Arnhem 1944

The Airborne Battle, 17–26 September

Martin Middlebrook

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ARNHEM 1944

The Airborne Battle, 17–26 September

MARTIN MIDDLEBROOK

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Introduction

Arnhem – it was the last major battle lost by the British Army, lost not by the men who fought there but by the overconfidence of generals, faulty planning and the failure of a relieving force given too great a task. If the operation of which Arnhem formed a part had been successful, the outcome of the war and the history of post-war Europe would have been greatly altered. Yet is it worth another book? I had fulfilled all my literary ambitions by researching and writing thirteen full-length books and was ready to retire from that laborious craft when Peter van Gorsel, head of Penguin's Dutch office, asked me to write a book on Arnhem for the fiftieth anniversary in 1994. It was the first time that my publishers had requested a book; all previous subjects had been my choice. I eventually agreed for several reasons. I had not previously researched and written about the British Army in the Second World War and had not previously done any work in Holland; so two fresh fields were opened up to me. I also felt that the fighting in and around Arnhem had still not been described in the detail that it merited.

The preparations have followed my standard procedure. First was the study of prime source documents, not always complete in this case because so few men returned from the battle to write up unit war diaries. But the Airborne Forces Museum at Aldershot has a bulging archive of Arnhem reports built up over the years, and I was most fortunate in being allowed to take home the entire collection for a careful study. Similarly, Dr Adrian Groeneweg and the Airborne Museum at Oosterbeek have also been most diligent in providing help. In addition, I have benefited from the research which several members of the post-war generation in Britain and Holland have carried out; these will be acknowledged in due course but I must mention Jan Hey, a Dutchman who analysed the registers of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to produce

a most useful publication, *Roll of Honour: The Battle of Arnhem, 17–26 September 1944*,[1] which lists the fatal casualties by units. The War Graves Commission registers are freely available for such research, but Jan Hey has added the invaluable information of the original 'field burial' locations before the remains were concentrated into post-war cemeteries.

I then set out to contact as many men as possible who had taken part in the battle – always the most interesting part of my work. A total of 501 men eventually provided their contributions, 156 by personal interview, the remainder by correspondence. Some of the men were regular contributors to Arnhem authors, and their names appear in other books, but hundreds of men have never told their stories, and much new material became available. One man in New Zealand spent eleven days preparing a detailed map and twenty-eight pages of laboriously handwritten notes. Another man who was an officer at Arnhem stressed, with his notes: 'Here rests no hero but the remains of a once young man who was scared out of his wits at the violence and ferocity of dirty little battles in dirty little corners of which the world knew nothing nor ever will.'

A visit to Holland proved most rewarding. I needed to study the ground where the troops landed and on which actions were fought; fortunately, most of the locations are little changed except for the road-bridge area in Arnhem. I was also able to interview some of the Dutch people who were involved in 1944; I will never forget the help and hospitality shown to me by these people. I would normally have travelled to Germany to talk to the German soldiers but did not do so for practical reasons. A new book became available while I was carrying out my research, written by Robert Kershaw, a serving officer of the Parachute Regiment who was attached to the German Army for three years during which he researched and wrote up Operation 'Market Garden' from the German side. There was no way that I could improve on this new work, and I will devote most of my book to fresh material from the British and Dutch sides.[2]

[1] Published by the Society of Friends of the Airborne Museum, Oosterbeek, 1986.

[2] Robert Kershaw's book is *It Never Snows in September*, Crowood Press, Marlborough, Wilts, 1990.

The subject of the book is clear – all aspects of the fighting in and around Arnhem but not of the wider Operation 'Market Garden'. The units involved will be the 1st British Airborne Division, the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade Group, and the glider pilot, RAF and USAAF squadrons which carried the airborne men to Holland and, in the case of the RAF, then suffered so grievously in attempting to succour them by dropping supplies. The only ground troops who will be invited to this 'airborne party' will be the 4th Dorsets, who crossed the Rhine towards the end of the battle, and the British and Canadian Royal Engineers, who evacuated the airborne survivors across the river. The geographical area of the battle will be that part of Holland around the communities of Arnhem, Oosterbeek, Wolfheze, Renkum and Driel.

There are no major mysteries or dramatic disclosures about Arnhem – I am not a revisionist historian – and the strategic background will be set in as brief a manner as possible so that I can devote maximum space to a description of the units which went to Arnhem and of the actual fighting. My main intention will be to describe the action in as much detail as possible and with the correct 'balance'. Brave as it was, the oft told story of the holding of the area around the Arnhem road bridge by the 2nd Parachute Battalion and by other troops is too often highlighted to the detriment of other aspects of the battle.

I would like to conclude this Introduction on a personal note. Whatever the success or otherwise of this book, I have been completely absorbed by it and will be well satisfied to see it as my literary swan-song. In some ways it has reminded me of my first book, which was about the opening of the Battle of the Somme.[3] Both that day in July 1916 and those events in September 1944 were disasters that might have been foreseen but had an inevitability which could not be halted. There is a further comparison. The Somme survivors whom I interviewed in the late 1960s were the same age as the airborne men whom I have met more recently. Men at that age, with maturity of mind and with time to spare in their retirement, are ideal contributors. That First World War book

[3] *The First Day on the Somme*, Allen Lane, London, 1971; Penguin, London, 1984.

opened my writing career; I hope that I can close it with a fitting description of what happened in and around Arnhem.

Martin Middlebrook
Boston, England
1994

CHAPTER 1

The Path to Arnhem

The war was exactly five years old in September 1944, almost a year longer than the whole of the First World War. But it seemed to many that the end was in sight, for the signs of German collapse in the first few days of the month had been breathtaking. It had started when Montgomery's plans in Normandy reached fulfilment early in August and the Third US Army under the brilliant Patton broke out and motored deep into the German rear, before swinging round and trapping much of the Seventh German Army in the Falaise Pocket. This was followed by a general Allied advance culminating in a dramatic dash across northern France into Belgium, this time with the British covering the ground fastest. Starting from the Seine, they advanced 200 miles to capture Brussels and Antwerp in just one week. That exhilarating drive ended on 5 September when the Germans were at last able to form a new defence line on the Meuse–Escaut canal to stop the Allies moving on to the liberation of Holland. The British were just able to establish two bridgeheads across the canal before the German defence hardened.

The German losses had been enormous, and it was believed that their defence lines everywhere were paper thin. There was only one problem for the Allies: the fighting units had outrun their supplies. The approaches to the port of Antwerp had not been cleared; recently captured Ostend and Dieppe had only limited cargo capacity, and the Germans had left garrisons at the other Channel ports. Only Cherbourg – 450 miles from the forward British positions and 400 from Patton's in eastern France – was capable of handling appreciable tonnages. A general advance was out of the question until Antwerp could be cleared, and that might allow the Germans to recover unless a decisive move was undertaken at once. Such a move would have to be limited to a narrow frontage because of the supplies position. There was one other factor. There remained in

England an 'airborne army' containing two American and one British airborne divisions, a Polish parachute brigade and an infantry division capable of being lifted by transport aircraft – all fresh and ready for immediate action. But an airborne operation would have to be within the range of the transport aircraft based in England, and there was only one part of occupied Europe that those aircraft could reach from their existing bases – Holland.

Attention can quickly focus upon the 1st British Airborne Division, which was to bear the brunt at Arnhem.[1] This formation contained Britain's earliest airborne units. Parts of the division had fought in North Africa, Sicily and Italy in 1942 and 1943, and the whole division had been standing by in England since early 1944, ready for further action. Its sister division – 6th Airborne – had dropped into Normandy to protect the flank of the British landings; 1st Airborne had been ready to follow in support but had not been required. Since then, no less than fifteen further operations had been planned but then cancelled, usually because ground forces reached the landing area first. Some of these operations would have been carried out in conjunction with American airborne divisions, others would have been solo British efforts.

It was out of the last of these cancelled operations – code-named 'Comet' – that the Battle of Arnhem was born; indeed, the operation which eventually took place was an extension of 'Comet'. The decision to mount 'Comet' was made on 2 September, just as the leading Allied forces were crossing into Belgium from France and before even Brussels was reached. The plan was for the 1st British Airborne Division, with the Polish brigade attached, to drop ahead of the advancing armies and capture the bridges over the rivers and canals flowing across Holland. The 4th Parachute Brigade was to seize the nearest bridge, over the Maas near Grave; the glider-borne 1st Airlanding Brigade, the Poles and divisional headquarters were to land in the centre, around Nijmegen, and capture the

[1] General references like this, to 'Arnhem' and to the Battle of Arnhem, include the whole area that would be covered by the battle as it developed; and they particularly include Oosterbeek, where fighting continued for several days after efforts in Arnhem itself had failed. This note is made in deference to the feelings of the men who fought only at Oosterbeek.

bridges over the Waal; and the 1st Parachute Brigade was to drop in the north near Arnhem and capture the crossings over the Rhine.

