiers by sending the story, as some of his critics have charged. He probably saved a few, because by withholding the announcement of an armistice you prolong the shooting, and, conversely, by announcing it promptly you make the shooting stop. Moreover, the Germans had broadcast the news of the armistice several hours before Kennedy's story appeared on the streets of New York… The thing that has caused the most hard feeling is that Kennedy broke a "combination," which means that he sent out a story after all the correspondents on the assignment had agreed not to. But the old-fashioned "combination" was an agreement freely reached among reporters and not a pledge imposed upon the whole group by somebody outside it.

In my journalism classes at Boston University, I teach "Liebling's Law" as a cautionary tale about what can happen when news organizations get too cosy with governments and forget to put their audiences first. Seventy years later, it's a lesson worth remembering.

Managing the News During the Battle for Rome in 1944

Brigadier (Ret'd) Richard Toomey analyses the relationship between the British army and the media during the Battle. Courtesy of British Army Review.

THE BRITISH PUBLIC received the news of the Allied landing at Anzio on 22 January 1944 with enthusiasm, even though they were weary of dispiriting news from Italy. Since the Italian surrender in early September 1943, the Allied advance from the 'boot' of Italy had been slow, bloody and demoralising.

The landing, behind the Gustav Line - the forbidding German defences anchored on Monte Cassino - seemed to be the breakthrough that everyone had been waiting for.

The good news reached the home audience quickly. The Allies had provided reporters at Anzio with a radio transmitter to get their reports out without delay. But by mid-February the military-media relationship in Italy had deteriorated badly.

Landing ships unloading supplies in Anzio Harbour 19-24 February 1944

As the landing failed to make the progress that had been hoped for, and defeat seemed possible, some reporters became despondent, privately speculating about a 'Dunkirk-style' withdrawal. Public morale about the progress of operations fell to its lowest level since the disasters of mid-1942.

The Prime Minister and certain senior Army officers deemed the media reporting to be too negative and its impact damaging.

Matters came to a head when the British commander of Allied Armies in Italy, General Sir Harold Alexander, flew in to visit Anzio on 14 February. He came to ensure that commanders and the defences were ready for a major German counterattack that intelligence had told him was coming. He also had to deal with the sensitive issue of the replacement of the American corps commander in the beach head.

Just before he left, he called all the press and radio reporters together. BBC correspondent Wynford Vaughan-Thomas was one of them. He recalled:

He spoke to the assembled group with the firm tone of a headmaster disappointed at some misdemeanour'. When he 'went on to say that the reports sent from the Beachhead were causing alarm, there were emphatic protests.

General Alexander looked sternly at the protesters. 'Were any of you at Dunkirk?' he asked. 'I was and I know that there is never likely to be a Dunkirk here. ' The reporters were told that they could no longer use the transmitter. 'We could not send any news' (which was not quite true), said Vaughan-Thomas, 'but hadn't the news become too depressing to send?

Three months, three failed attempts to penetrate the Gustav Line and many thousands of Allied casualties later, on 11 May, Operation DIADEM began. Fifth (US) and Eighth (British) armies concentrated in the Cassino area smashed through the Gustav Line defensive belt. Soon after, the forces in the Anzio beach head broke out and the Allied advance continued, liberating Rome on 4 June 1944. Reports to the public were accurate and timely, good relations between the military and the media had been restored and the public liked what they were reading and hearing.

How had the Allies in Italy recovered their relationship with the media? The answer provides a fascinating insight into the development of approaches to handling the media during military operations.

Public opinion and the war

During the Second World War, public opinion mattered. After the immediate threat to the UK abated in 1941 the war had to be maintained to a successful conclusion. The public would have to accept and endure the privations of wartime for years. People gritted their teeth and got on with rationing, the blackout, long working hours, limited holidays, significant state direction of individual lives and many restrictions. In exchange, people expected Churchill and his government to conduct the war effectively.

Yet a series of setbacks and disasters in 1941 and 1942, some of Britain's own making, did not inspire confidence. Even Churchill's personal standing came into question, and if things had not improved, it could have been even worse for him.

Churchill hated criticism. He disliked the gloomy content of the Ministry of Information's national morale report in 1942 so much that he wanted to stop them altogether The popular, left wing Daily Mirror really irritated him and sailed so close to the wind that it was nearly banned. For the Mirror, the failures of 1941-1942 was all evidence of an incompetent, upper class old guard running the country and the Army.

Of course, what mattered most was battlefield success against the Germans. For that, from El Alamein in November 1942, through Tunisia and into Sicily in 1943, Alexander and Montgomery, and the entire Eighth Army became national heroes. They and Churchill were seen to be steadily bringing the war to a successful conclusion. There was a clear, functioning interrelationship, sustained by the news between home morale, the national war effort and operational success. The impact was international as well. As the war could only ultimately be decided on land, it was clear that the question, and if things had not improved, it could have been even worse for him.

British Media and the war overseas

The impact was international as well. As the war could only ultimately be decided on land, it was clear that the Army's operational performance and impact, real and perceived, was the leading indicator of national power. With every British and Commonwealth success on the battlefield, Churchill's strength in negotiations with the United States and the Soviet Union increased. During the war, the media was subject to censorship. The policy was to censor only those facts that could be of value to the enemy, and in theory never to censor opinion.

Journalists in the field were expected to report facts and atmosphere; editors and writers at home would supply opinion. Once a journalist had drafted a report, it would be taken to the censors for approval. Censors and journalists received frequently updated direction on what could not be reported.

These so-called 'stops' were imposed to maintain operational security, leaving journalists free to adopt whatever tone they felt captured the story best. There was plenty of self-censorship. Journalists knew that a censors 'blue pencil' crossing out would mean that they would have to come back for approval, likely missing their deadlines. Not only that, but journalists also wanted their country to win the war and consciously avoided undermining their compatriots, even though this might have gone against their peacetime journalistic principles.

Reporting on the Italian Campaign

By the time the Anzio landings began, the Allies had been in Italy for just over six months. The first two months had been a great success and culminated in the Italian surrender. At this stage, Churchill imagined the liberation of Rome before the end of 1943 possibly tilting Allied strategy to the Mediterranean.

But the Germans chose to fight every step of the way, over terrain that favoured them. The media with the Allies reported what they saw, which was a slow advance of endless small battles through mountains, over rivers, and for small towns and villages. Churchill, instigator of the campaign, was particularly frustrated.

At the end of October General Alexander explained the difficulties to the Allied journalists in Italy, and this went some way to reassuring the public. It is notable how the newspapers of the day were full of the striking successes of the Soviet Army. The public could not fail to compare progress in Russia with progress in Italy. Every potential breakthrough in Italy was latched onto by the media and the public, but as they came to little, eventually Italy fatigue pushed the story off the front pages.

The process of censorship still applied as before, and censors were given further, more detailed direction based on Harding's themes. Harding's directive, a clear statement of the higher commander's intent, went to everyone who might work with the media, or communicate directly themselves.

The distribution included army commanders, staff in 'public relations' (i.e. media operations) branches, censors, and the editors of in-theatre magazines such as Union Jack, Stars and Stripes and Maple Leaf.

The resulting newspaper reporting over the following few weeks was carefully measured. As a consequence, the British national morale reports recorded a gradual but sustained increase in enthusiasm. What Alexander and Harding could not influence was the extremely high level of second front anxiety at home, shared by Government and people alike, including Churchill. Unfortunately, for all those in Italy, their theatre had been eclipsed by Normandy.

Yet Harding's press directive indicated a keen awareness of the strategic context, and it showed that the staff who planned Operation DIADEM had learned lessons from the campaign and the failures of Anzio in particular. The directive was judged such a success that another was issued on 3 June 1944. Allied Armies Italy's insight - probably Harding's personally - was to see that to be fully successful, operations had to be accompanied by a compelling narrative.

This not only told the media - and through them the audience at home - what was happening, but carefully and conservatively shaped their expectations before operations actually started and maintained that approach throughout the subsequent campaign.

Finally, it concludes with one paragraph of 'do's' and a crisp list of 'don'ts':

Do's

- Portray a clear picture of the successive enemy defence lines.
- Build up in the minds of the public the strength of each as they are approached upon which guidance will be given.
- As each one is broken, proclaim it as a success as opening the way not to Rome or some more distant objective but to the next lie of the Fortress which is not many miles behind. ● The strength of the Hitler Line could well be magnified and in any case shown to be greater than that of the Gustav Line.
- The breaking of this line can then be used by us as great propaganda value (against) the enemy.

- Don't expect a large number of prisoners to be taken as this country is unsuited to quick manoeuvre which alone results in such capture of men and material. ● Don't draw comparisons between success now and previous failures.
- Don't speculate on the future conduct of the campaign.

- Don't measure success in terms of some distant objective.
- Don't magnify early successes. Play down the news in the opening stages and as each successive line is broken proclaim the success in crescendo.

The process of censorship still applied as before, and censors were given further, more detailed direction based on Harding's themes.

Harding's directive, a clear statement of the higher commander's intent, went to everyone who might work with the media, or directly communicate themselves. The distribution included army commanders, staff in 'public relations (i.e. media operations) branches, censors, and the editors of in-theatre magazines such as Union Jack, Stars and Stripes and Maple Leaf.

Left: General Alexander

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The News was Almost too Depressing to Send!

THE BITTER FOUR MONTHS long battle on the Anzio beach, 40 miles behind German lines was covered by one of the BBC's best-known war correspondents, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, pictured below…

Wynford joined the BBC office at Cardiff in 1937 and at the beginning of the Second World War was transferred as a home-front reporter to London in 1942 after covering the Blitz, he became a war correspondent. He was the first BBC reporter to fly in a Lancaster bomber on a night raid over Berlin in 1943.

He described in detail the whole of the action and gave the listeners at home an idea of the dangers faced by the pilots of the RAF. Later, similar graphic descriptions and details of the situation characterised his reports from Italy on the Anzio beachhead (he wrote a volume on the conflict published in 1961) and the liberation of Rome.

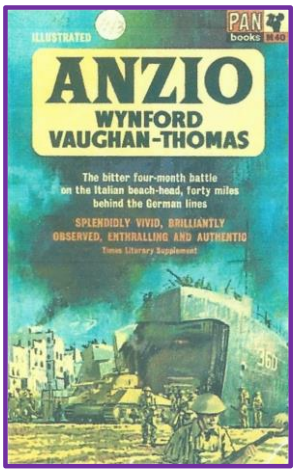
He broadcast from Burgundy and was awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French authorities in 1945. He captured the atmosphere of this in his last volume How I liberated Burgundy: and other Vinous Adventures (1985). He was also one of the first to visit Belsen concentration camp after its liberation.

VWT's book pulls no punches about the war correspondents experiences. To say the group at Anzio were not happy would be an under-statement. Media handling and particularly the lurid and incessant German psy ops get full coverage. Interestingly W%/T believes the German efforts at psy ops were almost amusing, but he is in no doubt they had little effect on the morale of British and American troops,

The ‘following extract from Anzio gives the journalists' reaction to the pep talk from the British Generals described by Brigadier Toomey above:-

Not all correspondents lived up to what the Army or the GI expected of them. There were plenty of reporters who were chary about approaching the front, and there were some at Anzio who moved out rapidly when they sensed that the Beachhead was in danger, muttering as they went. 'This is going to be a second Dunkirk. ' But this was not true of most of them.

Most of the alarmist reports in the Press did not come from the Beachhead reporters but from farther back — from Naples and Algiers. The real difficulty arose because the reporting of the War had now become a complicated affair. Army spokesmen 'briefed' correspondents at both Army and Army Group HQ, and the farther the 'briefing' was from the front, the less factual, of necessity, it became. Harassed editors, waiting impatiently in the newsrooms in London or New York, were bound to use the first reports which came to hand.



The Army authorities wanted to take no risks. They withdrew direct transmission facilities from the correspondents on the Beachhead with the result that, for some of the most critical days of the German attack, Naples and Algiers were the source of the news from Anzio. Small wonder that the news continued to be alarming.

On the day before the Germans launched their final all-out offensive General Alexander came to the Beachhead. The 14th of February saw an uneasy lull in the struggle. Everyone knew that in a matter of hours the supreme test would be upon them. General Alexander toured the front and came back to meet the correspondents. They had assembled in a bare room in Sixth Corps Headquarters after passing along the narrow corridor covered with posters of innocent American girls exhorting the GI to 'Come back clean'.

An air-raid warning wailed as the General came in, dressed in his fur-lined jacket which was his characteristic hallmark. For once he was not his urbane self. He spoke to the assembled group with the firm tone of a headmaster disappointed at some misdemeanour in the Upper School. He admitted that the Beachhead landing hadn't gone as he had hoped: 'We wanted a break-through and a complete answer inside a week but once you are stopped it becomes a question of building up and slogging.

Guts and determination

' He insisted that it was the people with guts and determination who were going to win when it came to a slogging match. The correspondents listened politely —generals are bound to sound more optimistic than the man in the fox-hole — but when General Alexander went on to say that the reports sent from the Beachhead were causing alarm, there were emphatic protests.

General Alexander looked sternly at the protesters. 'Were any of you at Dunkirk?' he asked. 'I was and I know that there is never likely to be a Dunkirk here. '

But the Commander-in-Chief, a reasonable man, felt the strength of the protests and promised that the whole thing should be checked when he returned to Naples.

A strange little scene, a small and trivial affair when compared to the general agony of the Beachhead, one is tempted to say. Yet it might not have been so trivial as it seemed. Could you have imagined it taking place at Kesselring's Headquarters or behind the front of the Red Army?

The C-in-C took time in a crisis of the battle to meet the correspondents because he was not certain in his own mind that justice had been done, and although his sympathies must have lain with his commanders he struggled to see viewpoint of the Press. It was a small part of the democracy that the Western Allies were trying to defend.

The correspondents walked slowly back through the dismal wintry weather to their battered villa on the edge of the sea near Nettuno. For the moment they could not send any news, but hadn't the news almost become too depressing to send?

Courtesy of Mark Postlethwaite

Tirpitz: Hunting the Beast

By John Sweetman

'LAST NIGHT'S RAID successful. *Tirpitz* sunk.' On 13 November 1944, this announcement at No 5 Bomber Group's staff conference signalled the end of four and a half years of air effort by the RAF and Fleet Air Arm. The 52,000 tons armoured German battleship with 15in guns capable of 22.4 miles range and capable of 34 knots had been under attack since 10 July 1940.

Almost 400 bombers, torpedo-bombers, fighters and reconnaissance aircraft had been involved, independent of two audacious raids by Royal Navy charioteers and midget submariners.

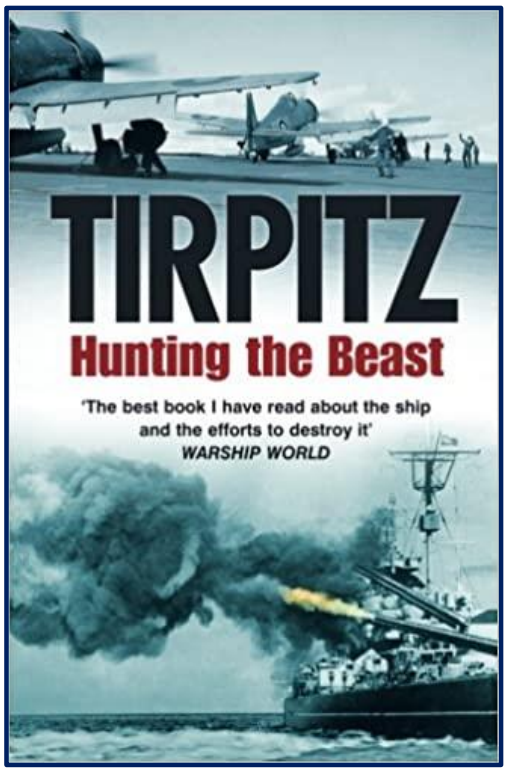
Dubbed 'the beast' by Winston Churchill, *Tirpitz* posed a major threat to allied shipping in the Atlantic and Artic convoys to the northern Soviet Union. He declared her destruction 'of utmost importance'.