The initiative behind 'Comet' was that of Field Marshal Montgomery, commander of the British 21st Army Group. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, favoured a general move forward by all of his armies. Montgomery, however, was pressing hard for a strong 'single thrust' while the Germans were in such disarray and urged that such a thrust should be northwards and under his command, continuing onwards through Holland over the river crossings captured in Operation 'Comet', outflanking the Siegfried Line, breaking out on to the open country of the North German Plain, which would favour the mobile Allied forces, and pressing on all the way to Berlin – beating the Russians to the German capital and hopefully ending the war before the winter. It was a plan of breathtaking scope. There were two drawbacks: the shortage of supplies already mentioned and the reluctance by Eisenhower to abandon his own plan and give priority to Montgomery at the expense of American commanders, some of whose forces would need to come under Montgomery's control.

Eisenhower gave 'Comet' the go-ahead, but did not yet sanction Montgomery's later plans. Only the British airborne division and the Polish brigade were to be employed; the two American divisions and the airportable division were not included. The reason for this was probably twofold: a smaller force required a shorter planning and preparation period, and there were only sufficient transport aircraft to carry such a force in one lift, factors which enabled the operation to proceed with speed and surprise while the Germans were off balance. It is believed that the start date was initially set for Saturday 9 September, one week later.

The RAF was asked to help by bombing German fighter airfields in Holland and Bomber Command promptly obliged with heavy raids by 675 bombers in daylight on 3 September; only one aircraft was lost. Some urgency might have been added to the planning on 8 September when the German V-2 rocket campaign against London opened from launch sites in Holland. But doubts about the viability of the operation were developing as the week passed. The Allied advance across Belgium ran out of steam; the supply crisis was evident; the German defence on the Dutch frontier was hardening.

Major-General R. E. Urquhart, commander of the 1st British Airborne Division, had received his orders on 6 September and had briefed his brigadiers. Brigadier 'Shan' Hackett, a comparative newcomer to the division, whose 4th Parachute Brigade was to capture the nearest bridge, at Grave, tells of his reaction to the plan:[2]

> The airborne movement was very naïve. It was very good on getting airborne troops to battle, but they were innocents when it came to fighting the Germans when we arrived. They used to make a beautiful airborne plan and then add the fighting-the-Germans bit afterwards. We brigade commanders were at one of the divisional commander's conferences for 'Comet' at Cottesmore airfield where this lovely plan was being presented. The Polish commander, Sosabowski, said in his lovely deep voice, 'But the Germans, General, the Germans!'
>
> Sosabowski and I, and one or two others, knew that, however thin on the ground the Germans were, they could react instantly and violently when you touched something sensitive. Thank goodness 'Comet' was cancelled; it would have been a disaster. But the same attitude persisted with the eventual Arnhem plan.

The period for preparation for 'Comet' ran its full course. All units were briefed; gliders were loaded; parachute-dropping and towing aircraft were ready. But Sosabowski's forceful objections had some result. Urquhart took him by plane to see Lieutenant-General F. M. ('Boy') Browning, who was carrying out the detailed planning of 'Comet' at his headquarters in Hertfordshire. Sosabowski argued that the force to be employed on 'Comet' was not strong enough and that at least two airborne divisions were required. This and possibly other protests, together with the changed ground situation, put an end to 'Comet'. On Friday 8 September the operation was postponed for twenty-four hours, but it was not until 2.0 a.m. on Sunday 10 September, four hours before take-off time, that a message was received at Urquhart's headquarters that 'Comet' was cancelled.

[2] Quotations by participants are from personal interviews or correspondence with the author unless some other source is acknowledged.

Operation 'Comet' was not dead, however; it was about to be transformed into a much larger venture with important changes taking place at both the strategic and the tactical level. The strategy was settled at a meeting later that day, Sunday 10 September, when Eisenhower flew from Normandy to meet Montgomery at Brussels; the ensuing discussion took place in Eisenhower's aircraft because his knee was in plaster following an accident. Montgomery once again urged total commitment to a northern thrust, with Berlin as the eventual objective. Eisenhower was still willing to go along with the airborne plan to seize the Dutch bridges; success in that operation would enable the 400-mile-long Siegfried Line to be outflanked, and operations could then be developed which would hopefully lead to the encirclement of the Ruhr. There were advantages also on the western flank of the proposed operation. A short onward advance from Arnhem to the IJsselmeer (formerly the Zuider Zee) would cut off all German forces in western Holland, and eventually capture the V-2 rocket launch sites, hasten the clearance of Antwerp and overrun Rotterdam to bring two major ports into use and help solve the chronic supply problem. So Montgomery received the go-ahead for an enlarged airborne operation, the original 'Comet' force being supplemented by the two American airborne divisions. Montgomery was also given the support of some American troops on his right flank and an increase in his supplies, but he was not to have absolute priority in supply, and Berlin was not to be his ultimate objective.

So 'Comet' became 'Market Garden'. The reason there were two words in the new code-name was that, instead of the airborne troops being dropped ahead of the still advancing ground force, as in 'Comet', a set-piece ground attack would need to be prepared and set in motion to join up with the air landings. The airborne part in this new combined plan was 'Market', and the ground attack was 'Garden'. The objectives of 'Market' were exactly the same as those of 'Comet' – seizure of the bridges over the waterways in Holland between the existing front and the North German Plain; the main change was in the scale of airborne force to be used. An initial proposal to launch the new operation in a mere five days' time had to be extended, but the start date would be only a week away, on Sunday 17 September.

*

The airborne forces waiting in England came under the First Allied Airborne Army, an organization which had been formed only six weeks earlier to co-ordinate the activities of the various British and American airborne units in England and of the air transport units required to take them into action. Its commander was an American, Lieutenant-General Lewis H. Brereton, who until then had been commander of the US Ninth Air Force; his headquarters were at Sunninghill Park near Ascot. As was normal at that time with 'Allied' formations, an American commander had a British deputy, in this case an army officer with the same rank as the commander – Lieutenant-General F. A. M. Browning; the staff were, again as usual, mixed British and American. Brereton's current directive was to be ready to despatch his airborne units on any operation in support of Montgomery's 21st Army Group, the American sectors on the Continent being now too distant for support by airborne operations. So, when Eisenhower gave Montgomery the go-ahead for 'Market', it was Brereton and his staff who prepared the operation. It would be the first of their many planned operations actually to be launched.

The next level of command was that of 'corps'. The American units came under Lieutenant-General Matthew B. Ridgway's XVIII US Airborne Corps; his main units were the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, which had fought in Normandy but were ready for action again, and the 17th Airborne, which was still assembling and was not yet operational. The British units were under I British Airborne Corps and consisted of the 1st British Airborne Division and the Polish Independent Parachute Brigade Group, both ready for action, the 6th British Airborne Division, just returned from a long spell in Normandy, and an SAS unit. The British corps commander was Lieutenant-General Browning, who thus had two jobs. Both of the two corps organizations were also new, although the British one was really a transformation of the British Airborne Forces HQ, which had been in existence since 1941. Also available was the British 52nd (Lowland) Division, capable of being lifted by aircraft, but this was not officially part of Browning's corps.

The main purpose of the corps organizations was administration and training, and no previous airborne operation had taken place in which a corps headquarters had any operational role. The standard practice was that divisions were dropped independently and came

under the command of the relevant ground forces corps headquarters as soon as a link-up was achieved. Three airborne divisions had been dropped in Normandy on D-Day and had performed satisfactorily in that way. But the two corps headquarters under Brereton's command had recently been given a limited operational capability in case circumstances developed in which an operation would require the co-ordinating influence of an airborne corps headquarters on the ground. 'Market' was about to employ three and one-third divisions, dropped at three separate places, and which were hopefully to be relieved within three days by ground forces. On the face of it, these were not the circumstances in which an airborne corps headquarters could be inserted into the operation with any beneficial effect.

But Lieutenant-General Browning – 'Boy' Browning, forty-one years old, handsome and elegant, married to the famous novelist Daphne du Maurier and a qualified glider pilot – was anxious to command troops in action before the war ended. He was a gallant veteran of the First World War, in which he won the DSO and the Croix de Guerre with the Grenadier Guards, but he had not yet had the opportunity to see action in this war. As commander of British Airborne Forces since 1941, his had been the guiding hand in the major build-up of this new arm of the British Army. Now the war might be brought to an end by means of the largest airborne operation of all time, and Browning wanted to be personally involved in it.

As Brereton's deputy and military adviser, Browning had met Montgomery at Brussels immediately after Eisenhower's aircraft took off after the 10 September meeting which inaugurated 'Market', and he brought Montgomery's outline plan back to England; he presented it at Brereton's first planning meeting that evening. Perhaps with Montgomery's blessing or perhaps by persuading Brereton himself, Browning secured agreement that the embryo untried tactical headquarters of his airborne corps should actually take part in the operation, despite the fact that the three divisional drops were to be scattered and despite the fact that the majority of the troops to be used would be American, whose own corps commander, Matthew Ridgway, with his recent battle experience as an airborne divisional commander in Normandy, would

have to stand aside to give Browning his chance. In the plan that soon evolved, Browning and his tactical staff would fly in by glider and land on the first day alongside the 82nd US Airborne Division in the middle of the three main dropping areas, near Nijmegen.

The reader may think that this lengthy introduction of 'Boy' Browning and his corps headquarters in the plan for 'Market' is tiresome. But the first contribution to the tragedy of Arnhem had now been made. The signals organization of Browning's tactical headquarters was not complete; many extra men and much signals equipment had to be added during the next few days – much of it from American sources. On landing in Holland, he would be out of touch with two-thirds of his command unless his signals organization worked perfectly. His presence would also mean that, after the ground forces linked up with the air landings, two corps headquarters would be attempting to control operations in the same geographical area. There would be an even more direct effect upon the fortunes of the British troops about to fly to Arnhem. The glider lift of Browning's headquarters would require thirty-eight tug aircraft from the limited air transport force available, and these would be taken from the allotment to the Arnhem lift.

There is no record of any American opposition to Browning's plan, but British officers due to take part in 'Market' ridiculed it. One says: 'Browning's staff came straight from soft living in comfortable houses in England and had never done a single exercise'; and the following is part of a poem written in the last days before 'Market' by an officer due to fly to Arnhem.

> Corps Headquarters is moving to battle
> And they're holding a mammoth display
> Somewhat spoiled by the deafening rattle
> From the throats of the pen-pushers grey.
> ('Oh Doctor! – Quick! – Stretcher this way!')
>
> Corps Headquarters is flying in Gliders
> With Typewriters, Sten Guns and Ink,
> And the sarcasm shown by outsiders
> Would tickle an elephant pink!
> (Does the 'Boy' know the form, do you think?)

And what they Command when they get there
If Command is their ultimate goal
Is a matter it's hard to conjecture
We ourselves and a possible Pole.
(But it's better than drawing the dole!)[3]

Brereton's planning staff worked furiously to enlarge the old 'Comet' plan. The 101st US Airborne Division was allocated the capture of two canal bridges and one small river bridge north of Eindhoven and also to help the ground forces capture that town. The 82nd US Airborne Division came next with the more difficult tasks, first, of securing the Groesbeek heights which threatened the right flank both of their own operations and of the subsequent advance by the ground forces, and then of capturing the major bridges over the rivers Maas and Waal at Grave and Nijmegen, as well as a series of smaller bridges over a canal between the two rivers – seven bridges in all. Finally, the 1st British Airborne Division with the Polish brigade attached was to capture the main road bridge, a railway bridge and a pontoon over the Lower Rhine at Arnhem. It was obvious that the British would have to hold out the longest before being relieved by ground forces, but, with the Polish brigade adding to their strength, they had a greater number of troops. Major-General Urquhart, the British commander at Arnhem, was told after the war that an early version of the plan allocated the 101st US to Arnhem but that his division was then substituted. The main reason for such a change would have been inter-Allied politics; with a basically British plan and with relief at Arnhem dependent upon British ground forces, it was deemed unacceptable that an American division be subjected to the risk of being stranded at the end of the airborne corridor. For those interested in statistics, a total of 33,971 men would go into action by air – 20,190 by parachute, 13,781 by glider – together with 5,230 tons of equipment, 1,927 vehicles and 568 guns.

The ground operation – 'Garden' – would be carried out by General Miles Dempsey's Second British Army. Dempsey selected Lieutenant-General Brian Horrocks's XXX Corps for the task of

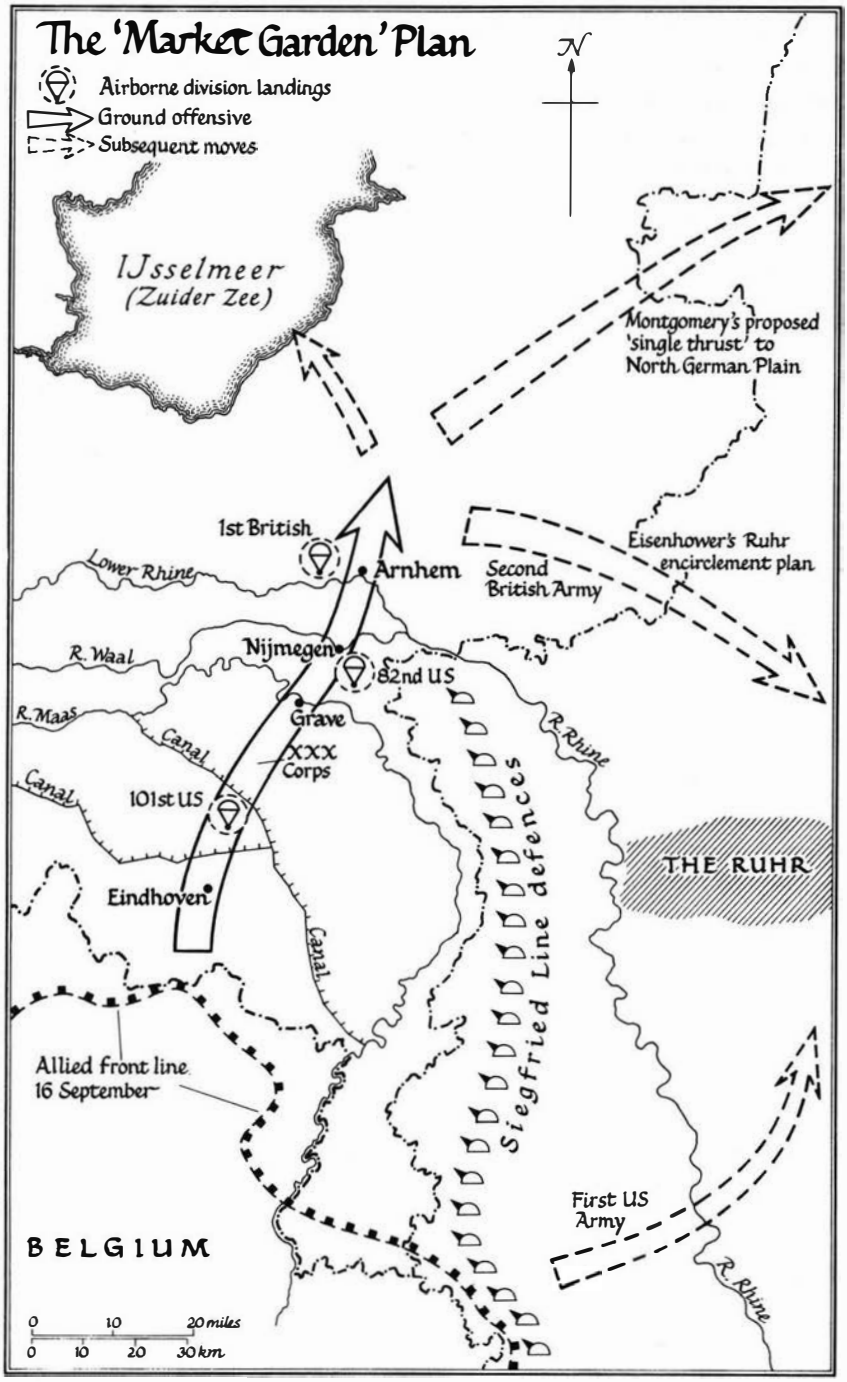
[3] Written by Captain C. R. Miller, G3 (Air), 1st Parachute Brigade HQ.

breaking through the German forward defences and then pushing up a corridor containing just one road to relieve and join up the airborne landings. Montgomery's order to Dempsey was that this move should be 'rapid and violent, without regard to what is happening on the flanks'.[4] The advance of XXX Corps would be led by the Guards Armoured Division, with the infantry of the 43rd (Wessex) and the 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions following behind. Also in the XXX Corps column would be much extra artillery, to fire into the areas ahead in which the lightly armed airborne divisions would be fighting, plus no less than 2,300 vehicles loaded with bridging material and 9,000 sappers and pioneers to replace or repair any blown bridges. XXX Corps had fortunately captured a bridgehead over the Meuse–Escaut canal at Neerpelt, in Belgium but only three miles south of the Dutch border, which meant one less waterway to cross and also that almost all of the ensuing action would be in Holland. The distance by road from the start line at Neerpelt to the bridge at Arnhem was sixty-four miles, a far deeper airborne penetration than ever before contemplated.

If the combined operations were successful, it was hoped that the British in Arnhem could be reached in three days or less and that a further advance could cut Holland in two by reaching the IJsselmeer on the fifth day. The two American divisions were to be withdrawn immediately to England, but the 1st British Airborne was told that it might be retained to remain in action as ground troops; Rotterdam was hinted at as the next objective for the division, and maps of that area were issued to its units.

A multitude of difficulties were encountered when it came to preparing the air plan, both because there were insufficient aircraft to carry the entire 'Market' force in one lift and because of the difficulty in finding suitable dropping and landing zones. (Parachute troops use a 'dropping zone', gliders a 'landing zone'.) More than three-quarters of the transport aircraft were American, but one of the reasons for creating Brereton's First Allied Airborne Army was to pool air resources. The American aircraft belonged to IX Troop

[4] Quoted in Major L. F. Ellis and Lieutenant-General A. E. Warhurst, *Victory in the West*, HMSO, 1968, p. 27.