In 1940-1, Hampden, Whitley and Wellington twin-engine bombers repeatedly attacked her in Wilhelmshaven dockyard and when she moved to Kiel for sea trials in the Baltic without inflicting serious damage. Fully operational, the warship sailed for Norway in January 1942.

Located near Trondheim, a raid by four-engine Stirlings and Halifaxes on 30 January proved 'a fiasco due to the terrible weather'.

In March, *Tirpitz* ventured north to threaten the Soviet-bound PQ 12 convoy, failed to locate it and, returning south, narrowly avoided being sunk by FAA Albacore torpedo-bombers off Narvik. Back at Trondheim, three more times Halifaxes and Lancasters tried with 4,000lb bombs and modified mines. Yet again, 'thick cloud over the target and mist in the valleys' frustrated accuracy.

In July 1942, the warship sailed north again and caused havoc. Warned that *Tirpitz* was at sea, naval escorts with Archangel-bound PQ17 convoy were withdrawn to intercept her, leaving enemy submarines and aircraft to feast on the unprotected merchantmen: only 11 of 35 survived.



With her anti-aircraft defences being strengthened at Narvik, proposals for a daylight raid from either Hofn in Iceland or Sumburgh in the Shetlands, for either Flying Fortresses or Lancasters to attack on the way to, or on the way back from, a Soviet base, were considered but shelved.

Churchill fretted in February 1943: 'It is a terrible thing that this prize should be waiting, and no one be able to think of a way of winning it'. During that year, *Tirpitz* anchored in Kaa Fjord in northern Norway, ideally poised to attack the Artic convoys or break into the Atlantic.

Midget Submarines

A renewed plan for Flying Fortresses to bomb the battleship both to and from a Soviet base and use by Mosquitoes of a smaller version of Barnes Wallis's 'bouncing bomb', which shattered west German dams in May, failed to materialise. Midget submarines undoubtedly did damage, but not disable, *Tirpitz* in September.

Photographic reconnaissance by Spitfires, decoding of German radio messages and reports from observers on the ground built up a picture of repair progress. In March 1944, Naval Intelligence believed the warship capable of at least 18 knots with 'an operational sortie' possible.

The FAA now planned a major attack and exhaustive practices were carried out on the simulated target area in Scotland. On 3 April 1944, six carriers launched 41 Barracuda bombers, accompanied by Corsair, Hellcat and Wildcat fighters to deal with flak positions on shore and hostile aircraft.

Tirpitz was caught manoeuvring out of her 'protective cage' for trials. The Admiralty claimed eight certain hits (including three by 1,600 lb bombs), five 'probable' and one damaging near miss. Undoubtedly, there were several hits, but no bomb penetrated the armoured deck. Three further attacks were baulked by poor weather and, in July, the enemy vessel was observed making 15-20 knots.

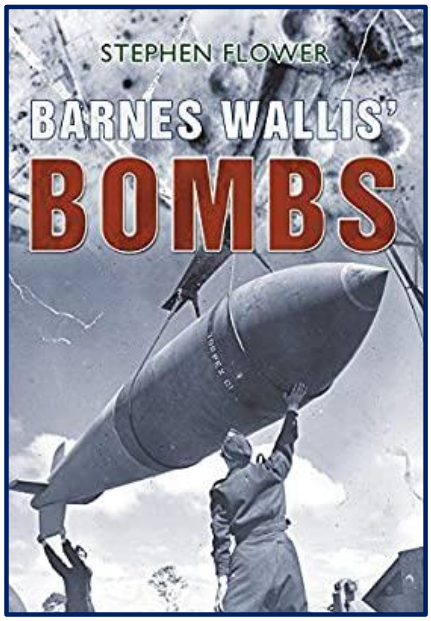
On 17 July, another attack was launched from carriers by 44 Barracudas protected by Hellcats and Corsairs as Seafires patrolled the fleet and Swordfish guarded against submarine interference. This time a thick smokescreen prevented accurate bombing and 'strike considered unsuccessful'.

Another operation was, therefore, planned and practised. This time, Barracudas would be accompanied by Corsairs, Fireflies, Wildcats and Hellcats, Avengers drop mines close to the ship and across the entrance to the fjord. The fleet would be protected by 32 Seafires. Twice on 22 August 1944, the main attack was either aborted or cancelled due to poor visibility. On each occasion a small number of Hellcats and Fireflies hit flak positions and ineffectively dropped 500lb bombs on *Tirpitz*.

On 24 August, another major attack took place. 33 Barracudas, each carrying a 1,600 lb bomb, 24 Corsairs and 10 Hellcats with smaller bombs, plus 10 Fireflies took off for Kaa Fjord. Eight Seafires simultaneously attacked Banak airfield, as others patrolled over the fleet.

One Barracuda observer wrote: 'The pull out of the dive in the smoke with the mountains above … stuck in my memory'. But thick smoke made accuracy difficult, two Hellcats and four Corsairs were lost, with many of the surviving aircraft extensively damaged. The Germans conceded that this was 'undoubtedly the heaviest and most determined (attack) so far': one 1,600 lb bomb did pierce the main deck without exploding.

The final, inconclusive FAA attack occurred on 29 August: 26 Barracudas (each with an AP 1,600 lb bomb), two Corsairs (1,000lb AP bomb each) and three Hellcats (a 500lb bomb) with 15 Corsairs and 10 Fireflies as escort. Post-operational analysis pointed to 'quite unreliable' weather forecasts, different conditions over the fleet and ashore, the slowness of Barracuda bombers and the advisability of using Mosquitoes, Hellcats and Corsairs in future.



There was no naval encore, however. RAF Bomber Command now tried its luck. Lancaster bombers could carry the 12,000lb deep-penetration Tallboy bomb, effective either with a direct hit or landing beside a warship able to burrow beneath it before exploding.

There was, too, the experimental JW mine, whose explosive charge would detonate on contact with a ship's hull. If dropped a distance away, it would 'hop' or 'walk' across the seabed until the target was detected. Two squadrons, nos. 9 and 617 (Dambuster), had precision-bombing experience.

The idea of using a Soviet base was revived. On the evening of 11 September, 18 9 Squadron (one forced to abort the operation) and 20 617 Squadron aircraft set off for Yagodnik airfield near Archangel in the northern USSR. A reconnaissance Mosquito would follow next day. Flying through the night across Norway, neutral Sweden and occupied Finland, the Lancasters encountered 'isolated instances of ineffective flak'.

After running into 'considerable low cloud and rain … about 150 miles from Archangel', map reading became 'impossible', and below was 'the most desolate country imaginable – lakes, forests and swamps'. Most failed to pick up Soviet signals because they had the wrong frequency or call sign. At 0800 GMT (1100 LT) on 12 September, only 13 operational Lancasters were at Yagodnik. Others had put down in scattered locations, seven of which would be written off.

Thirty-one bombers eventually reached Yagodnik, though on the morning of 14 September five were still unserviceable. So, twenty Tallboy Lancasters and six each carrying 12 JW mines were set to attack *Tirpitz* in Kaa Fjord from an easterly direction. The Mosquito reported unfavourable weather in the target area, which allowed the Lancaster piloted by American Lt H C Knilans USAAF to be repaired and join the force when it eventually set out the following morning, 15 September. As he prepared to board, Fg Off J A Sanders was 'somewhat alarmed' to be advised by a sergeant armourer not to bring back his JW mines, 'they are set to self-destruct after 15 hours'.

At 1255 DBST, the leading Lancaster saw *Tirpitz* nestling under a cliff precisely as shown on the briefing model. The initial view was rapidly obscured by a thick smoke-screen and later crews 'saw only about 1/3rd of the ship or the superstructure only'.

Several made multiple runs from different directions to seek accuracy: 'We hadn't put (in) all this effort … just to kill a few Norwegian fish', one navigator remarked. No aircraft was lost, but the wrecked Lancasters were left behind, their crews being distributed between returning aircraft. One, with 11 men on board, crashed with total loss in Norway.

Back in England, it became clear that one Tallboy had severely damaged the bows and the Germans decided to move *Tirpitz* south to Tromso as a floating battery to deter invasion.

The RAF was unaware of her parlous state and Naval Intelligence still rated her a convoy threat. Crucially, at Tromso, *Tirpitz* was in direct return range from bases in Scotland.

From there, shortly after midnight on 29 October, 19 617 Squadron and 20 9 Squadron Lancasters, all carrying one Tallboy, took off. A 9 Squadron aircraft returned early and two more failed to reach the target, so 36 Lancasters gathered at the rendezvous lake after crossing the Norwegian coast to attack *Tirpitz*.

Although visibility was fine on the approach, 'considerable low cloud (appeared) in the target area with tops at about 6,000ft totally obscuring the target' and no hit was achieved. As one flight engineer wrote, not having sunk the warship 'after 13 hours boring flight did not make for happy thoughts. On their return to base, crews were informed that they would be sent back 'again and again' until *Tirpitz* was sunk.

So, at midnight on 12 November, the Lancasters again prepared to leave the Moray Firth. Icy conditions prevented eight getting airborne, so 29 were to reprise the October attack. Approaching the Norwegian coast individually in darkness, 'wonderful navigation' allowed 'a swarm of four-engine gnats' to congregate at the rendezvous lake and in a 'gin-clear sky' make for *Tirpitz.*

Anxious eyes scanned the horizon for fighters known to be 10 minutes flying time from the target, but none appeared. It later emerged that a communications hiatus had saved the RAF crews. A navigator reflected, 'we were lucky to catch the enemy on a bad day'.

The terrain around the anchorage near Tromso was too flat for an effective smoke-screen and the attackers evaded flak from the warship and shore batteries: only one damaged aircraft sought refuge in Sweden, Two direct hits and one near miss accounted for *Tirpitz*. Churchill's beast had at last been slain.

Looking down on the upturned hull, one aircrew member breathed: 'Thank God for that. It's the last time we're going to come here'. Looking at later reconnaissance photos, a staff officer remarked: 'Sic transit gloria mundi' (so passes away earthly glory).

Unearthed: Secrets of the devastation caused by Grand Slam, the earthquake bomb

By David Keys, The Independent

THE FINAL SECRETS of Britain's largest-ever conventional weapon of war are being 'unearthed' by archaeologists. Geophysics experts are using ground-penetrating radar and other high tech methods to 'x-ray' the ground, in a remote area of the New Forest in Hampshire, to shed new light on the most powerful top secret World War Two weapon test ever carried out in the UK.

The weapon - a bomb designed by the British aircraft and munitions inventor, Barnes Wallis, and codenamed 'Grand Slam' - was almost 26-foot-long and weighed 22,000 pounds, substantially bigger than any other wartime explosive device ever developed by Britain.

The New Forest test is historically important because it heralded an expansion in the crucial strategic air offensive against key infrastructure targets in Nazi Germany. The first RAF bomber command Grand Slam sortie got underway within hours of the successful test of the bomb.

Four geophysical techniques - ground penetrating radar, magnetometry, electrical resistivity and electrical resistivity tomography - are being used by the archaeologists to assess the damage done to the large concrete target building which has lain buried under a vast mound of earth for the past 66 years.

Barnes Wallis' Grand Slam bomb was designed to seriously damage and destroy buildings, bridges, viaducts and other structures without necessarily having to achieve a direct hit against them. It worked by creating a severe yet localized artificial earthquake.

The one and only test of the bomb took place on 13 March 1945. The weapon was released from a specially adapted Lancaster bomber flying at 16,000 feet over the River Avon just east of the Hampshire town of Fordingbridge, almost two miles west of the New Forest target building. Half a minute after release, the bomb, with its specially designed aero-dynamic fins, hit the target area at more than 700 miles per hour.

Penetrating deep into the ground it produced, after a predetermined nine second interval, a massive explosion which generated the desired artificial earthquake.

It created a 70-foot-deep 130-foot diameter crater. It was the biggest bomb ever dropped on Britain before or since.

The geophysical investigation and the research operation in the National Archives are expected to reveal just how much damage the earthquake effect had on the target building - but oral history research recently carried out by the New Forest archaeological team suggests that the entire structure was seen to physically move when the bomb exploded some 250 feet away.

After the New Forest test, Grand Slam bombs were used between 14 March and 19 April, 1945 against nine strategically important German targets including the Schildesche railway viaduct near Bielefeld, the Arnsberg railway viaduct, the Nienburg railway bridge, submarine pens near Bremen and German gun batteries on the island of Heligoland.

The Grand Slam campaign played a key role in helping to speed up the defeat of German forces in the final two and half months of the war. Almost 100 Grand Slam bombs were produced of which 42 were used in nine major Bomber Command sorties. Today only five publicly accessible examples survive - in the RAF Museum in north-west London, Brooklands Museum in Surrey, Dumfries and Galloway Aviation Museum, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Visitor Centre at RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire and Kelham Island Museum, Sheffield.

The New Forest National Park Authority's current geophysical survey and historical investigation into Grand Slam is part of a wider project researching and surveying the park's often unappreciated wartime role. Quite apart from Grand Slam, the New Forest was used as a test site for the first Barnes Wallis bouncing bombs, the development of the 'Tallboy' predecessor of Grand Slam, as well as early demonstrations of the Churchill tank. The forest was also home to nine wartime airfields, many of which played a key role in D-Day.

The vast concrete bunker which formed the centre of the Grand Slam target area had originally been built in 1941.Up till now, historians had thought that it was constructed as a replica enemy submarine pen complex - so as to develop bomb strategy against such targets along occupied Europe's coastline.

However, a series of once-secret documents found in the National Archives by the New Forest National Park research team over the past year have now revealed that the building was originally constructed as a test structure to help develop more effective public air raid shelters.

It appears to have been experimentally constructed out of successive layers of different types of concrete - designed to inhibit the transmission of shock-waves through its walls and roof.

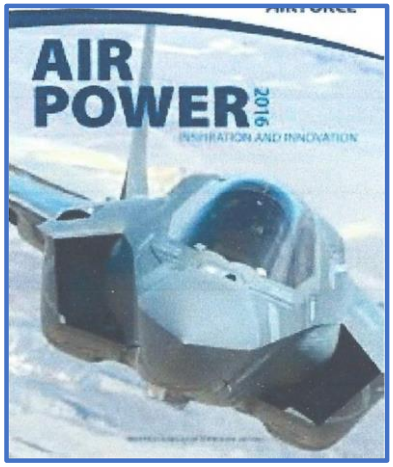
The researchers have even found a previously unknown plan of the building, showing the points at which test detonations were carried out on its roof to assess the effectiveness of the newly developed experimental multi-layer air raid shelter technology.

Bizarrely, Barnes Wallis had actually designed Grand Slam back in 1940 - but political disinterest, bureaucratic obstacles and weapon delivery problems conspired to prevent its final development until early 1945.

"Our geophysical and historical research is helping us to more fully understand and appreciate the testing of Grand Slam - and the New Forest's more general major, yet little known, role in World War Two," said James Brown, an archaeologist at the New Forest National Park Authority.

By Dr Peter W Gray, FRAeS. Peter retired from the Royal Air Force as an Air Commodore and is now an air power studies academic. Courtesy of Air Power Magazine.

BOMBER COMMAND of the Royal Air Force was active throughout the Second World War and, for a significant proportion of the time, was the only means by which we could carry our resistance into the heartland of the enemy and his conquered territories. Over one third of a million sorties were flown over the course of the war in Europe alone with some 9,000 aircraft lost and 50,000 allied personnel killed or reported as missing in action.



Targets for the heavy bomber force varied from Berlin, through the VIN2 rocket sites at Peenemunde, to German Army positions opposing the Normandy landings. On numerous occasions, the area attacked consisted of little more than arable fields — particularly when decoys had been deployed or bombing accuracy was suspect. Some raids, such as the attacks on the dams, have entered the annals of history and legend; others have faded from the memories of all but the remaining survivors.