The 'Market Garden' Plan
Airborne division landings
Ground offensive
Subsequent moves
N
IJsselmeer
(Zuider Zee)
Montgomery's proposed
'single thrust' to
North German Plain
1st British
Arnhem
Second
British Army
Eisenhower's Ruhr
encirclement plan
Lower Rhine
R. Waal
Nijmegen
82nd US
R. Maas
Canal
Grave
XXX
Corps
Canal
101st US
R. Rhine
THE RUHR
Eindhoven
Canal
Siegfried Line defences
Allied front line
16 September
First US
Army
BELGIUM
R. Rhine
0 10 20 miles
0 10 20 30 km

Carrier Command under Major-General Paul L. Williams, and he was appointed the air commander for 'Market'. The principle in airborne operations was, and still is, that the military force states its requirements but that the air force involved actually makes the air plan in the light of what it perceives to be possible. The obvious requirement for 'Market' was that as much of the military force as possible be delivered as close to their objectives as possible, and with the greatest degree of surprise. But Williams and his staff quickly found that only half of the airborne force at best could be carried in one lift. The three airborne divisions actually had different requirements. The 101st US, being only twenty miles from the ground-attack start line, would carry only the barest minimum of its artillery, whereas 1st British at Arnhem would require all of its artillery. For the first lift, it might have appeared obvious that the available aircraft be allocated accordingly, but, instead, a decision was taken that two-thirds of the aircraft were allocated to the two US divisions and one-third to the British. It was then decided that the thirty-eight aircraft required to tow the gliders of Browning's corps headquarters should come from the British allocation. The different divisional requirements and the diversion of aircraft from the British allocation for the corps lift had the effect of giving priority 'from bottom to top', with nearly all of 101st US arriving in one lift, nearly all of 82nd US arriving in two lifts, but the British and Poles requiring three lifts. This was a cold-blooded, but probably correct, decision; if the 101st failed, then the other two divisions would be stranded, but it was obviously a grave disadvantage for the British and Poles. The actual allocation of aircraft to divisions for the first lift was: 101st US, 502 aircraft; 82nd US, 530 aircraft; 1st British, 475 aircraft.

There was more trouble to come. Major-General Williams, with Brereton's support, went on to decide that no more than one lift should be flown each day. This was patently disadvantageous to the prospects of the British and Poles at Arnhem; three lifts meant three days! Furthermore, Urquhart found that the dropping and landing zones allocated to his division were too far distant from the Arnhem road bridge. The probable reason for the one-lift-per-day decision was that the American transport units involved were not sufficiently skilled in navigation or formation keeping for the pre-

dawn or post-dusk flights that would be required for two flights on an autumn day. Memories of scattered drops by night in Sicily and Normandy were still fresh in the minds of the two American commanders who made that decision. The distant dropping and landing zones decision, however, was made by an RAF officer, Air Vice-Marshal L. N. Hollinghurst, commander of No. 38 Group, the senior RAF officer involved; Brereton and Williams had delegated to Hollinghurst the detailed planning of the Arnhem fly-in. Most of the extensive open area south of the Rhine bridges was 'polderland' consisting of small, low-lying fields intersected by numerous ditches, unsuitable for large-scale glider operations, though possible for parachute dropping. But Hollinghurst was reluctant to use that area because he was anxious about the danger posed to his low-flying transport aircraft by a reported build-up of German flak around the bridges and about the need to fly out over a German airfield north of Arnhem believed to be protected by further flak batteries. Much of the land north of the river was either built up or wooded, but some excellent areas both for parachute dropping and for glider landing existed to the west of Arnhem; unfortunately, they were between five and eight miles from the Arnhem road bridge, Urquhart's main objective.

This was Roy Urquhart's first airborne operation, but he felt that the combination of the lifts spread over three days and the distance from his landing areas to Arnhem would prevent his division from carrying out its task. He asked Brereton and Williams if the Arnhem force could have two lifts on the first day, as had been envisaged for the recent Operation 'Comet'. His request was refused. He then urged that landing zones be found closer to the bridge, at least for a proportion of his division which could act as a *coup-de-main* force. There was some meadowland close by the railway bridge; this was only two and a half miles from the road bridge. There was even room for a few gliders immediately south of the Arnhem road bridge. This time it was his fellow countryman, Air Vice-Marshal Hollinghurst, who declined to change the air plan.

These were further crippling limitations on Urquhart's chances of success. The basic advantages of airborne operations – surprise and the ability to drop astride an objective – were being thrown away. Because of the two main lifts of his division, Urquhart would have to

leave half of the limited first day's lift to protect the landing areas, with only a third of his division remaining available to move into Arnhem and seize the bridges. A dropping zone south of the river was allocated to the Polish brigade, which would land by parachute on the third day, but by then, the optimists envisaged, the town of Arnhem would be secure, and the Poles would do no more than move across one of the bridges and take over part of the town perimeter on the north side. The tanks of XXX Corps should arrive by the evening of the third day and motor on towards the IJsselmeer.

Urquhart felt he could do no more and concentrated on his divisional plan, but these decisions by the air planners had already sealed the fate of the division. Urquhart did not know that his fellow British airborne divisional commander, Major-General R. N. ('Windy') Gale, who had taken 6th Airborne to Normandy, was consulted by Browning during the preparation of the Arnhem plan. Gale stated that at least one parachute brigade should be dropped as a *coup-de-main* force adjacent to the road bridge, to hold the bridge until the remainder of the division arrived. Gale said that he would have pressed for that condition 'to the point of resignation'. But the planning process was too far advanced, and Browning did not feel able to intervene on Urquhart's behalf. He asked Gale not to report the conversation to Urquhart for fear of unsettling him on the eve of the operation.[5]

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[5] Major-General Gale reported this meeting to Major Geoffrey Norton, Curator of the Airborne Forces Museum at Aldershot, in the early 1970s, but only verbally; he stipulated that the information should not be used during the lifetime of any of the personalities involved. Major Norton writes in a letter of 4 March 1992 to Mrs Diana Andrews at the museum but in answer to my query through her: 'The plan would have worked if German opposition was slight. General Windy's gut feelings at the time, based on his respect for the Germans as soldiers and masters of improvisation when the chips were down, was that the German reaction to such a threat to their heartland would be rapid and violent . . . General Gale was unhappy – as the most experienced airborne general – not to have been involved in the planning earlier, when his views might have prevailed, though he was the first to admit that, as it was not his division undertaking the task, he had no right to expect to be asked . . . He felt, even at this late stage, that if enough high level pressure had been exerted, that at least the aircraft to lift the whole division on Day-1 might have

So that was Operation 'Market' – the largest airborne operation of the war and probably of all time, carried out at extreme range from home bases and landing deeper into enemy-held territory than any previous airborne operation. But, essentially, it was a more cautious and methodical plan than that of 'Comet'. The force to be employed was two and a half times larger and was to be landed on a step-by-step basis over a period of up to three days. There were no *coup-de-main* parties landing directly on to objectives. Some say that it was less like an airborne operation seizing its objectives by surprise than an airborne force landing and then manoeuvring like a ground force towards those objectives in the hope that the Germans would not intervene. Both Montgomery and Browning likened the landings to an airborne carpet over which XXX Corps would advance. Browning, despite his keenness for action, was worried about Arnhem; on first hearing the plan from Montgomery he had questioned whether it might not be 'a bridge too far', though he may never have used that particular phrase.

But the optimism of the moment and the benefits if the operation succeeded should never be overlooked. The German Army seemed to have been crushed in Normandy. The Guards Armoured Division which would break through the thin crust, it was hoped, of the German defence on the Dutch frontier was the very same division which had just motored 120 miles from the river Somme to Brussels in three days with both flanks exposed. And a whole series of proposed airborne operations had just been cancelled because ground forces had moved so fast that the airborne operation could not even get started. It did not seem unreasonable that the ground forces would once again leap forward, join up with the airborne men and eventually unleash the mass of armoured and motorized troops available to the Allies on to the open country beyond the rivers, with all the attendant benefits that would produce.

been found. If they had, the outcome could have been different.' One of my Polish contributors, Jerzy Dyrda, who as a lieutenant in 1944 was aide-de-camp to Major-General Sosabowski, the commander of the Polish Parachute Brigade, quotes Sosabowski's succinct comment: 'He always told us that an airborne operation is not a purchase by instalments.'

CHAPTER 2

'First Airborne' and Friends

The first British parachute units had been formed in June 1940, after Dunkirk, when Churchill ordered the formation of a parachute force of up to 5,000 men to join with the similarly newly formed Commandos to carry out raids on the coast of German-occupied Europe. But it was not until November 1942 that the airborne force reached divisional strength and the 1st British Airborne Division came into being, eventually settling down with a permanent organization of two parachute brigades and one 'airlanding' brigade, each of three battalions. Major-General Browning was the first divisional commander. Units of the division saw their first major action in November 1942 when the 1st Parachute Brigade carried out drops in Algeria and Tunisia and then fought on in a long and costly ground campaign. This was followed by the invasion of Sicily in July 1943 when the 1st Airlanding Brigade went in by glider on the first night of that operation, and the 1st Parachute Brigade dropped ahead of the ground forces four nights later. Both operations were successful, but casualties were again heavy, many being from causes other than enemy action, such as the premature release of gliders due to a faulty wind forecast, resulting in many men being drowned when gliders came down in the sea, and parachute aircraft being hit by 'friendly' anti-aircraft fire when they flew over the Allied invasion fleet.

The final part of the division's Mediterranean campaign took place when Italy surrendered in September 1943 and some of the airborne units were rushed over by ship to land at Taranto. There was a disaster in Taranto harbour when HMS *Abdiel*, a minelayer, carrying a parachute battalion – the 6th Battalion from the 2nd Parachute Brigade – and part of one of the division's anti-tank batteries, blew up on a mine with heavy loss of life. The division's involvement in Italy was not prolonged and not costly.