Yet the combined Bomber Command/ USAAF Eighth Air Force raids on Dresden on 13-14 February 1945 have probably occasioned more impassioned debate than the rest put together. This debate has inevitably been fuelled by retrospective moralising, self-conscious justification of positions and an unhealthy dose of Cold War propaganda

The scope for rational discussion has been further reduced by the furore surrounding the author of the first monologue on the subject — Mr David Irving? The fact that his book has admirably stood the test of time and is not, contrary to popular suggestion, an essay in Nazi apologia has been lost in the heat.
Dresden has been represented as the epitome of all that was immoral, unethical and illegal about the allied strategic bombing campaign in World War II. Even in the immediate aftermath of the raids, the talk was increasingly of 'acts of terror and wanton destruction' The casualty figures have been debated, revised and contested. And even those responsible for the planning and execution of strategic and operational policy have sought to distance themselves from the horror of what was, in reality, an eminently successful raid.

In his memoirs, Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur Harris points out that the attack on Dresden was 'at the time considered a military necessity by much more important people than himself'.

Very Muted Response

This was a very muted response considering the many efforts to make him the scapegoat. Air Marshal Sir Robert Saundby, who was Deputy Commander-in-Chief at Bomber Command and was therefore directly involved in the planning for the raid, provided the foreword to Irving's book. He wrote:

Dresden has been represented as the epitome of all that was immoral, unethical and illegal about the allied strategic bombing campaign in World War II. Even in the immediate aftermath of the raids, the talk was increasingly of 'acts of terror and wanton destruction.

'That the bombing of Dresden was a great tragedy none can deny that it was a military necessity few, after reading this book, will believe. It was one of those terrible things that sometime happen in wartime, brought about by an unfortunate combination of circumstances. Those who approved it were neither wicked nor cruel, though it may well be that they were too remote from the harsh realities of war to understand fu//y the appalling destructive power of air bombardment in the spring of 1945.

This paper will attempt to situate the combined raids on Dresden in the wider geo-political strategic framework prevailing in 1944-45. It will then look briefly at the raid itself and then examine the legal and ethical issues that have arisen, both from the raid in isolation and from the broader context of the strategic bombing campaign.

Documentary sources have been used wherever possible. Oral evidence has been eschewed, partly because much of it is concerned with detail. With no disrespect for those involved at the time, or subsequently, there is also the risk that oral sources may alter their standpoint to suit more appropriately the moral or ethical views of the age in which they were asked to testify.

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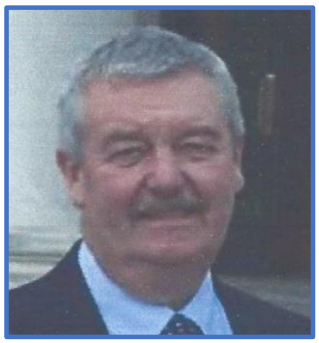

Peter Gray began his career in the Royal Air Force as a navigator on Phantom F4s. He went on to command 101 Squadron. He worked for three years in the Cabinet Office and in the Ministry of Defence and was then appointed Director of Defence Studies for the RAF. He retired from the Royal Air Force in June 2008. He has been a senior research fellow in Air Power Studies at the Centre for War Studies at Birmingham University since 1 September 2008. He graduated from
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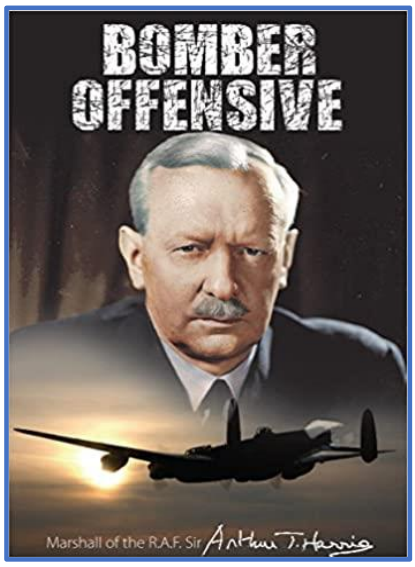
The Strategic Context and Bomber Command Policy

Notwithstanding the debate that has ensued over the years concerning the differences of opinion between Harris (as C-in-C Bomber Command) and Portal (Chief of the Air Staff), it is important to remember that the Strategic Bombing Policy was not the brainchild of one man and his staff. Rather it was an iterative process guided, from time to time, from the grand strategic level.



The primacy of the strategic bomber had been a cornerstone of British and American air power thinking for much of the inter-war period. After Dunkirk, and for the next three years, it became the only feasible method by which Britain could strike back at Germany. Churchill promised in 1940 that there would be a 'continuous and relentless air offensive'. Technology, or the lack of it, ensured that the doctrinal imperative of attacking the morale of the people was adhered to due to the impracticality of more precise targeting. Improvements in navigation aids, and the increases in bomb loads, resulted in a gradual improvement in Bomber Command efficiency. The emphasis, however, was on the incremental nature of the change. Watersheds were few and far between.

A key opportunity for a major re-evaluation of policy came with the American entry into the conflict. Strategic bombing policy as discussed at the Casablanca Conference in 1943. But it was not the top item on the agenda — a key strategic area for discussion was confirmation of 'Germany first' and the ensuing argument over the desirability of an early land offensive in Northern Europe versus a Mediterranean policy. The resulting bombing directive read: 'The primary objective will be the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened'

As Biddle has pointed out, this contained something for everyone and gave the commanders a deal of latitude, both in target sets and methodology.

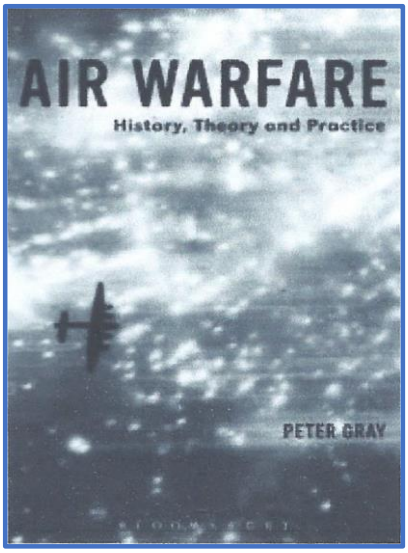
Some unity of purpose was imposed on the scene in the lead-up to the Normandy landings with the attacks on the German transportation system. Once the land offensive was established, however, differences of opinion again surfaced over priorities. Tedder (as Deputy to Eisenhower) advocated that priority continue to be given to transportation and communications targets. Spaatz (Commander of the USAAF Eighth Air Force) favoured attacks on oil, while Harris continued to insist on the maintenance of area bombing

In late 1944 and into early 1 945, it was increasingly evident to military planners that the defeat of Germany was a matter only of time and/or resources. There was, however, no room for complacency.

The Germans were far from beaten and showed no sign whatsoever of merely rolling over. The Ardennes offensive in the dying days of December 1944 badly rattled the Allies, not least because they had hoped to have won the war by Christmas of that year.

Furthermore, the threat of new terror weapons, and even the deployment of nuclear bombs, was a very real consideration at the time.

The Russians had already lost huge numbers of men killed and the Allies were facing mounting casualty lists as they fought their way into the heartland. Every means was therefore sought to shorten the war.



The Allies and the Russians had accepted, as early as 1943, that the strategic bomber offensive would continue to play a key role in operations against Germany. By the time of the Octagon Conference in September 1944, the British Chiefs of Staff considered that it might become 'desirable in the immediate future to apply the whole strategic bomber effort to the direct attack of German morale'. 12 They also agreed that attacks could usefully be undertaken in support of the Russian armies.

These discussions culminated in the formulation of a plan entitled Thunderclap. The Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Charles Portal, presented this to his fellow Chiefs of Staff in August 1944. This envisaged a massive attack on Berlin at about the time that the German Army had been defeated in the field. The strategic bomber force would then deliver the coup de grace ending further resistance.

By 1945, the Air Staff considered that Thunderclap might well appear to the Germans as an excellent example of close co-ordination with the Russians thereby greatly increasing the morale effect. In January 1945, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) played down the possibility of German resistance crumbling but highlighted the scope for confusion in the movement of reinforcements and refugees if, by implication, critical towns in the infrastructure were attacked.

The JIC report coincided with preparations for the Allied discussions in Malta that were the precursor to the Yalta conference with the Soviets. In the meantime, Churchill had asked the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, what plans the Royal Air Force had for 'blasting the Germans in their retreat from Breslau'. Portal's advice was that Thunderclap would be both costly and indecisive.

He recommended that oil targets should have absolute priority along with Me262 factories and submarine yards, Portal also echoed the sentiments of the JIC report recommending attacks on Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Chemnitz, 'or any other cities where a severe blitz will not only cause confusion in the evacuation from the East, but will also hamper the movement of troops from the West'.

Cautious Reply

Sinclair replied to Churchill in a cautious tone on 26 January suggesting that oil targets should remain the priority with attacks on East German cities as a secondary option when the weather was too poor. The Prime Minister was obviously not satisfied that sufficient emphasis was being given to his wish that support be given to the Russian advance. His blistering response is worthy of quotation in full:

'I did not ask you last night about plans for harrying the German retreat from Breslau. On the contrary, I asked whether Berlin and no doubt other large cities in East Germany, should not now be considered especially attractive targets. I am glad that this is 'under examination'. Pray report to me tomorrow what is going to be done.'

Without further ado, the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Norman Bottomley, wrote to C-in-C Bomber Command formally instructing him to carry out these attacks, Sinclair confirmed this to Churchill on 27 January; this minute was acknowledged and elicited no further comment.

After a series of meetings involving Portal, Bottomley, Tedder and General Carl Spaatz it was agreed that oil would remain the number one priority for strategic bomber forces operating from the UK. This would be followed in priority by attacks on Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig; destruction of communications feeding the respective fronts; and finally, the Me 262 plants.

In London, the Vice-Chiefs confirmed these priorities with the addition of a more sustained effort against tank factories. The plot now moves to Yalta where the debate over who said what to whom becomes complex.

Cold War Soviet propaganda has emphasised that the Russian delegation in the Crimea had no responsibility for the bombing of Dresden. The Allies were unequivocal in their inclusion of Dresden in the target list, in particular with its importance on the Berlin — Leipzig — Dresden railway.

The Russian Deputy Chief of Staff, General Antonov, submitted a formal memorandum to the Allies requesting, inter alia, that air attacks against communications should be carried out 'in particular to paralyse the centres: Berlin and Leipzig.'

The use of the wording 'in particular' makes it, at best, disingenuous for the Russians subsequently to suggest that they had not requested action at Dresden.

Although the documentary evidence from the Russian perspective is limited, it is highly improbable that informal or non-minuted discussions had left them in any doubt as to Allied intentions. It is worthy of note at this stage that Harris's role had been no more sinister than as a recipient of very high-level instructions,

The Raids

Dresden had a pre-war population of about 600,000. By 1944, this had been swollen by refugees, prisoners of war and undoubtedly a number of folks seeking to exploit the city's reputation as being exempt from air raids. For what was Germany's seventh largest city to have escaped until 7 October 1944 had not gone unnoticed the city and its environs hosted numerous targets of military and industrial significance.

These included an optical factory, a glass works, two plants producing radar components, an arsenal and finally a poison gas factory.

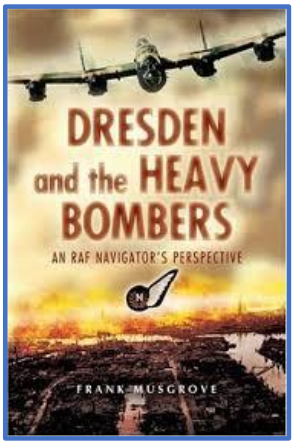
Dresden had become a key nodal point in the German postal and telegraph system. In addition, the infrastructure of Saxony was such that Dresden was indeed a key point in the communications of the region for refugees and the military. It was the hub connecting two major rail lines between Berlin and Leipzig and accordingly was a troop concentration area.

There was therefore no logical reason — other than its distance from Lincolnshire — for it to have been exempt from air attack. The USAAF Eighth Air Force first visited Dresden on 7 October 1944 with 30 effective sorties against the industrial areas. This attack was followed with a raid on the marshalling yards 16 January 1945 (133 effective sorties).

By early 1945, German night fighter defences had become threadbare. The crews were tired and aviation spirit was at an absolute premium. Even though the area of the homeland and occupied territory that had to be defended had shrunk considerably under Allied and Soviet attack, the scale of air attacks was steadily increasing.

The impact of the combined bomber offensive with its escorting long-range fighters had taken its toll on the Luftwaffe. Furthermore, the demand for heavy) calibre artillery was huge; it has been estimated that even though over 20,000 artillery pieces were deployed for air defence purposes (and therefore not available for land warfare), there were still insufficient guns to protect everything. Dresden was comparatively low on the priority list, hence its earlier escape from air attack contributed to its eventual demise.

Harris planned his attack on Dresden accordingly. He elected to use a double blow. The first wave would convince the Luftwaffe that it was the main raid and their fighters would be back on the ground refuelling when the second and larger raid would have unfettered access to the target. The gap between waves was to be three hours during which time the defences and rescue services would be swamped, and still in the open when the main raid arrived.



Over 800 aircraft were launched on the two raids with devastating effect. These were followed the next day by the USAAF with over 200 sorties against the marshalling yards. In terms of precision targeting, 'marshalling yards' had been used by the USAAF as a euphemism for area bombing. But by early 1945, accuracy had improved to the point where such targets could be defined with a reasonable expectation that they would be hit.

The importance and scale of the yards made them a worthwhile target in their own right. Furthermore, the designated MPIs (mean points of impact) for the 92nd Bomb Group show seven precise targets (five based on the rail network and two industrial) with the centre of the city as an eighth target of opportunity'.

For Bomber Command, contemporary maps held by the Air Historical Branch unequivocally show the aiming point as the centre of the Old Town Eighth Air Force was to revisit Dresden on 2 March and 17 April. For Bomber Command it was a highly successful raid and the city dropped to 62nd on their target list and was not revisited.

The Immediate Aftermath

- For those directly involved in the planning of Bomber Command operations, the immediate response to the raids was almost certainly one of relief that the casualty lists were relatively low, followed by satisfaction over its success. The whole issue was, however, compounded by a press release and interview given by Air Commodore C M Grierson at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force in Paris.
- The ensuing Associated Press (AP) despatch stated that Allied Air Chiefs had made the 'long awaited decision to adopt deliberate terror bombing of German population centres as a ruthless expedient to hastening Hitler's doom'.
- This was widely published in America and was broadcast in Paris. Public opinion in the US had hitherto been fed a diet that emphasised the precision of the American bombing campaign. Concern was only partly alleviated by Marshall's statement that it had been carried out at Russian request.
- The despatch gained a brief exposure in London prior to heavy censorship. The matter was subsequently raised in parliament on 6 March 1945 by Mr Richard Stokes MP. 30 As he rose to speak in the House, Sinclair rose from his seat and pointedly left the Chamber. Stokes read out the AP despatch in full and then accused the government of hiding the true nature of the raid.

Legal and Ethical Factors

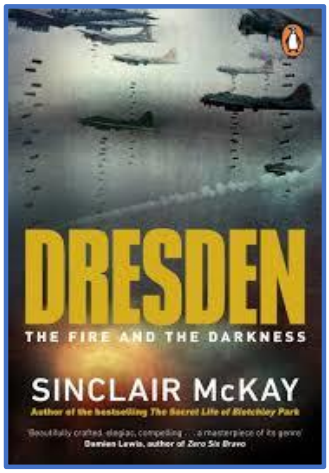
At first sight, it must appear to be faintly ridiculous for legal and ethical issues to feature at all in what, at the time, was total war against the most obnoxious regime ever to challenge world peace. A quick glance, however, at the indexes of a wide range of books on international legal issues and ethics shows that Dresden features as almost as regularly as does debate on the wider strategic bombing campaign. As stated above, the AP Despatch effectively ensured that the genie was let out of the bottle at this point even though other raids (such as those on Hamburg) could have provided the turning point if it had been based on tangible criteria such as the use of firestorm tactics.

The presentational aspects of warfare as an extension of political activity have considerable importance for those involved, especially at the higher levels, in the prosecution of a campaign. Adherence to the tenets of international law was, and remains, an integral part of this process — notwithstanding the ephemeral nature of the discipline as it was understood prior to the formation of the United Nations. In the relatively calm pre-war (and hence pre-Warsaw, Rotterdam and Coventry) days of June 1938, Neville Chamberlain cited international law in his formal guidelines to Bomber Command. He stated unequivocally that:

- **It is against international law to bomb civilians as such and to make deliberate attacks on the civilian population,**
- **Targets which are aimed at from the air must be legitimate military objectives and must be capable of identification.**
- **Reasonable care must be taken in attacking those military objectives so that by carelessness a civilian population in the neighbourhood is not bombed.**

Chamberlain went on to state in the House of Commons that not only was bombing civilian populations contrary to international [law, but that in his opinion such action would not be a successful war winning tool. His ethical and legal approach was heavily influenced by the practicalities of the matter.

These statements on the understood legal principles of the time were entirely consistent with those laid down by Trenchard in 1928 in what effectively became his 'last will and testament', In a paper that started as a presentation to the Imperial Defence College and was then circulated to fellow Chiefs, he dealt at length with the need to target military objectives and avoiding 'indiscriminate bombing of a city for the sole purpose of terrorising the civilian population' .



The air staff, a decade later, was more concerned with expediency than with the legalities. Slessor points out that our capabilities were such that decisive results could not then be achieved. Chamberlain's directives were translated, after much debate, into operations orders that could be issued to the Command; considerable doubt remained as to what could be reasonably described as military objectives.

Slessor dismissed the Draft Hague Rules out of hand and concluded it, without doubt, 'sooner or later, the gloves would have to come off. Attempts to regulate the conduct of warfare had gathered pace towards the end of the 19th Century with, inter alia, the formal prohibition of the bombardment of undefended towns. By 1975 the possibility of bombardment from the air led to the inclusion the clause 'by whatever means. The Hague Conference of 1925 had no hesitation in banning chemical and biological means of warfare, but the regulation of air warfare was left in draft form.

The 1923 Draft Hague Rules were never adopted. In retrospect, Dresden may have appeared to those at political and military strategic levels to have been a turning point in their pragmatic, ethical or legal thinking about the prosecution of the war. At the time, it was more likely that it was just another event in the long process of bringing the war to a speedy conclusion. Admittedly it came at a time when thoughts were turning increasingly to the management of the post-war mess and the likely advent of the Cold War.

That the destruction of a fine city should have become a propaganda tool does justice to neither the plight of the victims on the ground nor the bravery of the crews for whom Dresden was the 'target for tonight'.

To the operational commanders, the formation commanders and the crews in their charge, the raids on Dresden, and other East German cities, were part of the complex tapestry that represented their part in waging war against the most odious regime then known to mankind. To them, it was just another raid

Operation Market Garden Reconsidered

By Professor Lloyd Clark: This article was originally published in* World War II *Magazine. Lloyd is Professorial Research Fellow in the Humanities Research Institute and Course Director of the University of Buckingham's MA in Modern War Studies and Contemporary Military History programme based in London. He is also a senior academic in the Department of War Studies, The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, a member of the British Commission for Military History and historian to the Airborne Assault Normandy Trust. Professor Clark is a specialist in the First and Second World Wars with a particular interest in airborne and amphibious warfare; operational fighting methods; command and leadership; the development of doctrine and military lesson learning.

I FIRST READ about Operation Market Garden as a nine-year-old school-boy in England and was immediately entranced by the remarkable airborne effort to liberate the Netherlands in September 1944 and hasten the end of the war. I gulped down books on the subject, demanded that my parents take me to see Richard Attenborough's film *A Bridge Too Far*, and asked for the soundtrack for my birthday.

It wasn't just the images of vast air armadas droning through the morning sky, or the scenes of tenacious airborne forces deep behind enemy lines awaiting relief by advancing ground forces; I was in awe of the operation's ambition and its massive scale.

And because everything I had been told was summed up by the words of the author who described the operation as "an unmitigated disaster both absolute and terrible," I also wanted to understand why Market Garden had failed. I lapped up the conclusion of British military historian Ronald Lewin:

"Naked courage lacked the bodyguard of competent planning, competent intelligence, competent technology," and then went on to offer this searing indictment: "War's objective is victory, not only the Victoria Cross, and it was shameful that by the autumn of 1944 we could still be so amateur."

This was the conventional wisdom and, I, too, became a fervent detractor of Market Garden. But as I went on to become a serious student of military history and learned to be more critical, to understand strategy and its relation to the operational level, to work ever more closely with the military and to explore the old battlefield itself, I found myself questioning some of the more glib criticisms made of the operation.

I am aware of criticisms made of the operation. Although I am well aware of the numerous errors made in all of the operation's phases, I have become a defender of Market Garden. It was a bold but justifiable gamble made in a heady atmosphere in which a quick end to the war with Germany seemed tantalizingly possible.

And even in its undeniable failure it reaped tangible but largely unrecognized successes, weakening the German forces in Holland at a time when they could ill afford major combat losses and paving the way for the ultimately successful invasion of western Germany.

It is ludicrous—and disrespectful—to believe that Allied commanders in the autumn of 1944 needed to be reminded that "war's objective is victory, not only the Victoria Cross." Operation Market Garden did not take place in the strategic vacuum such words imply, for Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's scheme had to fit into the grand design dictated by his boss, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force.

Indeed, Ike approved Market Garden because he believed it held great strategic merit and had the potential to solve several problems the Allies had created for themselves owing to the speed of their advance after the Battle of Normandy.

During the last week in August, German forces in the west were disintegrating, and the Allied armoured spearheads streamed eastward. "We raced along," Capt. Robert Boscawen of the Coldstream Guards tank troop noted in his diary on August 31. "We charged down all the hills at a tremendous speed.…In front the Grenadiers had practically no opposition except shooting up an occasional convoy.…A wonderful day. We had advanced nearly 60 miles."

After the grind of Normandy, this bracing progress engendered a rush of optimism. The Combined Allied Intelligence Committee in London believed that "organized resistance under the control of the German High Command is unlikely to continue beyond 1 December 1944." But with supply lines for the advancing Allied troops now stretching 350 miles back to Normandy, neither the rate of advance nor the unbounded confidence could last. A great military opportunity remained for the Allies to exploit, but there was sharp disagreement over just how to do it.

The strategic debate centred on the views proffered by the ever-patient and politically astute Eisenhower against those of the arrogant and battle-experienced Montgomery, commander of the British 21st Army Group. Ike was committed to his "broad front" strategy: a slow but sure way of advancing his ground forces in a coordinated manner to put the enemy under constant pressure over a wide area.

Monty, however, did not rate this strategy—or Eisenhower—very highly: "His ignorance as to how to run the war is absolute and complete." Monty argued fiercely for a concentrated "narrow front"; one that, needless to say, would be under his own command.

The massing of divisions together, he argued, would create a force "which would be so strong that it need fear nothing" and would successfully "secure bridgeheads over the Rhine before winter began and seize the Ruhr quickly." Beyond the Ruhr—Germany's industrial heartland—Montgomery's eyes were firmly set on Berlin.

Montgomery frequently articulated these aims to Eisenhower during the late summer, and his vehemence only increased as the Allied offensive ground to a halt in the days after the liberation of Brussels on September 3. The British general believed fervently that Allied strategy was becoming "unstitched" and had no doubt that a narrow front would stitch it back together. After Eisenhower rejected his suggestion for a reorientation in strategy several times, Montgomery decided to subtly change his tack.

As a prelude to something grander, he offered the supreme commander a plan likely to be looked on with favour.

Knowing that his boss wanted to test his “sky soldiers” and was eyeing the last great obstacle protecting the heart of Germany, he proposed an airborne operation behind German lines in Holland to capture a crossing over the Rhine.

Ike gave this operation, codenamed Market Garden, his approval on September 10 but was careful to point out that he was not agreeing to a narrow front, merely a temporary boost to the left wing of his broad front. If it worked, he thought, the Allies would have gained an extremely valuable crossing over the Rhine. But if it failed, then at least Montgomery would have been able to put his preferred strategy to the test. The First Allied Airborne Army, the new and only Allied strategic reserve, would have been tested as well, and the Germans further weakened. Indeed, Eisenhower later said, “I not only approved Market Garden, I insisted upon it.”

Montgomery confirmed that the operation would take place on September 17.

The short lead time was necessary in order to take advantage of the German disorganization the rapid Allied advance had created. Reports from the front were acknowledging increasing enemy resistance, however, so there was precious little time for planning such a complex undertaking.

Market Garden’s main aim was to seize a Rhine crossing at the Dutch city of Arnhem and open a gateway to the Ruhr by outflanking the German Siegfried Line. The spearhead of the British Second Army, Lt. Gen. Brian Horrocks’s XXX Corps, would accomplish this by pushing up a narrow road to Arnhem, supported by a corps on either flank.

The First Allied Airborne Army—under the command of the tenacious American lieutenant general Lewis H. Brereton, a pilot in World War I—was to provide three and a half divisions. It was to be the largest airborne operation ever mounted.

These 35,000 men from three nations would be commanded by Brereton’s British deputy, Lt. Gen. Frederick “Boy” Browning. Maj. Gen. Maxwell Taylor’s 101st Airborne Division would be dropped north of Eindhoven; Maj. Gen. Jim Gavin’s 82nd Airborne Division would be inserted south of Nijmegen; and Maj. Gen. Roy Urquhart’s British 1st Airborne Division, along with Maj. Gen. Stanislaw Sosabowski’s 1st Independent Polish Parachute Brigade, were to land around Arnhem.

“I told my staff that General Eisenhower wants the airborne army used in mass,” Brereton later said. “He believes that if it is used that way the effect on morale of the Germans would be devastating.”

But that vision proved impossible to fulfil. Although 1500 transports and 500 tug-glider combinations were available, that was less than half the number required to move all the troops in one operation. Maj. Gen. Paul Williams, head of the American IX Troop Carrier Command, quickly determined that the airborne divisions would have to be inserted in three lifts spread over three days.

This decision had massive ramifications for Browning's lightly armed troops because it meant it would dilute the attacking forces, a situation exacerbated by the need for some of the first arriving troops to defend the drop zones and landing zones for subsequent lifts. To make matters worse, with so much air traffic rumbling over the battlefield on both resupply missions and ongoing airlifts, no ground-attack missions could be flown during these times for fear of aerial collision.

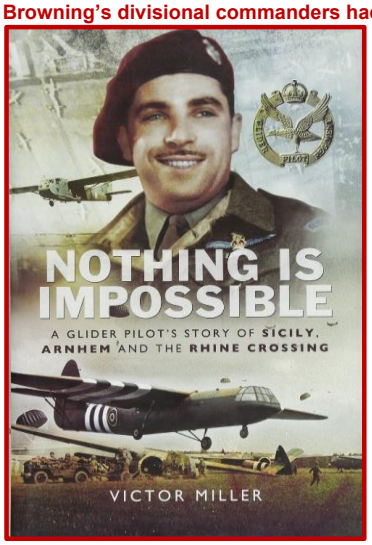
Williams also vetoed any drop zones or landing zones that he believed would put his aircraft in "unnecessary" danger of being engaged by enemy antiaircraft fire.

This led, in the worst case, to the British 1st Airborne Division's being forced to land between six and eight miles from its main objective.

The unintended net result of the air plan, therefore, was the destruction of the primary advantage of speed and surprise an airborne operation offered, while giving the Germans and the weather greater opportunity to undermine it. (Indeed, the situation would worsen two days into the operation, when inclement weather spread the airlifts from three days to five.)

"They used to make a beautiful airborne plan," Brigadier John "Shan" Hackett, commander of the British 4th Parachute Brigade, sardonically observed after the war, "and then add the fighting-the-Germans bit afterwards."

Browning's divisional commanders had concerns about the plan from the outset. But they recognized that airborne warfare was inherently risky and felt confident their superiors would not let them down. Even so, they could not help ruminating on the potential for a strong German reaction to the landings. The bridge at Arnhem spanned what was to Germany a psychological as well as a physical barrier—the Rhine. Sosabowski in particular feared a flexible, speedy, and strong response, saying, "The British are not only grossly underestimating German strength in the Arnhem area, but they seem ignorant of the significance Arnhem has for the Fatherland."



The mission planners consistently put the best possible interpretation on disturbing intelligence coming from both the Dutch underground and Ultra decrypts of German communications. When Maj. Brian Urquhart, chief intelligence officer at Browning's headquarters, presented photographic evidence of enemy armour in the Arnhem area, Browning reassured Urquhart that he "should not worry unduly, that the reports were probably wrong, and that in any case the Germans troops were refitting and not up to much fighting."

Even so, divisional commanders were aware of the quantity of German troops and armoured vehicles they were likely to face on landing, contrary to conventional historical views. But they were not told vital details about the quality of those troops, nor were they told to expect their rapid reinforcement.

Maj. Gen. Roy Urquhart, for example, was accurately told that in his sector it was unlikely that "any [enemy] mobile force larger than a brigade group with very few tanks and guns could be concentrated against the airborne troops before relief by the ground forces." But because he was not entitled to receive detailed Ultra intelligence, he was not told what his superiors did know: that a significant part of this force was from Lt. Gen. Willi Bittrich's professional and experienced II SS Panzer Corps.

Obviously, the planners did not pay sufficient respect to the enemy; this was what made men like Sosabowski and Urquhart question the wisdom of the operation. Yet, with heavy hitters such as Churchill, Gen. George C. Marshall (the U.S. Army chief of staff), Eisenhower, Montgomery, Brereton, and Browning all behind Market Garden, it attained unstoppable momentum.

In fact, the Germans were increasingly capable of undermining the Allied plan. One reason for this was the presence of so many extremely able senior commanders in and around the Market Garden area. These included Field Marshal Walther Model, commander of Army Group B, who had recently sited his headquarters in Oosterbeek alongside one of the British 1st Airborne Division's intended routes to Arnhem.

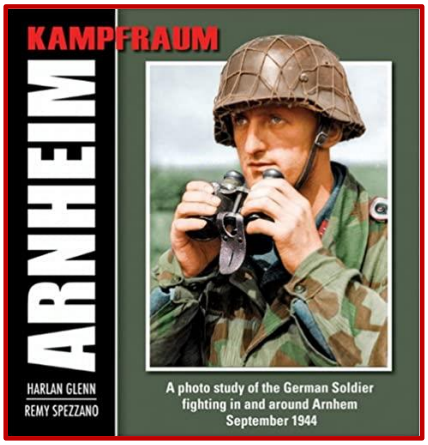
Model had helped to create growing order out of the chaos of early September and was in the process of reinforcing his front. One of his new formations was the First Parachute Army, commanded by the skilful Gen. Kurt Student, which had its headquarters just off the main Eindhoven–Nijmegen highway.

Bittrich's panzer corps was located just twenty-five miles from Arnhem. All three men had developed contingency plans for an Allied attack and ensured that they could counter quickly.

The Allied operation began the morning of September 17, with spectacularly successful daylight insertions of the airborne troops accurately hitting their drop zones and landing zones that afternoon.

Yet their very success actually assisted the German response from the start. Because the troops weren't scattered, the Germans could easily pinpoint where they had hit the ground and make a quick deduction of the likely objectives of the Allied operation. Troops from some SS units that were about to board a train back to Germany for reorganization were summarily stopped and turned around.

"Now we immediately received weapons," SS Cpl Paul Müller remembers. "Everyone got a rifle and ninety rounds of ammunition which was stuffed into our pockets or haversacks, because we no longer had our ammunition pouches, steel helmets, or entrenching tools."