A reorganization took place when the 2nd Parachute Brigade was left behind to become an independent brigade, its place being taken by the 4th Parachute Brigade which had been formed in the Middle East. The division which returned to England at the end of 1943 was thus in the form in which it would fight at Arnhem nine months later. There was intense disappointment that the division was not used in Normandy; it stood by for a secondary drop there but was not required and remained in its camps and billets in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Rutland.[1]

'Boy' Browning had left the division in April 1943, to continue the airborne build-up, and his successor, Major-General G. F. Hopkinson, was one of the division's last casualties in the Mediterranean when he was killed in Italy. His place was taken by Brigadier Eric Down, an officer described as being 'saturated in airborne experience'; but Down was soon sent to India to form a new airborne division there. Browning was then asked by the War Office if he would accept a new divisional commander from outside Airborne Forces. Browning agreed, but only on condition that he was 'hot from the battle'. The choice thus fell upon Major-General Urquhart – Robert Elliott but always known as Roy – a forty-three-year-old Scot, a former Highland Light Infantryman. Urquhart was indeed fresh from battle, being a product of the Middle East campaigns like so many successful commanders of 1944–5. He took command of 1st Airborne in January 1944.

It has sometimes been said that the choice of Urquhart was an error and that the promotion of a brigadier from within the division would have resulted in the air plan for Arnhem being more vigorously opposed. His was only one of several new faces at the top of the division. The enlargement of Airborne Forces and the recent establishment of the First Allied Airborne Army took away many of the senior staff officers, and most of the replacements came from outside the airborne 'brotherhood'. There was some natural resentment that 'insiders' had not been promoted and also because of the 'new broom' attitude of some of the newcomers. But the new men were all able officers with much recent experience on

[1] Appendix 1 shows the divisional order of battle just before Arnhem.

a wider battlefield. Major Philip Tower, the new brigade major to the division's new artillery commander, says: 'We found the airborne boys, with their red berets, etc., hard to convince that other people had done a lot of fighting in the war. General Urquhart found the same and had to take a grip on them. They were a marvellous lot but they overestimated their prowess.' These recent senior arrivals had not volunteered for this airborne duty; they had been appointed by the War Office to their new positions. They did not need to train as parachutists but would go into action by glider. Urquhart actually hated flying.

The main strength of the division was to be found in its two parachute brigades. The men in these units were all of high physical standard and were all volunteers. They were not allowed to come directly into a parachute unit on joining the army as in post-war years but had to apply from other units. Most of the volunteers were infantrymen but suitable volunteers from other arms were also accepted. There was a strong Guards presence in those parachute battalions which were raised in England; former Guards officer Browning ensured that a proportion of senior NCOs in particular came from that source and imposed their high standards of discipline in the parachute battalions.

Once accepted for training, the volunteer then had to complete a parachute course run by the RAF at Ringway (now Manchester Airport). A man could refuse to jump at any time during the training period and return to his old unit, but after completion of his eight training drops – two from balloons and six from aircraft – refusal to jump was a court-martial offence. There were some accidents; British parachute troops did not have a reserve parachute, as had American paratroops, until after the war. Qualified parachutists received extra pay: two shillings a day for other ranks, four shillings (later reduced to two shillings) for officers. The distinctive maroon – not red – beret was introduced in March 1942; 'an inspired move', one man says; 'We were very proud; now the whole world copies us.'

The parachute men were physically tough and aggressive. Their role in war was to seize an objective swiftly and then to hang on at all costs until relieved. Although most of the 1st Airborne Division's

units had seen action, it is not correct to say that the whole division was experienced or battle-hardened. Those men who had survived the Mediterranean campaigns certainly were; they were mature, older soldiers, often being pre-war Regulars who had experienced Dunkirk and then joined in the early airborne days. But the casualties of that campaign had been replaced by younger men who had been called up during the war. The casualty lists for Arnhem contain many names of such men, some aged only nineteen years. The same rules applied to officers. The originals had applied from existing units in the quiet years after Dunkirk and had since often been promoted several times in this expanding force. Most officer reinforcements still had to have served in another unit before acceptance, although the very first direct-entry subalterns were just being permitted to join straight from their officer-cadet training units.

The early parachute battalions did not have a parent regiment until August 1942 when the Parachute Regiment officially came into being; they had simply been 'Parachute Battalions' with no guaranteed future. The parachute badge so well known today was not issued until May 1943; until then most men had worn either the badge of their former regiment or that of the Army Air Corps. To many of the pre-war Regulars, this parachute service was probably regarded as no more than temporary duty. (The modern terms 1st Para or 1 PARA, signifying the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, were not used during the war and are disliked by many wartime men; units were usually referred to simply as the '1st Battalion', '156 Battalion', etc., and that is how they will be described in this book.)

A parachute battalion was a lightly armed, lean unit, its entire being dedicated to swift transport by air and dropping into immediate action. There were three rifle companies instead of the four in a normal infantry battalion. The fittest, keenest soldiers and those with the most initiative were in those rifle platoons – the cream of the division. There was an unusually high proportion of sergeants; the three sections in a platoon were each commanded by a sergeant or a lance-sergeant instead of a normal corporal. There were some heavy weapons in the 3-inch mortar and Vickers machine-gun platoons, but anti-tank weapons at Arnhem were limited to the

Piats and Gammon bombs carried by the rifle platoons. The full war establishment of a battalion was 36 officers and 696 men, but few battalions were up to strength at this time, and most of the transport and administration element did not fly into action but followed up in the 'sea tail'. The parachute battalions flying to Arnhem would do so with an average strength of 548 all ranks. Only seven jeeps and two Bren carriers accompanied the main battalion, those vehicles and their drivers travelling by glider. The average battalion would fly to Arnhem in thirty-four parachute aircraft and eight gliders – seven Horsas and a Hamilcar for the Bren carriers.

The units of the 1st Parachute Brigade were the real veterans, not only of the 1st Airborne Division but of all Britain's airborne forces; the original brigade, as one early officer says, 'was a great thing to be in'. The brigade had suffered heavy casualties in 1943, particularly in Tunisia, with battalions being reduced to strengths of 100 or so men by the end of the campaign. There had been large transfers of replacements from the 2nd Parachute Brigade; many of the lightly wounded later returned, and the remaining gaps were filled by recently trained parachutists. Approximately half of the men in the brigade were now Tunisia veterans; few of the remainder had seen active service. The commander was Brigadier Gerald Lathbury, a former Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry officer who was rich in airborne service. The brigade was now billeted in South Lincolnshire. It would drop in the first lift of the Arnhem operation.

The original members of the 1st Battalion were Britain's very first parachute troops. They were men who had volunteered after Dunkirk for transfer to a force described as being formed 'for parachute training or independent mobile units'. Those volunteers who were accepted became No. 2 Commando, stationed in billets on the outskirts of Manchester and carrying out parachute training at nearby Ringway. Most of this unit became the 11th SAS in November 1940 but was then redesignated 1st Parachute Battalion in September 1941. There had been a Guards troop in the original Commando unit, and T Company of the battalion would continue to have a strong Guards representation. One of my contributors

insisted that his rank in 1944 was 'Guardsman' and not the standard 'Private' of a parachute battalion, and another old-timer said that his first loyalty was to the Commandos: 'We were a brotherhood; I'm really a Commando and always will be.'

The 1st Battalion was not pleased when a company of the 2nd Battalion was selected for the Bruneval Raid in February 1942, and a prolonged period without action led to some of the early men requesting returns to their old units. Then came Tunisia, and the desire for action was more than satisfied. A large draft of replacements for the casualties in Tunisia came from the 6th Parachute Battalion which had been formed from the 10th Royal Welch Fusiliers, so in 1944 the battalion had both a Guards and a Welsh character. The battalion was now based at Bourne. There had been two recent changes of command. A new CO arrived who displayed what was thought to be an excessive thirst for discipline and who brought his own – Guards – RSM, who was much resented for 'treating battle-hardened men like children'. There was a mutiny. A parachute exercise was ordered, but 'our rough old crowd' refused to draw parachutes in protest at the new regime. Brigadier Lathbury had the battalion paraded without its officers and listened to the men's grievances. He acted swiftly by posting both the new CO and his RSM and bringing in and promoting young Major David Dobie, a Tunisia veteran who was known and much respected in the 1st Battalion. (The officer who was replaced later had a distinguished career, rising to general officer's rank.)

The 2nd Battalion was formed on 1 October 1941 and, missing the various trials of the 1st Battalion, made smoother progress, its morale being boosted by the success of the company carrying out the Bruneval Raid. Major John Frost, the leader of that raid, became the battalion commander and led it throughout the Mediterranean campaign. Frost was the most experienced battalion commander in the division; one of his officers describes him thus: 'He had a very relaxed style of leadership when out of action, letting the very good company commanders get on with it. But, in action, he was absolutely on the ball and suddenly became five years younger.' Frost was an ex-Cameronian, and the company which went to Bruneval had been mainly Scots. A large draft of reinforcements in Tunisia had come from the 5th Battalion, formerly the 7th Cameron

Highlanders, and others were from the Royal Ulster Rifles; so the 1944 battalion had a strong Scots and Irish character. The battalion was now billeted in and around Grantham.

The 3rd Battalion, formed in October 1941 by Gerald Lathbury, has less of distinction in its description. It never had any regional characteristic, either in its original members or in its later reinforcements. It had performed well in Tunisia, where it had been the first British parachute battalion to drop complete into action when it parachuted on to Bône airfield. The battalion was now located in Spalding, two companies being in a hutted camp on the grammar-school playing field, the remainder in civilian billets. The CO was now Lieutenant-Colonel John Fitch, formerly of the Manchester Regiment, who had served as a company commander with the 2nd Battalion in Sicily and Italy.

The second of Urquhart's parachute brigades was a comparative newcomer to the division. This was the 4th Parachute Brigade, which had been formed as an independent brigade in the Middle East in late 1942 but was transferred to the 1st Airborne Division in exchange for the 2nd Parachute Brigade in 1943. The one and only commander of the brigade was John Hackett, better known as 'Shan', a member of an Irish family but born in Perth, Australia, where his father was a wealthy newspaper proprietor. ('Shan' was a pet name given in childhood. His Irish relatives called him Shaun, but his Liverpool-born nannie changed this to 'Shan', which persisted.) After an academic career at Oxford he joined the army and was commissioned into the 8th (King's Royal Irish) Hussars. Hackett had experienced much action before raising this brigade, being wounded in Syria in 1940 and then wounded and burned when his Stuart tank was hit in Rommel's first desert offensive in May 1942. On recovery, he returned again to the desert but was then brought back to a staff position in Cairo and eventually to raise the 4th Parachute Brigade. Short of stature but brainy, bold, firm and decisive, Hackett had the total loyalty of his men and was looking forward to taking the complete brigade to its first airborne action at Arnhem, but this would not be until the second day's lift.

The senior battalion in the brigade was 156 Battalion. Despite its high numbering, this was a long-serving unit which had been

formed – numbered 151 Battalion – as the first parachute battalion to be raised in India in October 1941. Its original members came from no less than twenty-three British regiments and were all pre-war Regulars. When the battalion moved to Egypt to help form 4th Parachute Brigade, it was renumbered 156 to lead enemy intelligence to believe that it was a new unit. The battalion lost many of its members in this period, particularly senior ranks, because they were long overdue for repatriation to England after seven or more years' service in India. The gaps left were filled up with volunteers from various Middle East units, including a party of Life Guards troopers, most of whom became NCOs, and also a party of about twenty Rhodesians. The battalion also received a new commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Richard des Voeux, a Grenadier who had been on Browning's staff in earlier airborne days; a Grenadier RSM was also appointed. The battalion's headwear also changed. Bush hats, which had been worn in India and were popular because they were smart and could easily be folded up inside parachute smocks for a drop, were replaced by maroon berets, which were not liked: 'We had never worn berets and thought red a funny colour for a soldier.' The battalion experienced only two weeks of light action in Italy, but this was useful experience for a unit which, although many of its members were long-service soldiers, had seen no previous action as a unit. On arrival in England it was first billeted in the Uppingham area but was now concentrated around Melton Mowbray, most of the companies occupying hunting lodges.

The 10th Battalion was raised at Kabrit in December 1942 and was almost entirely a product of the Eighth Army. When an infantry brigade consisting of three Royal Sussex battalions was broken up after suffering heavy casualties at El Alamein, the 2nd Royal Sussex was selected as the basis for what became the 10th Parachute Battalion, and 200 of the Sussex men volunteered and were accepted for parachute training. The battalion was made up to full strength by volunteers from the Infantry Base Depot at Geneifa; many were men who had recovered from light wounds received in the desert fighting. The Royal Sussex attempted to keep its link with the battalion by attracting officers of the regiment from as far afield as Tunisia and Malta, and the battalion would continue to

have a strong representation from that regiment. The new battalion commander was Lieutenant-Colonel Ken Smyth, from the South Wales Borderers, but his RSM was Royal Sussex; there would be no changes before Arnhem. After serving briefly in Italy the battalion was now billeted in Rutland, partly in the village of Somerby where there was also a Land Army hostel for girls from Nottingham and Leicester, so there were soon several 10th Battalion weddings in those cities.

Hackett's junior battalion, the 11th, had been somewhat of a problem child. By the time this battalion formed at Kabrit in March 1943, many of the most suitable volunteers available for the new parachute brigade had joined the other two battalions. The result was that the 11th was a 'rough, tough' battalion which was not fully trained when the 4th Parachute Brigade left Palestine to join the 1st Airborne Division. One company of the battalion had dropped unopposed on to the island of Cos to secure the local airfield when Italy surrendered, and was later bombed by the Luftwaffe, but this was the battalion's only action before sailing straight to England at the end of 1943 and rejoining its brigade, disappointed that it had missed fighting with the brigade in Italy.

The battalion experienced further difficulties in England. After a spell at various locations in Leicestershire, it finally concentrated and spent many months impatiently waiting at Melton Mowbray. One of the problems was leadership. The first CO was Lieutenant-Colonel Micky Thomas, who had been transferred from 156 Battalion to raise and command the 11th. He was a good officer but 'too much of a gentleman' and not firm enough for this difficult battalion. Trouble blew up one Friday when men who had been used to drawing pay in advance suddenly found that this practice had been stopped, and those in arrears and therefore without walking-out passes made a mass exodus into town. Brigadier Hackett relieved the CO, posting in as his replacement his brigade major, and so the newly promoted Lieutenant-Colonel George Lea (formerly Lancashire Fusiliers) took over and started the task of pulling the battalion into shape. A new second in command also arrived, the rumbustious Major Dickie Lonsdale, whose airborne career seemed to consist of being passed on from one unit to another for unconventional behaviour. The process of recovery

proceeded well, but the battalion would be unfortunate at Arnhem in being given a suddenly unexpected and difficult role. (Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas returned to his old regiment – the Wiltshires – and served as a major in the 5th Wiltshires in Normandy. He was killed in a gallant night action near Mont Pincon in July 1944.)

The third brigade of the division was the 1st Airlanding Brigade, made up of three battalions of infantry who flew into action by glider. The role of such units in airborne divisions was to provide a large lift of infantry complete with most of their support weapons and light transport and without the extra training required by parachute troops. Glider units could land almost intact and be ready for instant action; parachute drops were sometimes scattered and required a longer interval for assembly and joining up with vehicles. There were some limitations. Large-scale night landings were almost impossible, and smooth, firm ground was required, whereas parachute troops could land by night and on rougher ground. The Airlanding Brigade's night landing in Sicily had been very costly.

Airlanding battalions were much larger than both the standard infantry battalions and parachute battalions. There were four rifle companies instead of three and four platoons in each company instead of three, giving a total of sixteen rifle platoons compared with only nine in the parachute battalions. Their platoons were slightly smaller, however, in order that each could land complete in a Horsa glider, the standard load of which became twenty-six men, a handcart containing the platoon's ammunition reserve and a small motorcycle. Support Companies were also enlarged. The Bren-carrier platoon was omitted, but the 3-inch mortar, Vickers machine-gun and 6-pounder anti-tank platoons were all doubled in size to provide battalions with more fire-power until relieved by ground forces. The average glider battalion would land at Arnhem with a strength of 773 men – nearly 50 per cent more than a parachute battalion – and would be carried by sixty-two Horsas and a Hamilcar.

The original airlanding battalions had been made up of men from the battalions selected for conversion to the new role, provided they passed a medical examination, one of the most stringent aspects of which was the ear test to ensure the man would not suffer

unduly from the rapid change in pressure when a glider dived steeply before landing. Those men found physically unfit for glider operations were replaced by volunteers from other units. Extra payment of one shilling per day was made, half that of the parachute soldier. As with other army units, glider troops could volunteer to go on to parachute training, and many did so, partly for the money, partly for the glamour, but some for fear of another glider operation after the misfortunes in Sicily. Volunteering for glider units ended in 1942, and men with suitable physical qualifications were then compulsorily posted in to keep battalions up to strength. Recent reinforcements had often come from Young Soldiers Battalions in which recruits were held after completing basic infantry training, which resulted in the glider battalions containing the youngest soldiers at Arnhem, some of them only eighteen years of age. All glider troops, whether infantry or other arms, wore the maroon beret which was the mark of all 'airborne' soldiers in those days, not just of parachute soldiers as today. The performance of the glider battalions at Arnhem gives the impression that they may have lacked a little of the aggression in attack of the parachute battalions, but they were steadfast in defence; their character was probably halfway between the doggedness of ordinary British infantry and the dash of parachute troops.

The officers in the battalions mostly came from their respective regiments, with one important exception – the CANLOANS. British infantry divisions preparing for the invasion of Normandy were short of junior officers at the same time as the Canadian Army had a large surplus, usually good NCOs who had completed an officers' training course in Canada and were awaiting vacancies in units of their own army. Under the CANLOAN scheme, 623 infantry officers volunteered to serve in British units, nearly all as platoon commanders. The British troops liked their Canadian officers; they were not as 'regimental' as the British officers. More than twenty Canadian officers fought at Arnhem, nearly all with the Airlanding Brigade, and five of them would be killed.[2]

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[2] Three-quarters of all CANLOAN officers became casualties in 1944–5: 128 killed, 310 wounded and 27 taken prisoner.