Meanwhile, local field commanders did what they could to stall the Allied airborne forces. SS Maj. Sepp Krafft sent his under-strength SS Panzer Grenadier Training and Reserve Battalion, which had been exercising in the woods near the British drop and landing zones, to immediately block routes into Arnhem.

One of the British units they stopped was the reconnaissance squadron, which had sped off by jeep to capture the bridge at Arnhem ahead of the rest of the 1st Parachute Brigade, approaching on foot.

Trooper Arthur Barlow recalled what happened when his vehicle came under German machine gun fire: "[We] ran to the road verge on the right-hand side of the jeep….The heavy machine gun fire continued. Minns, being more exposed, had his hip shattered and other wounds, and lay in the road bleeding profusely, calling for help. Thomas was hit in the foot, whilst Hasler was hit in both legs and unable to move.…[McGregor] raised himself up on his hands to have a look around and died immediately, falling flat on his face without making a sound, killed by a burst of machine-gun fire in the face and chest."

The success of Krafft's defensive enterprise meant that only a small force of 720 airborne soldiers managed to get through to Arnhem bridge (see related story, "They Stood to Their Guns," p. 62). Urquhart's prospects never recovered from this early blow, and the majority of his division eventually became isolated and surrounded miles from the bridge.

One of the most obvious weaknesses in the Market Garden plan was XXX Corps' reliance on a single road- "Hell's Highway," as the American 101st Airborne Division called it.

Indeed, Maj. Freddie Hennessy, the operations officer of the Guards Armoured Division, which was in the vanguard of the push up the road, compared advancing sixty-four miles on a narrow highway over several major water crossings to "threading seven needles with one piece of cotton, and we only have to miss one to be in trouble."

Numerous ad hoc German battle groups immediately saw the advantage in severing this crucial artery and converged on it in attempts to destroy its bridges. “German machine gun and rifle fire cut through us,” recalled Donald R. Burgett of the American Company A, 1st Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, which took part in the storming of the Wilhelmina Canal crossing at Son soon after landing.

“Several men were hit but we continued on. We covered the ground quickly. Just a few yards to go and the bridge would be ours.…I was staring at the bridge when it suddenly erupted in a flash of flame and black smoke. The air was shattered by one hell of an explosion and the shock scattered those of us who were close to it like rag dolls.”

XXX Corps had found it difficult to gain any momentum from the outset, and the destruction of the bridge at Son slowed them even further. German pressure on the highway increased as the days passed, undeterred by the British flanking corps, which was struggling to make progress. As one American rifleman from the 101st Airborne who had been wounded trying to keep the corridor open wrote to his parents: “Our combat experience started out very easy, but got worse and worse as it went along, until finally on the day I was hit, the Germans counterattacked with vicious artillery support and raised six kinds of hell with us. I was wounded just in time to escape the worst of it.”

These attacks stretched the airborne forces dangerously thin at times, but they failed to permanently cut the highway. “Apparently the enemy had insufficient troops to force a decisive action,” Capt. Robert H. Evans, a company commander in the 327th Glider Infantry, later wrote. “With many small forces, he hit the corridor at several points almost simultaneously. If an action was not almost immediately successful, the units were withdrawn to strike again at another point.” This gave the airborne troops some respite, and XXX Corps staggered on toward Arnhem. British armour eventually crossed the Wilhelmina Canal on the morning of September 19 after a Bailey bridge had been constructed, only to find that the American 82nd Airborne Division had been unable at the same time as intended to seize the road and railroad bridges at the town of Nijmegen from men of the 10th SS Panzer Division.

The 82nd Airborne had been asked to achieve too much with too little. Its commander, General Gavin, had wanted to storm across the wide Waal River in strength on the opening day, but with other objectives pressing, his one “spare” battalion instead conducted the abortive attack. “I was deeply troubled by the possibility of failing to accomplish some of my objectives,” Gavin later admitted. “The perimeter of our endeavours would extend beyond twenty-five miles with the likelihood of major battles being fought at several different points simultaneously.”

On the afternoon of the next day, September 20, the 3rd Battalion of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment finally stormed across the Waal and seized the Nijmegen bridges. It was a perilous endeavour.

As the Guards Armoured Division aimed a barrage of artillery and mortar fire against the Waal’s opposite shore, twenty-six heavily laden small boats took to the river. “German small-arms fire began to intercept the fragile flotilla,” Gavin recalled. “Never having rowed together, the troopers sometimes worked against each other, and the boats were spinning in the river. The German firing steadily increased, heavy artillery fire joining the machine-gun and mortar-fire.…There were many individual acts of courage, many casualties.”

The Anglo-American forces’ success that afternoon concluded with the tanks of the Grenadier Guards rolling across the road bridge. However, with night falling, unreconnoitered ground ahead, and a serious lack of fuel and ammunition, the armour was forced to halt—just eight miles from the Lower Rhine.

The attack was resumed at dawn, but for the dwindling band of British airborne troops at Arnhem bridge who had gallantly been holding on since September 17, it was too late: within a few hours, German forces overran them.

The remainder of the British 1st Airborne Division continued to fight from slit trenches and burning buildings outside Arnhem. Here the battle was not only ferocious but often at close quarters. "We heard a great deal of shouting and prepared ourselves for yet another attempt by the enemy to dislodge us from our house," Staff Sgt. Les Frater said of one German attack. "Over they came, screaming and yelling, and this time they made it to the house. I could see them through the iron grille on the front door and fired up the hallway at point-blank range, working the bolt of my rifle as fast as I could, dodging back behind the wall to reload hastily, and then firing again."

Although there were attempts to reinforce the division with units from the Polish Brigade and XXX Corps, they largely failed. Thus, high on casualties and low on everything required to sustain themselves, some four thousand British and Polish troops were evacuated across the Lower Rhine the night of September 25–26. Market Garden had come to an end.

There is no doubt that Operation Market Garden failed. No matter how close XXX Corps got to Arnhem, the British Second Army did not cross its bridge over the Rhine, and the war in Europe continued into 1945. There were some remarkably courageous acts by units and individuals: indeed, five Victoria Crosses and two Medals of Honor were later awarded. But many argued then and since that all that courage was in vain. When one equates the ground taken (a vulnerable finger pointing toward the Lower Rhine) to the cost (nearly eleven thousand airborne casualties and more than five thousand ground casualties), the outcome of Market Garden looks abject.

"Through inappropriate risk-taking, underestimation of the enemy, the neglect of unpalatable information and a failure of technology," British author Norman Dixon wrote, "military decisions by able brains, at high levels of command, brought down misery and chaos."

Such words raise the question of whether the operation should ever have been mounted. But the majority of the military hierarchy, as well as the airborne troops themselves, were willing and ready to take bold operational risks. With the Germans in retreat, September 1944 was just the time for a daring operation to bring down the final curtain.

Gavin, for one, later reflected, "We knew that the risks were great, but we believed that the battle we were about to fight would lead to the battle that would bring the war to an end." The British prime minister went further in the immediate aftermath of the operation: "The battle was a decided victory….I have not been afflicted by any feelings of disappointment over this and am glad our commanders are capable of running this kind of risk."

Churchill's thoughts would be less cogent if the potential gains that a successful Market Garden offered had not been so great and the operation had not come so close to succeeding. Delays notwithstanding, XXX Corps was within just a few hours of linking up with the small airborne force holding out at Arnhem bridge.

With a little more luck—better weather for example—the operation could have worked despite its planning weaknesses. In other words, the risk became "inappropriate" only in hindsight because Market Garden failed. However, neither Montgomery—who suggested that the operation was "90 per cent successful"—nor the British Official History viewed the operation as a disaster.

The latter argued, "Operation Market Garden accomplished much of what it had been designed to accomplish. Nevertheless, by the merciless logic of war, Market Garden was a failure."

Although these two sources are not without obvious bias, the venture did yield some tangible gains: the Germans, already severely weakened by the Soviets pushing in from the east, were in no position to absorb the eight thousand casualties and equipment losses they suffered as a result of the operation.

Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, the German commander in chief West, was prevented from using his forces to strengthen the defences of their homeland against the Allies. Furthermore, the Germans never reclaimed the proportion of the Netherlands liberated up to the Waal, and that area subsequently became the springboard from which the final western offensive into Germany was launched.

Unfortunately, while Market Garden was a sensibly conceived scheme, the plan was ultimately flawed in too many ways. Warfare is an unforgiving business where mistakes can be cruelly punished; airborne warfare is particularly vulnerable to failure. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering the words of one veteran, Len Wright, who fought at Arnhem bridge: "We wanted and needed Market Garden in 1944.

We knew that there were risks and were willing to take them. Now I know that there were more risks than we were told about back then—but we would have taken them nonetheless."

Airborne Cameramen at Arnhem

The Army Film and Photographic Unit and members of the Public Relations Team flew into Operation Market Garden and came back with a Silver Star awarded to the team leader, Major Roy Oliver. Sadly, one of the team, Major Anthony Cotterell, a former Fleet Street journalist, was to lose his life. Captured by German Forces he was later shot while trying to escape.

The Parachute Regiment's Pegasus Archive records that Major Roy W. R. Oliver, pictured centre left, commanded the Public Relations Team during the Battle of Arnhem.

This unit consisted of himself, as a Public Relations Officer, two BBC civilian broadcasters, Stanley Maxted and Guy Byam, two newspaper journalists Alan Wood of the Daily Express and Jack Smyth of Reuters, two censors (Captains Brett and Williams), three men of the Army Film and Photographic Unit Sergeants Mike Lewis, Dennis Smith and *Gordon Walker,* and four signallers (Butcher, Cull, Hardcastle, and Noon).

For his conduct during the Battle, Oliver was awarded the Silver Star; His citation reads: *By direction of the President, under the provision of AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, the Silver Star is awarded to:*

Major R. W. R. Oliver, British Army, for gallantry in action from 17 September 1944 to 26 September 1944. Major Oliver was in command of the group of correspondents assigned to cover the activities of the First Airborne Division (British) in the airborne invasion of Holland.

He enabled the correspondents to radio their stories to the outside world and, in addition, he made the wireless sets available for operational military messages, since all other sets were rendered useless in the landings. During this time, the party was under considerable enemy fire and Major Oliver was wounded.

In the withdrawal to, and crossing of, the Rhine, he was again wounded and lost his boat, necessitating his swimming the remaining distance, carrying film negatives, still photographs, and radio discs of the operation. His coolness under fire and marked devotion to duty are highly exemplary.

British newspapers reported on 10th June 1945:

Major Roy Oliver, 31-years-old British Regular army P.R.O., who was in charge of the war correspondents at Arnhem, has been awarded the U.S. Silver Star.

The official citation described how Major Oliver enabled correspondents to radio their stories to the outside world. "During this time," it continues, "the party was under considerable enemy fire and Major Oliver was wounded. In the withdrawal to, and crossing of, the Rhine, he was again wounded and lost his boat, necessitating his swimming the remaining distance, carrying film negatives, still photographs, and radio discs of the operation. His coolness under fire and marked devotion to duty are highly exemplary."

Alan Wood, who covered Arnhem for the Daily Express and has also worked in New Guinea and China, told the Newspaper World:

"Oliver is quite unique among P.R.O.s. In my experience a P.R.O. is either the occasional dud who has been weeded out of a fighting unit, or a professional soldier who knows nothing about journalism, or a journalist who knows nothing about soldiering.

Oliver is a professional soldier who has been at Tobruk, who landed on D-Day, went to Arnhem, and has been in almost every tough spot during the war. It gives war correspondents confidence having an old soldier with them. At the same time Oliver is keenly interested in their work and always putting up suggestions for stories they should follow up."

"The job he did at Arnhem must be the most brilliant success a P.R.O. has had during the war. Never before have war correspondents been given the chance of getting out regular despatches under such difficult circumstances. Only on returning to London did I learn how good was the job he did.

No news at all of the First (Airborne) Division got to London or to Corps headquarters through operational signals for two days after we landed. Oliver succeeded in getting his little P.R. wireless set working just before midnight on the day we landed. So, the first two days the only news the Corps Commander, Churchill, Montgomery or anyone else had of how the First was getting on was through the despatches of Stanley Maxted, of the B.B.C., and myself. Later on, his P.R. wireless set was used almost entirely for operational messages."

"Major Oliver has a genius for organisation and a remarkable flair for leadership. I shall never forget the way he put himself at the head of the nondescript line of censors, wireless operators, and unarmed war correspondents and marched us off with as much apparent confidence about getting through as if he were leading a platoon of trained paratroops."

Major Oliver, who is under orders for P.R. duties in the Far East, has twice been mentioned in despatches.

Killed by the SS

Former Daily Express journalist, Major J. Anthony Cotterell was attached to the 1st Parachute Brigade Headquarters during Operation Market Garden.

He was working as a journalist for the Daily Express when he was, rather reluctantly, conscripted into the British Army. Posted to the infantry, he found himself to be wholly unsuited to the life and spent a miserable first year in conventional service.

In June 1941, however, all of this changed when he was recruited into what would become known as the Army Bureau of Current Affairs; a new department of the War Office concerned with Army education.

Anthony began working on a fortnightly booklet, imaginatively entitled *WAR*, which was sent out to all military units. Within a short time, he had become its chief editor and star reporter, and by 1943 he was allowed complete freedom to report the war as he saw fit. Amongst his self-chosen assignments were flying on operations with the USAAF and RAF.

***WAR* detailed various aspects of Army life, amongst which were a number of articles on the Airborne Forces. He had become fascinated with this new wing of the Armed Forces when, in December 1941, a piece appeared in *WAR* on British parachuting, written by Lieutenant-Colonel Flavell, the then commander of the 2nd Parachute Battalion. In October 1943, he completed a parachute course with the firm intention of taking part in an airborne operation at some point in the future.**

When the Normandy landings took place in June 1944, he applied for permission to accompany the 6th Airborne Division but was refused, instead he went ashore with some of the first troops to land on the invasion beaches, and spent almost a month embedded with the 8th Armoured Brigade, travelling as part of a tank crew.

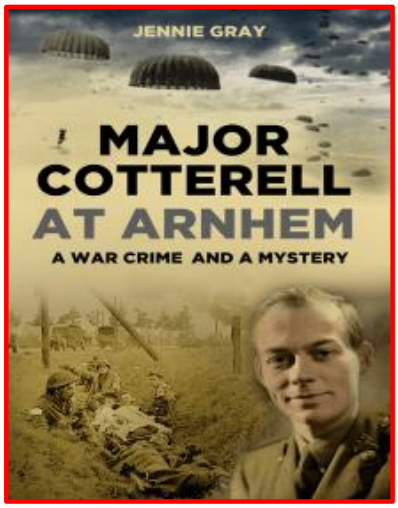
On the 1st September 1944, Anthony secured an attachment to the 1st Airborne Division, and he accompanied 1st Parachute Brigade Headquarters to Arnhem Bridge on the 17th September. During the early hours of Thursday 21st September, having been compressed into a small perimeter and with ammunition all but expended, the survivors were ordered to break out and attempt to reach the remainder of the 1st Airborne Division at Oosterbeek.

The men were organised into two platoons, each of five sections commanded by an officer; Anthony Cotterell was with the section commanded by the Brigade Major Tony Hibbert. Almost everyone involved succeeded in gaining the assembly point, at a convent school 100 yards to the north of the perimeter, and from here each of the sections moved out one at a time, but almost all were captured before much progress was made.

Hibbert led the last section away a few hours before dawn, but it quickly became apparent to him that the Germans had a stranglehold on the town and that there was no way through.

Having advanced no further than the cathedral, 300 yards to the north-west of the bridge, he ordered his men to hide in the back garden of a house. He barricaded most of them inside a bedroom, two more men hid in a tool shed, Major Munford of the Light Regiment shut himself in a wooden crate, whilst Tony and Anthony installed themselves in a coal bin. They were quickly discovered and dragged out.