The 1st Airlanding Brigade was born in November 1941 out of the 31st Independent Infantry Brigade, which had returned from India in late 1940 and had then been defending Wales against possible invasion. The brigade contained four Regular battalions – the 1st Royal Ulster Rifles, the 2nd South Staffords and the 2nd Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, which had all been brought back from India, and the 1st Border, which had fought in France in 1940. The Ulster Rifles and the Oxford and Bucks had to leave the brigade when the 6th Airborne Division was formed in 1943; but a new battalion, the 7th King's Own Scottish Borderers, was posted in, and the 1st Airlanding Brigade thus became the three-battalion brigade which flew to Arnhem. All three units had their main base in hutted camps around Woodhall Spa, but they spent much of their time at camps in the South Midlands near the airfields where their tug aircraft and gliders were based, carrying out exercises or preparing for the many operations which were later cancelled. The brigade was due to be the first large force to land at Arnhem and would secure the dropping zones for the parachute troops, although little immediate opposition was anticipated. Most of the brigade would then have to remain outside Arnhem to hold the dropping and landing zones for the second lift before being able to move into the town.

The brigade commander was Brigadier P. H. W. ('Pip') Hicks, who had served with the Royal Warwicks throughout the First World War and again in France in 1940. He had commanded the 1st Airlanding Brigade since early 1942 and led it in the Sicily campaign. He was the oldest of the Arnhem commanders, being six years older than his divisional commander, and would reach his forty-ninth birthday during the battle; he was the only senior Arnhem commander who had served in the First World War.

The 1st Border and the 2nd South Staffords were the only Regular Army battalions to fight at Arnhem. The Border, however, did not contain many pre-war soldiers, having suffered heavily in France in 1940, then losing further members of the rebuilt battalion in the medical tests on becoming 'airborne' and, finally, sustaining the casualties of the glider-release fiasco in Sicily. The battalion now contained a large proportion of reinforcements from the industrial areas of Lancashire and the North-East. The CO was

Lieutenant-Colonel Tommy Haddon, who was destined to have one of the most frustrating experiences of any officer in the Arnhem operation. The South Staffords had been in India on the outbreak of war and so contained more of their original members and native Staffordshire men, though the battalion had also suffered heavily in Sicily. The CO was Lieutenant-Colonel Derek McCardie, a pre-war Territorial officer. By a strange coincidence, the only other Regular South Staffords battalion, the 1st, also had a connection with gliders, being Chindit troops who had flown into Burma in the second Chindit operation earlier in 1944.

The junior battalion in the brigade had a completely different background. The 7th King's Own Scottish Borderers[3] was formed when the Territorial Army was doubled in size after the Munich Crisis in 1938. The 7th (Galloway) KOSBs came into being when the 5th Battalion was enlarged and then split in two, so it was a mixture of pre-war Territorials and Militiamen called up just before the war. Most other battalions formed in this way had fought somewhere in the war by 1944, but not the 7th KOSBs. It had formed part of the Orkney and Shetland Defence Force for a long period and was pleased to be relieved from this boring and remote duty to come south to the pleasant town of Woodhall Spa to become a glider unit and wear the maroon beret. The usual weeding out of men below the necessary medical standard took place, and replacements came in from other KOSB and a Scottish units. But the battalion still contained a high proportion of its original members and was the only Scots and only partially Territorial Army battalion to fight at Arnhem. This would be its first and last battle of the war. The CO was Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Payton-Reid, who would be the only battalion commander to return with his unit from the battle.

The parachute and airlanding brigades comprised about two-thirds of the total strength of the 1st Airborne Division. The rest of the division contained most of the supporting elements of a normal

[3] The sometimes-used abbreviation 'Kosbies' is not liked by members of the regiment, being a vulgarity in one of the Indian languages; 'KOSB' is the preferred abbreviation.

infantry division, though in a form and on a scale modified to the airborne role. There were further infantry beyond those units already described. Divisional Headquarters had its Defence Platoon formed of men from the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. There was also the 21st Independent Parachute Company, a special unit trained to act as 'pathfinders', dropping just before the rest of the division to mark the dropping and landing zones. When it was formed in 1942, the first members of the company had been disappointed applicants for glider-pilot training supplemented by volunteers from trained parachutists, so each man was a double volunteer and had been carefully selected. A later addition was an intake of about two dozen anti-Nazi German and Austrian refugees from the Pioneer Corps; many changed their names by deedpoll to avoid danger of capture, but the often recorded story that most chose Scottish surnames is exaggerated. The company had seen only limited action in Sicily and Italy and had yet to perform its pathfinding role in action. The company commander was Major B. A. Wilson – 'Boy' to his officer friends, 'Bob' to his men – who, at forty-five years, was the oldest parachutist in the division. Because of his seniority, his friendship with Browning and the independent nature of his company, Wilson was able to take a highly individualistic approach to his unit's activities. It was a large company, with up to sixty men in each platoon, and would be a valuable addition to the division's infantry strength in operations after the landing.

Almost equal in size to the Independent Company, and with an equally well-known and independent commander, was the division's Reconnaissance Squadron. After this unit had failed to find a place in the Sicily operation because of a shortage of gliders, most of the unit's men trained as parachutists; thus only the vehicles and drivers would need to fly in by glider at Arnhem. The fast, tough, manoeuvrable jeep was the squadron's standard vehicle, but it was only armed with a single .303-inch Vickers 'K' machine-gun, and the unarmoured jeep and its occupants would be vulnerable in action. The 6th Airborne Division had Tetrarch light tanks in its Reconnaissance Squadron when it landed in Normandy, but 1st Airborne's had not been similarly equipped. Major Freddie Gough was the squadron's commander, another of the division's 'old men'

with the varied service background of Royal Navy midshipman in the First World War and command of a provost section in the Dunkirk campaign. Most of the Reconnaissance Squadron would be given a *coup-de-main* role in the coming operation, being sent ahead of the marching infantry to secure the Arnhem road bridge, but this would prove to be a task for which it was ill suited.

The Royal Artillery had a large presence in the division, with a regiment of light field guns, two anti-tank batteries and a small unit for linking up with ground forces artillery support. Approximately 800 artillerymen would fly to Arnhem in about 170 gliders; many envious eyes in other units were cast on that huge glider allocation. The Commander Royal Artillery (CRA) was Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Loder-Symonds, a 'horse-gunner' and a rising star only recently brought into the division.

The 1st Airlanding Light Regiment was one of the newest units in the division, having been formed in February 1943 with a nucleus from one of the Royal Artillery's élite light batteries of 'pack-gunners' or 'mule-gunners' with much North-West Frontier experience. New guns were provided – the American-made 75-millimetre, with a four-man team, firing a 14.7-pound shell to a range of nearly five and a half miles. This gun did not need to be dismantled to fit into a Horsa glider; indeed, its towing jeep, the gun itself and a trailer of ready-use ammunition could all fit into one glider, so that the gun could be brought into action immediately after landing. The regiment would set off for Arnhem with twenty-four of those guns.

The Light Regiment first saw action in Italy, where it served as mountain artillery in support of several divisions from September 1943 until the end of the year, but it had never operated in the airborne role nor yet with its parent division. When the regiment returned to England in January 1944 to rejoin 1st Airborne, it was billeted in Boston, described by one officer as 'a marvellous place for the troops, with two dance halls, four cinemas, eighty-three pubs, and the girls used to whistle at us; but, being in the Fens, the area was useless when it came to gunnery practice'.

The divisional artillery would normally be responsible for linking up by radio with artillery units of the ground forces and for

directing their fire. Three artillery regiments – two mediums and one heavy – were included in the ground-force column specifically to support 1st Airborne. But, because the Light Regiment had no experience of working with such outside artillery, a new unit was created – No. 1 Forward (Airborne) Observation Unit, made up of experienced artillery officers from various sources asked to volunteer, trained as parachutists and forming this unit in June 1944. Such officers, with their signallers, and with jeep drivers and despatch riders at some levels, were attached to every infantry battalion, every brigade, at Divisional Headquarters, at XXX Corps and at each of the three supporting regiments of the ground forces, so that fire support could be given to any unit in 1st Airborne as soon as the ground-force artillery came within range – if all went well.

There were two anti-tank batteries in the division – essential units because the six parachute battalions contained no heavy anti-tank weapons. The 1st and 2nd Airlanding Anti-Tank Batteries were both formed from pre-war Territorial Army units which had their homes in Barrow-in-Furness and Oban respectively. The 2nd Battery had suffered a disaster when HMS *Abdiel* struck a mine in Taranto harbour and many men were drowned. To make up the battery's strength an airborne officer appealed for volunteers to a parade of artillery reinforcements at a camp in North Africa. Gunner George Hurdman describes the result: 'Only one man, a Jew, stepped forward. The officer then walked down the ranks selecting the required fifty of the fittest-looking men and these were sent to the battery. I never regretted it for one moment; it was a fantastic mob to be in.'