At 17:30 on Saturday 23rd September, having been held at the temporary POW camp at Velp, Anthony and Tony Hibbert and other captured officers were transported in an open lorry towards Munich. By an extraordinary twist of fate, seated in the same vehicle was Lieutenant Jim Flavell, the 2nd Battalion's Liaison Officer and also the son of Lieutenant-Colonel Flavell, whose 1941 article in *WAR* had inspired Anthony's interest in the Airborne Forces.



As they were about to pass through Brummen, Hibbert and Munford jumped off the lorry as it reduced speed and attempted to escape. Hibbert got away and eventually reached the British lines, but Munford was quickly recaptured.

As they had jumped from the lorry, however, one of the SS guards had panicked and turned his Schmeisser on the others.

A German soldier and four Airborne men were killed outright, and a further two mortally wounded; Anthony was one of the latter. He was treated at a German dressing station, but then disappeared from the record.

He is thought to have been buried with the other casualties from the incident at the General Cemetery in Enschede, but despite various attempts to identify the remains in the grave he was never positively identified. The inscription on his gravestone, 'Buried near this spot', reflects the continued uncertainty.

Jennie Gray is the author of a book, *Major Cotterell and Arnhem: A War Crime and a Mystery,* published by Spellmount.

Red Beret combat camera at Arnhem

Sergeant Gordon "Jock" Walker was a film cameraman attached to the Public Relations Team, of journalists and Army Film and Photographic Unit personnel, which accompanied the 1st Airborne Division to Arnhem. He was a trained member of the Parachute Regiment and had participated in the Invasion of Sicily in 1943. His war time exploits started on the beaches of Dunkirk and also took him to the Western Desert.

Jock is pictured below, centre, with Sgt Mike Lewis, right, who parachuted into Arnhem and the glider- borne Sgt Dennis Smith. This is his Bridge Too Far story….

The Unit was about to move out with the remainder of the 2nd Army in the great chase across Europe as, with their defeat at Falaise and the Americans success in the south, the Germans were in full-scale retreat, and were moving towards the Fatherland faster than a suppository in a constipated behind, when my mates and self were recalled to England for an airborne operation that was coming off shortly.

We picked up a U.K. bound aircraft at a nearby landing strip and eventually arrived back at Pinewood, where we joined another one of our lads who was already there.

We were just told that an airborne job was coming off, no details known, and would be briefed at the Airborne Forces H.Q. at Moor Park, and when we knew what the score was, we would be fitted out with whatever photographic kit we thought we would require, plus a jeep and trailer.

We were briefed three times, once for Paris and once for Maastricht in Holland, but the enemy was retreating too fast for these operations to be mounted, and eventually we were briefed on 'Operation Market Garden' which was the bridge across the Neder Rhine at Arnhem. On paper it was a doddle, maximum of only Brigade opposition and that would be composed of 'clapped out' tanks and second-class infantrymen.

The plan was far seeing; only three bridges stood between our advanced tanks and infantry and Germany, the first two of which would be taken by the two American Airborne Divisions, the 82nd and the 101st, one on each bridge, and we, the British 1st Airborne Division, were to take the final one - at Arnhem, thus leaving the way clear for the 2nd Army to advance in record time. In fact, our part of the operation was to last two days and then we would be relieved. That was the theory!

The lift was planned to take place in three successive days, Sunday first lift, Monday second lift and Tuesday the final one, all being combined Parachute and Glider landings. When we got to our departure airfield we were finally briefed, and shown our exact dropping and landing zones, and I must say that none of us were too happy about the distance these were from the Bridge itself, a matter of seven miles, and in completely unknown territory. However, ours was not to reason why, so as two of us had to fly in a Glider with the jeep and trailer, plus two Royal Signals wireless operators.

These weren't parachutists or even airborne troops, but were two very newly called up, very young lads, who had never heard a shot fired in anger, and had been posted as wireless operators to the Army Public Relations team, which was also going with us (these lads were magnificent, and did their job in the highest ideals of the Signals and, incidentally, the Public Relations wireless link to the U.K. was the only one working during the whole of the action). One bloke was to accompany the parachutists, and this was Sergeant Mike Lewis who was a veteran of the Tunisian campaigns and the most experienced parachutist of the three of us. My mate in the glider was Sergeant Dennis Smith.

At the airfield we filmed some 'lead-in' stuff, troops embarking, close-up of graffiti on the gliders and tugs, etc. then we embarked on our Horsa and off we went to see the wizard.

For us, the journey was uneventful, and mainly boring; we took off at 10.00 hours and it was a beautiful day and my mate, and I spent a lot of time taking film and pictures of the flight.

Before we reached the coast of Holland there was a couple or so gliders down in the drink, how or why I don't know, and after we crossed the coast, a number of dummy parachutists were dropped to fox the enemy. I'll bet a few Jerry soldiers didn't need their number nine pills when they saw them dropping. There was some anti-aircraft fire, not much, as our escorting fighters soon take care of them and the flight continued on.

I am not a happy person in a military glider, the continuous sight of those two tow ropes, stretching from the glider wings to the tail of the tug, were our umbilical cords, cut them and we were useless as of course we had no power of our own; the silence too, broken only by the swishing of air past the fuselage, was a bit unnerving, but it had a serenity of its own, a feeling of being detached from the rest of the fleet and just sailing along on a mat of fleecy cotton wool.

At approximately 1400 hours we were told to stand by for the landing; the glider cast off the ropes and we went into a steep descent, which levelled out into a beautiful landing. Quickly we jumped onto terra firma, and immediately started to film the Para drop.

By a nice bit of luck, we had landed before they arrived and so were able to put the 1st Parachute Brigade and the 1st Airborne Brigade arriving for the bitter fight that was to follow.

After the landings and drop, we retrieved our jeep and trailer and swanned around to see what was happening and we found out that the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Para had gone, hell for leather, for the bridge in their various directions, with the 2nd Battalion going directly through Osterbeek, the 1st Battalion via Ede and Arnhem Road and the 3rd Battalion via the Utrecht-Arnhem road.

The 2nd Battalion, we were to discover later, was the only battalion to get to the Bridge, the other two met with massive opposition in the form of tanks and self-propelled guns and were cut to ribbons en route; without knowing this, we tried to get to the bridge but encountered heavy and accurate fire and hastily retired, and came across Divisional H.Q. who had set up shop in Hartenstein, and from them we discovered what had happened to the Para Battalions.

We added our bit of information, as every little helps to pinpoint the enemy; we had a bite to eat and drink and went to join the South Staffs for the night, so as to be ready to film the arrival of the second drop the next day, the significance of the cut roads to the bridge not having hit us yet.

We left the trailer at H.Q. only taking with us our arms, cameras, and what film we had left, telling the First Aid Post to take whatever blankets etc. they might need, as we had no real use for them.

The night was comparatively quiet and we managed a few hours' sleep until dawn, and we set off for the second drop, which was over the railway line to Arnhem, and joined up with the Border Regiment and the King's Own Scottish Borderers, who were holding the landing zones, having been ordered to do so at all costs and with great ferocity had fought a pitched battle with the enemy, ending up by going in with the bayonet and scattering them like a burst bag of peas. They were well pleased with themselves, and rightly so too.

The landing was due at 1000 hours, but it came, and went, and no aircraft, gliders or anything appeared, and the situation was decidedly 'dodgy' with sporadic shelling, mortaring and sniping. These snipers were the very devil and picked off more of our men than I care to think about. However, we waited and had a number of German fighter's 'strafe' us also for good measure. By about 1500 hours the planes started to arrive, bang into a hail of anti-aircraft fire and machine gun. The scene was horrible, at least two Dakotas were hit and set on fire, the Paras exiting in a hurry, into a hail of tracer and the planes themselves eventually crashing in flames. T

the heath was on fire, Paras were being killed and wounded as they descended, and many a glider hit the deck, out of control. This was the 4th Para with some more South Staffs, and what was left of them formed up and set off for Arnhem, but never got through to the bridge and, in point of fact, the 1st and 4th Para Brigades had almost ceased to exist as a fighting force; this was clear by the third day.

We had re-joined Divisional H.Q. as we had no more film left and offered our services as required. We found out that the General had been missing for a day but had now turned up, after some hair-raising adventures in which Brigadier Lathbury, the 1st Para Commander had been severely wounded and was out of action.

With the terrible reverses that we had suffered and the enormous casualties the plan was to make a large defensive perimeter around the central point of the Hartenstein Hotel which was the divisional H.Q. and to withdraw what troops could be mustered to this perimeter and make a stand, until the 2nd Army could relieve us. By now we had gone 24 hours over the time we were told we should be relieved, and hunger and thirst were beginning to bite very hard.

The rations we carried for these capers were in the shape of two 24-hour packs of concentrated food and chocolate, and a water bottle full of water; only a fool would put anything else in it when going 'dicing' and as many bars of chocolate and packets of cigarettes you could stuff in your jump jacket; a cigarette is a great comforter in times of stress when the thought of dying from cancer seem very remote.

We should be so lucky and also it helps to keep hunger at bay, and nothing comforts a wounded man more if he is capable of smoking it. The three of us pooled what we had got and shared out food and cigarettes, except Mike, who didn't smoke.

The third day dawned and by this time what was left alive and kicking of 10,000 men were defending the perimeter, the remnants of 1st and 3rd Battalions were down by the river, the 2nd was on the Oosterbeek-Arnhem road and the South Staffs by the Church at Osterbeek, who were having a rotten time with snipers. I joined them there early in the morning, and that evening the Germans launched an attack with, I think, three tanks and Sgt Baskeyfield of the South Staffs won a V.C. in the view of many of us, by knocking out two of the tanks and then had his gun knocked out.

Crawling to another gun which was working, but whose crew were dead, he took on the third tank single-handed, which had withdrawn, but paid the penalty by being killed himself. A very brave man amongst many brave men.

The German infantry were attacking meantime, but we gave them stick; the stupid bastards just ran into Vickers and sub-machine gunfire and wave after wave of them were sent to their particular Valhalla.

They were massacred in their scores, the noise of the action was terrific, at such close quarters was it fought, with the ripping sound of Spandau machine-Guns, the stutter of Sten guns and the heavy thumps of the '75's and the Mills bombs, all making their contribution to a massive Death March but in 6/8 time.

The noise to me that stood out above all others was the very reassuring heavy thump, thump, thump of the Vickers, rising above the clash of the battle and the lads who played that particular instrument of death did it as if on a practice range; no panic, no wild bursts, just a steady burst, then another and so on.

The enemy broke, leaving the ground literally piled up with dead and wounded and the cries of 'Wa Ho Mahomet', the airborne battle cry resounded throughout. It was a notable victory but was just a taste of things to come during the following days until we retired. If only I'd had some film for my camera but expecting only a two-day stand, I only had 500 feet, thinking to pick up more when relieved, and that amount had been used up.

How the cookies crumble!

Ah well, that's how the cookie crumbles and on the evening of the fourth day, when things quietened down, it was back to H.Q. to discover that they had had a most fearful mortaring all day, reaching, I was informed, a density of forty plus bombs per hour, causing a lot of casualties. Later that afternoon, about 1700 hours or so, we had an accurate supply drop of ammunition; this was on the 20th September.

On the 21st it was impossible to leave the Hartenstein Hotel area, due to the fact that the enemy made a very determined attempt to break into the perimeter. What with this and the recommencement of the heavy mortaring and shelling it was a wonder any of us lived through it, but we did.

Defending the perimeter, in addition to the Para and the South Staffs, there were elements of REs, RAs, Royal Signals, Glider Pilots, Pathfinders, RASC who fought as hard and viciously as the rest. It was a case of their life or yours and although airborne troops do not require to have their back to the wall in order to fight, this was literally a case of give an inch and we were all done.

The R.A.F. supply planes and their dispatchers were giants among brave men; whenever they came over with supplies (which unfortunately usually fell to the enemy) all the fury of the enemy was directed against them, but steadfastly they flew straight and level through the most fearful 'flak' - the dispatchers at the doors, chucking out the containers, even when repeatedly hit and set on fire, flying on, blazing torches in the sky, until they eventually crashed in flames. What devotion to duty and so sorrowful to watch?

There wasn't a man on the ground that wasn't moved by this display of courage and, in the main, with no benefit to us.

That day, in an attempt to reinforce us, the Polish Para were dropped on the other side of the Rhine, opposite our perimeter but due apparently to lack of boats etc. they had to stay there until the next night, when they joined us, a very small batch of about 200; they too had been cut to ribbons.

Food and water was a definite problem, we managed to collect some apples and vegetables from time to time and at the end of the open space behind the Hartenstein there was a well but collecting water was very 'dodgy' due to these pestilential snipers.

One of the Sergeants and his men, faked up a dummy soldier with a stick, pillow and tin hat, and exposed it every so often. It never failed to draw fire, thus showing where the sniper was and then he would get his 'come-uppance.' He knocked out an awful lot of snipers this way and enabled us to get water from time to time.

If you were wounded it was certain captivity, as the British and German Red Cross agreed to work side by side, but the Germans controlled the hospital, so if you were taken there, into captivity you went. In fact the only jeep that was still running was the one that ferried the wounded to hospital, the enemy respected it and it was back and forth all day long, carrying the wounded to succour, safety and behind barbed wire.

It wasn't all grim, square-jawed stuff, we had some laughs like when a German Psychological unit in a van came up and bellowed through the loud-hailer that we were good blokes and marvellous fighters, and that if we would surrender we would be treated as heroes and all this guff. The answer of course was cat calls, "Up yours from Wigan." "Get knotted," and other military replies and when it came next day somebody fired a P.I.A.T. bomb right into it. They didn't send another one!

Non-stop shelling

And if you were caught in the open during an enemy 'stonk' and dived into a slit trench you had usually to battle with squirrels for possession of it; they couldn't live in the woods and very sensibly occupied slit trenches and were not at all keen on a human being there too. Sharp little teeth they've got.

The 22nd, 23rd and 24th were a repeat of the previous days, non-stop shelling and mortaring, and attack after attack, and every day the perimeter grew a little less until the evening of the 24th we were told we were evacuating as the 2nd Army had at last reached the opposite bank at Driel. We were filthy dirty, beyond tiredness, hunger and sleep were luxuries that belonged to another life, but we weren't broken not by a long way, and we received the news with gladness that it would soon be all over and with sadness at the loss of pals who wouldn't be coming back with us.

Late that night it was our turn to go down to the river and with a guide at the front and with all our 'tails' undone so that each person could hold on to the bloke in front we went, in single file, It was very overcast and pouring with rain and we had our feet muffled with sacking or other rags, and so we reached the river bank.

The Second Army were banging shell after shell into the German lines to cover our withdrawa1 and as we lay in the mud, we hoped that everyone found a target. Eventually we got on a boat, manned by REs and crossed over safely, notwithstanding a bit of mortaring by a suspicious enemy.

Sergeant Smith had been wounded during the fighting but had absolutely refused to go to hospital as he didn't want to be a POW, and wasn't in too good shape when we got to the other side, so as we set off walking towards Nijmegen, carrying our cameras, film and arms.

It became a bit of a strain, so the first house we came to, we forced an entry, found a bed and laid down and went to sleep; seemingly only minutes later I was awakened by a British corporal and two men, poking their bayonets at my rear; they thought we were Germans but were soon disabused of this idea.

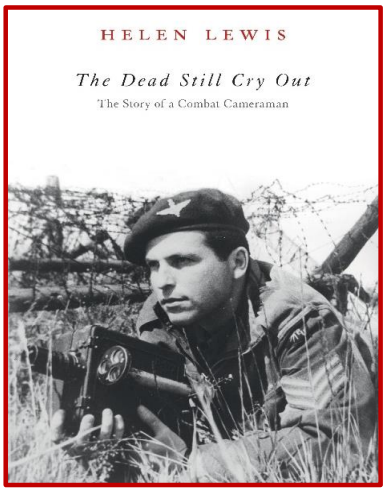
They took us to a First Aid Post where Sergeant Smith had his wound dressed and were given a lift in an ambulance to Nijmegen.

From there into hospital for a day and the following one we flew back in a Dakota to England, as our pictorial record of part of the action was of paramount importance, and as we were the first survivors home, received a tremendous and most embarrassing welcome.

The pictures and film were processed and released to the news reels and newspapers, and were published world-wide and later we were told that at 14 shillings (70p) a print they netted £156,000 for the Ministry of Information, who were our ultimate bosses and as we were part of the Army Public Relations set-up, we naturally came under them.

We were informed that we had each been recommended for the British Empire Medal, but with the inscrutable way that the Army works, we were later told that due to the widespread newspaper publicity we had received the award would not be possible.

I felt very bitter about this, the second time I had been an 'almost'. It is not a question of 'gong chasing' but a regular soldier's career will often be influenced by what he wears on his chest, and soldiering was my life and I had been cheated, not once, but twice- So Be It!



After a couple of days rest we were given a week's leave, during which I paid one of my infrequent visits to my home and parents, who were pleased to see me and made quite a fuss which I must admit I didn't feel displeased about and, at the end of the week, returned to Pinewood from where we re-joined our unit in Holland.

An atrocity that will never be forgotten

The story of Sgt Mike Lewis, a Sydney born, Australian, has been told by his daughter Helen in her book, The Dead Still Cry Out. Mike 's experiences at Bergen-Belsen stayed with him for the rest of his life. He told Dr. Fred McGlade author of The History of the British Army's Film and Photographic Unit of the Second World War:

We were told that the Germans had a camp ahead with what they called political prisoners. It seemed a bit vague, but it seemed safer than following the front up. We drove up in a jeep, through dense pinewoods to a wired gate, wooden gate I think it was. And that place was Belsen.

"There were people standing behind the wire pressing their faces against the wire . . . eating us up with their eyes. They were not political prisoners; this was a concentration camp. And they couldn't believe their eyes at our khaki colour and our British accents. And one of them said in German… and I understood… No, I think I said to them...and we began speaking...and I said that I was Jewish and one of them said, in a state of wonder, you are…and you are free?"

The pits were crammed with bodies, from babies to old men through all ages, mostly without clothes. There was a stench of human excrement and death and they lay there starved. It was a terrible sight.
There was a German medical doctor there and a Brigadier from the RAMC came up and he was so frustrated he grabbed the German by the throat and said, "You're a doctor and you allowed things like this to happen?" He had to be pulled away. The massive scale of death and stench and what happened to people.

I think I was too perhaps we all were. overwhelmed by feelings to think clearly about it. The rations we brought in had to be doled out carefully, these people were starving, and they couldn't eat too much. They couldn't manage it. Something had changed for me after I had seen the camp. I'd seen terrible things in the war…to have treated these people like this … there were so many theories and reasons as to who was responsible… everybody seemed to point the finger around until the finger came around in a circle.

It became difficult to bury the dead, so a bulldozer was brought in. Sometimes the bulldozer didn't catch the bodies cleanly and split them open the smell was terrible. I soaked my handkerchief with petrol and put it over my mouth and I couldn't stand the smell of petrol. I didn't know whether to try and bear the smell of petrol or take it off and stand the smell of the dead. I was glad to leave the camp."

The AFPU maintained a presence at Belsen until 21 May 1945 when the camp was burnt to the ground. The sergeant cameramen of the AFPU gathered 33 rolls of film and more than 200 photographs at the Bergen-Belsen camp, no other country's cameramen or war correspondents produced such a comprehensive record of this event as the AFPU. These images are the most influential record of Nazi concentration camps and they ensure that the atrocity will never be forgotten.

Arnhem: Ten Days in the Cauldron

By Stuart Crawford, guest reviewer to UK Defence Journal. Stuart Crawford is a defence analyst and commentator and former army officer.

There have been many accounts written on the Battle of Arnhem, that "glorious defeat" suffered by the British 1st Airborne Division in September 1944 during the Second World War. Best known might possibly be Cornelius Ryan's *A Bridge Too Far,* which spawned the eponymously titled film starring Sean Connery and a host of others. Books by Maj Gen John Frost (who was there) and Anthony Beevor are also well known.

But where Iain Ballantyne's book, *Ten Days in the Cauldron,* published on the 75th anniversary of the ill-fated assault from the sky, differs is in the telling of the well-known saga not from the strategic perspective followed by other authors but through the testimonies of those who were, if you like, at the coalface of the battle, soldiers and civilians alike.

So, we hear the personal testimonies of people like Captain Peter Fletcher of the Glider Pilot Regiment, or 19-year-old Private Frank Newhouse, or the remarkable story of Dutch civilians Frans de Soet and Jan Loos, trapped in cellars in the middle of the fighting. This brings a refreshing immediacy to the tale.

Interestingly, the first chapter of Ballantyne's book is nothing to do with Arnhem; it is an account of the famous *coup de main* operation which captured the two bridges across the River Orne and the Caen Canal on the night of 5th/6th June 1944, the opening act of D Day. This remarkably audacious operation by D Company, 2nd (Airborne) Battalion, the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, was known as Operation Deadstick and paved the way for British forces exiting Sword Beach on D Day.

Operation Market Garden, launched in September 1944 and of which the Battle of Arnhem was part, was a hundred times bigger than Deadstick and could hardly be described as a *coup de main* operation. What persuaded the normally cautious and cautious Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, commander of the 21st Army Group (2nd British Army and 1st Canadian Army), to go for a highly risky and ambitious operation like Market Garden is beyond the general scope of this book, but go for it he did. Clearly, he was persuaded that it was a risk worth taking.

Britain's 1st Airborne Division has only been used in its various constituent parts up to that date, not as a whole formation. It had been held in reserve whilst the 6th Airborne Division completed the Normandy landings. 1st Airborne had been stood up, and then stood down, for numerous operations – sometimes after they had boarded the transports – and there was a genuine fear among commanders that the troops "might go off the boil".

They need not have worried on that score. Despite the stop/start nature of their previous experiences, it's quite clear that the Division was at the top of its game when it landed in Holland. Just as well, because it landed amongst elite Waffen SS troops who were recuperating having been mauled in the race across France that eventually followed D Day. As we all now know, the airborne soldiers were more than equal to their opponents but sadly wanting in heavy equipment, and that in the end is what decided the matter. The British XXX Corps couldn't get to them in time.

One constant theme in the book is the Division's poor or non-existent communications once they got on the ground – radios were either lost, not working, or incompatible. We learn from Major Tony Deane-Drummond, who at the tender age of 27 was second-in-command of Divisional communications, that they had more or less known that they would lose comms with the brigades when they left the Landing Zones.

And that's exactly what happened, so the Divisional Commander, Maj Gen Urquhart, right, felt compelled to leave his HQ in an attempt to find out what was happening on the ground.

Urquhart gets some criticism from the author for this, but the General was caught between a rock and a hard place. If he had stayed at his HQ, he would have had no idea how events were unfolding at brigade level, but by leaving to see for himself his HQ could not contact him for decisions. Ballantyne calls his perambulations "a wild goose chase", but what else could he have done?

At the other end of the rank scale we hear of 19-year-old Private Frank Newhouse of the 10th Parachute Battalion, part of their anti-tank platoon and a PIAT (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank) operator. Newhouse is called into action twice to stalk enemy tanks and succeeds in driving them off. The third time he is called upon things do not go so well; he is badly wounded by shrapnel and evacuated to the dressing station.

I found the book pacey – and sometimes breath-taking – to read, and I finished it in one go. A couple of maps help to orientate the reader to the action, although arguably for the younger and/or non-military reader a larger scale map of the north west Europe strategic context might have been helpful too. There's also a useful glossary explaining military acronyms for the uninitiated and appendices looking at some aspects of the debacle in more detail.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this account of the Arnhem battle, adding if you like a trench level perspective to those other accounts written from more senior, and sometimes more detached, point of view. Compulsory reading, of course, for past, present and future members of the Parachute Regiment and thoroughly recommended for military historians of all ages. A really good read.

Arnhem: Ten Days in the Cauldron is by Iain Ballantyne. Agora Books, ISBN 978 19130 09924 4, 336 pages, £9.99 (paperback).

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Although he has written several naval history books, including on the Second World War and the Cold War, Iain Ballantyne- well known as a speaker at Pen & Sword Club events - has during the course of his career as a journalist, editor and author also covered the activities of land forces. Those assignments took him to Kuwait, Oman, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, the Czech Republic, Latvia and Hong Kong, sometimes during times of conflict.

Iain has visited WW2 battlefields in company with those who fought there as young men, while also spending hours in conversation with Arnhem veterans. 'Arnhem: Ten Days in The Cauldron' is Iain's second title for Agora Books, following on from 'Bismarck: 24 Hours to Doom' (2016). His other recent books include 'Hunter Killers' (Orion, 2013

Commented [Mike Pete1]:

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Take a Fresh Look at the Longest Day

Sand and Steel: The D-Day Invasions and the Liberation of France. Peter Caddick-Adams. Oxford University Press. 928 pages.

By Col. Cole C. Kingseed, U.S. Army retired **is a professor of history.**

THE 75th ANNIVERSARY of D-Day, June 6, 1944, will likely herald a number of excellent histories commemorating the events of what is arguably the most significant day in Western civilization during the 20th century. Foremost of these from the other side of the Atlantic is Peter Caddick-Adams' Sand and Steel.

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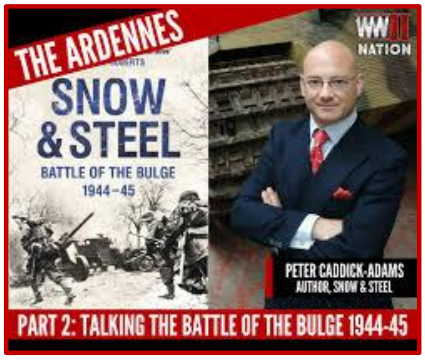
Caddick-Adams is a lecturer in military history at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. An accomplished historian, he is the author of Monte Cassino: Ten Armies in Hell and Snow and Steel: The Battle of the Bulge, 1944—45. Concurrently, he pursued a second career in the UK Regular and Reserve Forces, was commissioned in 1979 and joined the Reserves in 1985 as a member of Media Operations Group (V)



He has extensive experience of various war zones, including the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. During 1996-7 he was the official NATO Historian in Bosnia, based in Sarajevo, and was also the UK Historian during the Iraq War of 2003, based in Qatar and Iraq University.

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Caddick-Adams is at his best describing the lesser-known aspects of D-Day such as the Allied build-up, the role of deception, and logistics.

He opines that the Allied deception plan named Operation Fortitude, with its emphasis on fictional armies, double agents and deceptive radio traffic, stood in sharp contrast to Germany's "stove piping" of intelligence.

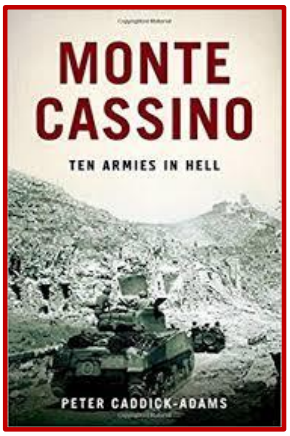
Challenging the conventions of history, Caddick-Adams also posits that the German meteorologists were equally proficient as those in the Allied camp, but Allied weather mapping was superior, being drawn from more sources. Fortunately for the Allied planners, the German High Command failed to coordinate forecasting from the Luftwaffe, Kriegsmarine (navy) and Heer (army).

The heart and soul of Sand and Steel, however, is the drama played out on the five beaches, codenamed Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. Caddick-Adams combines official unit histories and personal narratives to compare the American amphibious landings at Utah and Omaha.

He cites Maj. Gen. Thomas Handy, who he calls the director of operations in the War Plans Division, who reported that "we all thought Utah was going to be more of a problem than Omaha." But the performance of the untested 4th Infantry Division under Brig. Gen. Teddy Roosevelt Jr.'s inspired leadership incurred far fewer casualties than the 1st Infantry Division that landed at Omaha.

Caddick-Adams states that most military historians are incorrect when they assess that the German 352nd Infantry Division stationed behind the American beaches was a crack unit with a strength of 13,000. The German division was formed only in September 1943 from divisions that had been decimated on the Eastern Front and, in the words of one of its soldiers, was "a thrown together mob." Approximately 50 percent of the officers lacked combat experience and the NCO ranks were short by nearly a third.

Caddick-Adams also takes umbrage with the interpretation of the U.S. Army's official narrative, Cross Channel Attack, and Ryan's The Longest Day, on the Ranger assault on Pointe du Hoc. Ryan classified the action as heroic but futile because the cliffside gun emplacements were empty, while the official account recognized that the guns had been moved inland but minimized the effort to destroy them.



The salient point, Caddick-Adams notes, is that "the cannon, wherever they might have been, were useable, supported by trained artillerymen, well-stocked with ammunition, and thus posed a serious threat to the invasion."

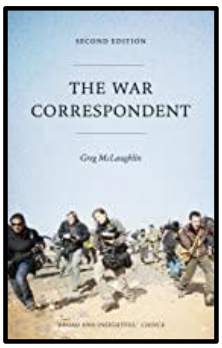
Why have so many historians been misled in their interpretations of D-Day? Caddick-Adams contends that accounts of the amphibious landings, particularly at Omaha, "tend to be land-centric—for this is where most of the tales of derring-do came from.

Yet, oft-overlooked, is the fact that the key enablers [of American success at Omaha Beach and Pointe du Hoc] were the five-inch guns of the fleet destroyers."

Though his examination of the British/Commonwealth amphibious landings lacks the detailed analysis of the American zone, Caddick-Adams has made a monumental contribution to our understanding of D-Day.

To stress the importance of Allied solidarity in the current political environment, the author reminds us that Sand and Steel is not a flag-waving exercise to tout the importance of any one country's efforts over those of the other Western powers. On that day, in the words of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, "there was only one nation—Allied."

It wasn't journalism, at all!



THE WAR CORRESPONDENT by Greg Mclaughlin, senior lecturer in media and journalism at the University of Ulster in this revised edition is essential reading for students and researchers of conflict news. It substantially updates the original, ending with an extended section on the return of history and ideology to the reporting of international conflict and interviews with prominent war correspondents including John Pilger, Robert Fisk, Mary Dejevsky and Alex Thomson. Published by Pluto Press (2016)

The following extract Covers World War 22. With Stephen Bake, Greg has also written The Propaganda of Peace and The British Media and Bloody Sunday.

WAR CORRESPONDENTS during the Second World War were known in the armed services as 'warcos'. By 1944, as the allies pushed the Germans out of France and Belgium, there were 150 warcos from Britain and the US all filing stories to 278 million readers worldwide 'like the scriptwriters of a long running soap opera'.

They were fitted out in officers' uniforms, including caps, Sam Browne belts and arm badges with the gold letter 'C' for correspondent. They were forbidden to carry arms, although if captured and held as prisoners of war they could assume the status of captain.

However, an American press officer remarked that when at large the warcos 'assumed the rank of field marshal...and recognised no conventions. The warcos had come to expect good treatment from the military without considering the cost in terms of professional integrity and independence.

Alan Moorehead, of the Daily Express, admitted that 'Like the children of very wealthy parents it seemed quite natural to us that we should occupy the best houses and hotels, that we should have - at our command cars, motor launches, servants and the best food'. The big question mark, of course, hung over the parents. What would their attitude be to their spoilt and unruly children? One of indulgence or discipline?

It is instructive to compare the British approach to control of the media with that of Germany in the early stages of the Second World War and then to compare both these with the new, public relations approach taken by the United States army when it eventually entered the war in 1941.

In Germany, all agencies of communication were brought under the direct control of the state so that journalists were conscripted along with film and radio producers, printers, artists, writers, and photographers, into the ranks of the Propaganda Division of the Army. They were given basic military training and were sent to the front to fight when necessary. But their principal role was as propaganda shock troops: they were to help to keep up morale on all fronts, and to damage enemy morale.

The German approach to neutral correspondents, especially Americans before the US entered the war, was rather more seductive. Its Ministry of Propaganda under Goebbels facilitated neutral correspondents through its Foreign Press Department. They were given a range of perks and privileges (extra rations, petrol expenses and special exchange rates, among others) and a free hand to report what they wanted.

Correspondents intimidated

However, in practice, all communications out of the German theatre of operations were carefully monitored and journalists who filed negative copy were intimidated or even arrested for spying.

As Knightley suggests, this was an easy charge to make in wartime where the line between journalism and espionage is a rather fine one; its effect was to encourage self-censorship. Still, the conditions experienced by foreign correspondents in Berlin in the early stages of the war were much more favourable than those prevailing behind Allied lines and it was little wonder that over 100 journalists based themselves there.

The British approach was just as effective but far from seductive or subtle. The government used the Emergency Powers Act to censor all public and private communication out of the country that was thought to be of use to the enemy. The media — which now included radio as well as the press — were subjected to the same reporting restrictions as in the First World War. A limited number of correspondents were allowed to the front under the watchful eye of a senior Ministry of Information minder, called 'Eyewitness' as in the First World War.

They were subjected to strict procedures of accreditation and essentially became part of the BEF. Furthermore, their dispatches from the front were censored so they would not undermine morale at home. Four British correspondents accompanied the BEF to the Maginot Line in France where they worked in a pool system. The system of media control in France was so stringent that by the time a correspondent's dispatch reached the newspaper it was barely news anymore.

Dearth of Hard News

Such was the dearth of hard news and skilful media management from the Ministry of Information, The Daily Express complained that Britain would need to launch a leaflet drop on itself to inform its citizens about the course of the war so far. Its correspondent O. D. Gallagher suggested that British Army public relations was so ineffective that it would be better to adopt the German system instead. After pressure from the military, Gallagher was recalled from the front and sent around Britain to report on civil defence arrangements.

The approach of American reporters to British censorship was to fight it. Ben Robertson, of the New York paper PM, was covering a dogfight between German and British planes mid-channel and reported the loss of three Spitfires to seven Messerschmitt’s.

But one of the censors on duty in the Ministry of Information struck out the references to British losses. Robertson took exception and appealed upwards, eventually to the Minister himself, Alfred Duff Cooper, who agreed to let it through.

For Robertson, the main obstacle was not so much the system in place as the individual censor, often lowly ranked and poorly paid, and quite unwilling to stray from the rules.

Robertson and his compatriot colleagues were used to a different culture of information and expected openness and public relations skills from their military. The US army saw public relations and news management as a vital part of overall strategy; as General Dwight D. Eisenhower put it to a meeting of US newspaper editors, 'Public opinion wins war'

Considerable resources were afforded to the job of accommodating and controlling the burgeoning demands the media were making for information about the latest developments in the war.

Military officers became adept at handling journalists and catering to their professional requirements. The concern was to strike a working balance between necessary censorship and good public relations: to bring reporters on side and accommodate their needs as much as possible; to give them good stories and pictures; and to be mindful of the impressions of the military journalists would bring back home after the war.

Eisenhower told reporters that it was 'a matter of policy [that] accredited war correspondents should be accorded the greatest possible latitude in the gathering of legitimate news' and that 'Public Relations Officers and Conducting Officers give...war correspondents all reasonable assistance'. Of course, the power to define what 'legitimate news' was vested with the military. American reporters were subjected to censorship, but they were allowed easy access to the front, accompanied always by a public affairs officer.

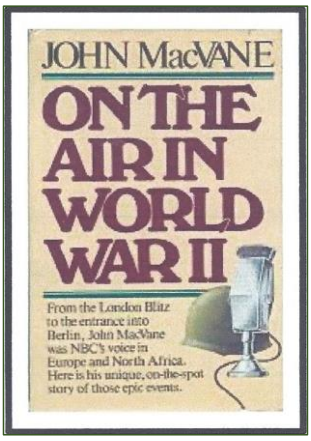
Reporters from other countries, including Britain, envied the facilities offered to the American press corps. American field commanders were more open with reporters, British commanders more suspicious.

American reporters were treated as active officers and given room and equipment to do their job, including the services of a press officer; while British reporters were watched closely at all times by a duty escorting officer and were subject to a raft of reporting restrictions and censorship procedures.

Braestrup notes that the US Army allowed journalists in on the planning of major operations such as the D-Day landings and both parties got to know each other quite well. 'The journalist had time to understand the problem and the plan — and hence gain some basis for later assessments of what actually took place'.

The amphibious landings by the US army in Europe and the Pacific were 'set-piece affairs', well planned in advance to include the accommodation of a select number of journalists.

Just before the Normandy landings, reporters based at Army headquarters were assured that they would be well looked after by the Public Relations division, which would offer them 'the very best in information and communication.' They were encouraged to see the Public Relations Officer as 'true friends', some of whom were reporters themselves and who knew a good news angle.



The public relations strategy did not quite work in practice when the invasion finally went ahead. The contingent of reporters with US forces was small and severely stretched. Reporters found themselves isolated and unable to access communications facilities. John McVane of NBC remarked on 'All the vast public relations preparations and only a lieutenant there to help us' when he tried to report on the Omaha beach landing.

The treatment of journalists at the Normandy landings was not flawless but it was a great improvement on earlier operations, such as the disastrous raid on Dieppe when reporters were largely kept in the dark, given little or no information and subjected to unreasonable censorship.

It was also true that improved military public relations translated into better or more extensive coverage of the war by the American news media. The Asian and Pacific theatres were not well covered at all simply because there were not enough reporters to cover every battle. Important battles such as the now famous 'Battle of the Bulge' at Bastogne in December 1944 went unreported by American correspondents.

This was not to say that all sections of the British armed services were lacking in public relations skills. The British army in the North African theatre was taking a very different, more media friendly approach. For the British army, the North African campaign was a chance to shine against the enemy in apparently wide-open and empty spaces without having to worry too much about civilian casualties.

Furthermore, it distracted from their own deficiencies in the European theatre of war where it was becoming apparent that defeat could only be averted by American intervention — both financial and military. The war in the desert also appealed to the warcos. When the offensive began, in December 1940, six reporters accompanied the British armoured brigades. Within a year and a half, there were 92 of them, and more arriving by the day.

Field Marshal Montgomery was a charismatic and dynamic military leader and appreciated the value of a friendly and amenable press corps for self-promotion and propaganda in his personal duel with the German Field Marshal Rommel.

He went so far as to regard journalists as elements of his staff. BBC correspondent Frank Gillard, left, remembers 'the kind of relationship which could develop in this war between a war correspondent and the commander-in-chief and says that it was 'crucially important to a correspondent that he should be recognised and trusted as a member of the Army family, even though he could never allow the army to use or manipulate him.

This delicate relationship was greatly strengthened if it was seen that the correspondent was approved of in the top ranks of command'. Duly approved of, and some with egos greatly inflated, the warcos saw little problem with this and some even considered giving up the job to enlist. They reported the desert campaign as a romantic adventure in which the British triumphed and where even the enemy displayed chivalry and military greatness.

Yet for all the public relations, few journalists ever got close enough to the North African frontlines to witness a single tank battle. Alan Moorehead, of the Daily Express, recalls that they 'were simply conscious of a great deal of dust, noise and confusion'.

No room for women

Furthermore, the PR approach did not extend to the few women correspondents accredited in the second world war and who turned up to report the action in Northern Africa. Army command barred women reporters from working in active combat zones and were especially irked whenever they caused a fuss and made difficult demands for equality with their male colleagues. The head of the British Army's Press Division, Lieutenant Philip Astley, wondered why women reporters could not be content with special 'visitor status' and segregated facilities.

Although journalists soon realised the implications of censorship during the Second World War, few if any confronted the system. They accepted it because they thought the situation would change for the better or that the war would soon be over. The criticisms and reservations were saved or their post-war memoirs when it was too late to have any real effect. A Reuters correspondent admitted that journalists were simply propagandists for their governments, mere cheerleaders: 'It wasn't good journalism', he said. 'It wasn't journalism at all'.

Lieutenant Leo Gradwell and the improbable voyage of HMS Ayrshire

I ONLY HEARD THIS story for the first time recently, and it deserves sharing. In June 1942 RNVR Lt Leo Gradwell was in command of the HMS Ayrshire, a small (roughly 500 tons) converted fishing trawler forming part of the anti-submarine screening force for Admiralty convoy PQ-17 departing for Arkhangelsk in the soviet union with much needed war supplies on June 27th 1942.

Arctic convoys at this time had to be concerned not only with Luftwaffe and U boat attacks but also the attentions of major German surface units, including the Tirpitz.

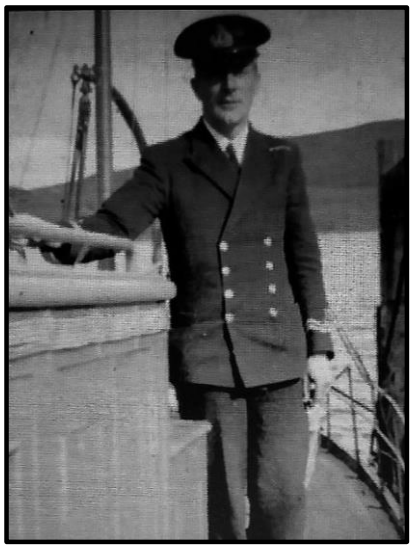
The convoy therefor had a heavy escort force following it in addition to a light close escort of destroyers, corvettes and trawlers such as the Ayrshire. However, the heavy escort fell behind just as luck would have it, that air reconnaissance of German bases was prevented by bad weather.

On July 3rd, a reconnaissance plane finally made it to Trondheim, home of the Tirpitz found to the admiralty's horror that the Tirpitz had gone, as well as it's cruiser screen. With a large raiding force at sea, and unable to know precisely where it was and the heavy escort force too far away to reach the convoy in time, an order was given to scatter the convoy.

What followed was largely a disaster, the Tirpitz never showed up, the Germans having thought the convoy was bait for a trap and turned away, and the scattered merchant ships were easy prey for both bombers and U boats.

This is where the remarkable story of Lieutenant Leo Gradwell and his trawler begins. With the convoy ordered to scatter he decided to head directly north towards the pack ice east of

Svalbard and persuaded three of the scattering freighters to follow him. The Panamanian registered "Troubadour", the "Ironclad" and the United states registered "Silver Sword".



None of the three ships or their tiny escort had charts for this area, since it was well off the planned convoy route, and so Lt Gradwell had to navigate their course using only a Sextant and a copy of The Times World Geographic Pocket Book. On reaching the pack ice, the unlikely flotilla became stuck fast in the ice unable to move.

Lt Gradwell took overall command as the senior naval officer present and organised the ships to defend themselves.

Taking stock, it was discovered that the Troubadour was carrying a cargo of bunkering coal and white paint. Lt Gradwell ordered the paint supplies opened and soon all four vessels were painted white, with white sheets over the decks to camouflage them from Luftwaffe bombers.

He also ordered the freighters to move around their deck cargo of Sherman tanks into defensive rings pointing outwards with their main guns loaded turning them into improvised gun turrets.

After several days stuck fast the camouflage proved effective, in that they were never spotted or attacked.

Finally, upon breaking free of the ice Lt Gradwell lead his three merchant ships across the Barents sea to the Matochkin Straight where they were met by a force of Soviet navy corvettes who accompanied the rag tag convoy to the port of Archangel, arriving on July 25th.In September that year, Lt Leo Gradwell was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in saving the three merchantmen, and would later command a larger ASW ship, the converted whaler HMS Thirlmere. He survived the war and returned to his pre-war law career. He ended his career as a Magistrate, and died in November 1969, aged 70.

Secrets of much-loved wartime cartoonist Giles revealed

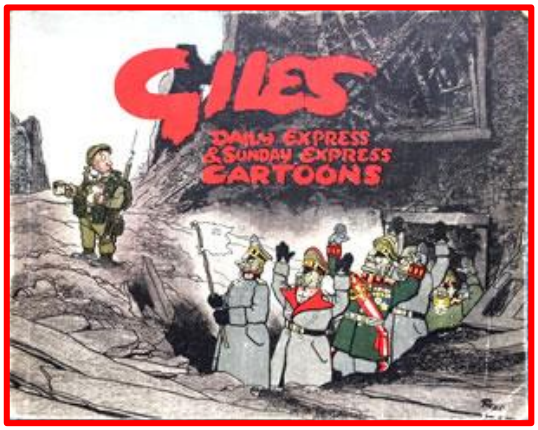
By Maev Kennedy, The Guardian

IN SEPTEMBER 1943, when the readers of the left-wing Sunday newspaper Reynolds News badly needed cheering up – with a long, cold, dark winter ahead and years of war and rationing to come – the paper lost its star cartoonist, Carl Giles. The shock was greater because the lifelong socialist had decamped to the Tory peer Lord Beaverbrook's Express.

More than 100 of the cartoons that had kept the Reynolds News readers laughing, including many of heroic Russians such as an amiable Joseph Stalin propping up a bar, or a doughty little peasant woman bringing in a clump of roped-up captured German soldiers – have been collected for the first time in Giles's War, edited by Tim Benson, an expert on the history of the British political cartoon.

He has also discovered that Giles's repeated insistence that he had been headhunted by the Express was a lie: it was the cartoonist who had touted his skills around Fleet Street.

"He obviously felt guilty about it, particularly leaving the paper which had given him his break as a national cartoonist for a paper like the Express," Benson said. "He referred to it himself as 'a Judas act' – but he repeated the claim that he had eventually been unable to resist the offers from the Express, and he got colleagues to back up that version of events. But the truth was all there in his archive. It's amazing that he kept the correspondence."



Giles, who described himself as "a Bentley-driving socialist" even wrote that "a multiplying of salaries did not interest me greatly" but multiply them he did.

He started at the Express at just under £1,000 a year, almost four times his Reynolds salary, and within a year that would be multiplied fourfold again, to £3,900.

Much of the story was missing from his official biography by Peter Tory, commissioned for the Express. The two men loathed one another and Tory, who died in 2012, described it as his "worst and most boring assignment". For obvious reasons he left out another of Giles's job perks. The cartoonist was very happily married to his first Cousin Joan Clarke, but also had a mistress – and, according to Benson's research, it was the Express that paid for the room they regularly took at the Savoy.

Giles would work for the Sunday and Daily Express for more than 45 years, regularly voted the nation's favourite cartoonist. The annuals, still being published 22 years after his death, repeatedly topped the bestseller lists.

The wartime cartoons for both Reynolds and the Express are among his most political. Benson says he was a hopeless caricaturist, who got by with Hitler with a small moustache, Stalin with a huge moustache, and Mussolini as a blob, but his genius was as a draughtsman, and for portraying the war from the viewpoint of the little man or woman, often an authority-loathing but heroic bumbler, making tea while shells whistled past.

Within a year there was an extraordinary development in his career. Turned down for army service because a motorbike accident in his teens had left him blind in one eye, he managed to get sent to the front as a war correspondent cartoonist.

He was present at the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and said the memories haunted him every day for the rest of his life – including a disconcerting encounter with the camp commander, Josef Kramer, who turned out to be a great admirer.

Benson, who runs a political cartoon gallery in west London, almost abandoned the project when he discovered that although Giles's own archive was safe in the British cartoon archive at the University of Kent, transferred from the V&A, most of the war years Reynolds News was missing from the British Library newspaper archives. He then found a complete set in the JB Priestley archive at the University of Bradford, and the book, published this month by Random House, was on again. The archive revealed another Giles lie: his cartoons had never been cut down to make way for more editorial in the early war years, as he had claimed.

Some Giles stock jokes vanished when he moved to the Express, said Benson, as the cracks about bloated capitalists making a handsome profit out of the war were dropped.

Reynolds News readers were heartbroken to lose him, and the archive contains their letters and even a poem: “Laski and Driberg, Brailsford and Bullett/Excellent writers with differing styles/ We read them with profit, enjoyment and fervour/But tell me oh why have you robbed us of Giles?”

Note from the Editor:

All stories and ideas are welcome. The next edition topic which be VJ Day

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