The original establishment of each battery was four troops, each of four 6-pounder guns, but there had been a recent reorganization. A larger and more powerful gun, the 17-pounder, had been developed to counter the growing thickness of German tank armour, and it had been found possible to carry one of these guns and its towing vehicle in the new Hamilcar glider. One 6-pounder troop had been converted and three extra troops had been formed for this new gun. This development took place only just before Arnhem; the Germans did not know that the 17-pounder was capable of being glider-borne and would be much surprised by its appearance

at Arnhem. Together with the anti-tank platoons of the Airlanding Brigade, a total of fifty-two 6-pounder and sixteen 17-pounder anti-tank guns would set out for Arnhem.

There was a considerable Royal Engineers presence in the division, with more than 500 members of this branch of the army going to Arnhem. The 9th (Airborne) Field Company was one of the oldest units in the Royal Engineers, with an unbroken history going back to 1787. It had become 'airborne' in June 1942 but had suffered a tragic experience in November of that year when the company took part in a glider raid to Norway to attack a heavy-water plant which might have eventually helped to produce a German atom bomb. One of the two Halifax tugs and both of the Horsa gliders crashed, and those of the sappers not killed outright were interrogated under torture – even the badly wounded – and all later executed. The unit had then taken part in the Sicily landing, where the company commander was killed. The 9th Field Company was a glider unit and carried out engineer duties for the whole division. By contrast, the 1st and 4th Parachute Squadrons were wartime-raised units and were integral parts of their respective parachute brigades. Also going to Arnhem was a detachment of 261 (Airborne) Field Park Company, which had also taken part in the Norway raid in 1942. The men of all these units were fully trained infantry and would be useful additions to the division's rifle strength when their specialist roles were completed. The Commander Royal Engineers (CRE) was Lieutenant-Colonel Edmund Myers, an enterprising character known as 'Eddie' since his cadet days because of Eddie Myers, a famous footballer, but now also known as 'Tito' Myers by some of his men because he had recently served with partisans, although in Greece not Yugoslavia.

Most of the transport of the division's RASC (Royal Army Service Corps) would not travel directly to Arnhem but, hopefully, would come up by land later. Three platoons of 250 (Airborne) Light Composite Company would, however, take part in the airborne operation, their main duty being to collect supplies dropped by parachute and distribute the contents to the division's units. A light transport platoon with jeeps and trailers would also come in with a large reserve of ammunition on the second lift. Once again, these men were all trained to fight as infantry.

Most units flew to Arnhem in high spirits and with reasonable confidence, but the Divisional Signals knew that they were likely to be in difficulty when they saw the plan produced for the operation. The maintenance of communications within the division during the critical opening phase of the battle would have to be achieved with equipment which they knew was inadequate for this particular operation. The standard inter-unit radio sets available in 1944 were, in simple layman's terms: the '19' set, a large set with a range of twelve miles in good conditions, but requiring a jeep and a heavy battery charger; the '22' set, a medium-sized set, also carried in a jeep but requiring a smaller battery charger, and with a maximum range of six miles; and the '68' set, a small, man-pack set using replaceable dry batteries and with a range of about three miles. The main communications within the battalions of the division were the 68 sets, which, because they were carried in the kitbag attached to the operator's leg, were immediately available for use after landing. There were also some 22 sets for the divisional command net, but only the artillery had the more powerful 19 sets. So, if an airborne division was dropped within a 'goose-egg'[4] of three miles and radio conditions were good, inter-unit communications should be satisfactory. But if battalions became separated by more than three miles or brigades by more than six miles, or if local conditions such as woods or buildings reduced those ranges – as they would drastically at Arnhem – then radio control would be lost.

When details of the Arnhem plan were received, with parts of the division having to remain at dropping and landing zones outside Arnhem while other units advanced into the town, it was realized that the 'goose-egg' was far too large and that there was no way that infantry units could maintain contact with each other. Major Tony Deane-Drummond, the experienced second-in-command of Divisional Signals, discussed the problem with his CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Tom Stephenson:

> We had reluctantly accepted the 68 Sets because the division had laid down, in January 1944, that the maximum diameter

[4] 'Goose-egg': so named after the oval circle drawn on planning maps to denote unit locations.

> of the divisional 'goose-egg' would be no more than three miles. Most of the previous planned operations had arranged for landings to take place adjacent or near to the objectives, but as soon as we saw the Arnhem plan, we knew that communications would not work until all units were concentrated in Arnhem. We needed more 19 sets; this would have required more jeeps and more gliders, but any changes in allocation would have implications for other units. This could not be contemplated without at least a ten-day sorting-out period, and that was obviously not acceptable. It was all too late; we had to get on with what we had. But the fact that communications would be dodgy was something that the staff should have been aware of when the operation was being planned.

So the 350 or so signalmen who went to Arnhem knew that there would be a preliminary gap in inter-unit communications lasting for at least twenty-four hours, or longer if the division was slow in concentrating. But, as Tony Deane-Drummond concludes: '*Everybody* in the division wanted to get on with the operation after all the cancelled ones. There is no doubt that risks were taken by everybody with eyes wide open. The feeling was that we had to get there before the German Army packed up.'

The remainder of the divisional units can be quickly described. The three medical units attached to brigades were most important elements, because there could be no evacuation of casualties until a link-up with the ground forces was achieved. Nos 16 and 133 Parachute Field Ambulances were attached to the 1st and 4th Parachute Brigades respectively, and 181 Airlanding Field Ambulance would fly in by glider with the Airlanding Brigade. No. 16 Field Ambulance claimed, justifiably, to have been the first 'paramedics'; 133 and 181 both had their original roots in pre-war Croydon Territorial Army units. The 400 RAMC (Royal Army Medical Corps) men would be stretched to the limit at Arnhem in an action that would last longer without outside relief than anyone expected. Seventy men of the REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) would be present, mostly on weapon- and

radio-repair duties. The RAOC (Royal Army Ordnance Corps) sent twenty-eight men to identify and sort captured German weapons and equipment and to control the issue of British equipment received on supply drops. Finally, sixty-nine Military Police for traffic control and the guarding of prisoners would be present, together with sixteen Intelligence Corps men fluent in various languages – though none spoke Dutch – with orders to capture as many Gestapo personnel, Dutch collaborators and German documents as possible.

The total war establishment of 1st Airborne was 12,215 men; the total despatched by air to Arnhem is quoted variously between 8,905 and 8,969. Just over half of these had seen action before; the average age was twenty-seven. Nearly all were from the home countries of the United Kingdom, the only known exceptions being the Canadian officers, the Germans and Austrians in the Independent Company, a few Rhodesians in 156 Battalion, two South African officers who could speak Dutch and a French officer who had been attached to 156 Battalion for one of the proposed drops in France and, in the absence of orders returning him to his own forces, volunteered to drop at Arnhem and would die there. Several Dutch personnel and some more Americans would be added in the final stages of preparation. The division was a keen, well-rested force eager for action, although the long wait in England and the many cancellations had created a degree of staleness, so the division was not battle-sharp. It was also going into action for the first time as a complete division, under a new commander with no airborne experience, and with a plan whose implementation would require considerable skill even in favourable conditions.

The glider-pilot units which carried much of 1st Airborne to Arnhem were not part of the division. The Glider Pilot Regiment was, like the Parachute Regiment, part of the Army Air Corps and was available for whichever airborne division was carrying out an operation involving gliders. Glider pilots wore the airborne maroon beret, but there was no regimental badge, only the Army Air Corps 'eagle' badge. The regiment had started to form early in the war with a few army officers holding pre-war pilot's qualifications, but

almost the entire regiment was the product of wartime volunteering and training. There was no shortage of applicants, but selection was rigorous, and a high standard was soon achieved, helped along by the usual leavening of Guards NCOs provided by Browning. The glider pilots were trained by the RAF, first on powered aircraft up to solo flight standard and then on gliders. The Horsa and Hamilcar gliders now in use had a crew of two: first pilots, who were at least staff sergeants, and second pilots, who were usually sergeants, had received a shorter training course and wore a smaller 'wings' badge than the first pilots. After an uncertain start, the Glider Pilot Regiment had developed close links with the RAF, and its units were all based on the airfields of RAF transport squadrons.

The standard glider now in use was the Horsa – high wing, tricycle undercarriage, 67 feet long, 88 feet wing-span and with an interior often compared with that of a London underground train carriage. The Horsa had one drawback; it had been designed before the arrival of the airborne jeep and the trailers and various guns the jeep would tow. These could be loaded, carefully and slowly, through the large side door of the glider but, in action, had to be unloaded by removing the high tail and driving down steep ramps. The process was slow and often difficult under operational conditions and extremely hazardous if the landing zone was under fire. One glider pilot says that 'the euphemism of the quick-release bolt was a sore point with us'. The standard American glider, the Waco, had a low undercarriage, and its nose could be lifted up to allow a jeep to drive straight out, but it had a much smaller capacity than the otherwise excellent Horsa.

A much larger British glider, the Hamilcar, had been developed in 1943. It was huge, larger than the four-engined aircraft which towed it. But, once airborne after a long take-off, it was not difficult to fly, though the pilots had to sit one behind the other in the narrow cockpit on top of the high fuselage. The Hamilcar had been developed to carry the light Tetrarch tank which could drive straight out of the up-tilted nose on airborne operations, and this had been done successfully in Normandy. The Tetrarch was not to be used at Arnhem, but the 17-pounder anti-tank gun with its towing vehicle also fitted into the Hamilcar, thus enabling 1st Airborne to take this new gun into action. The selected glider pilots

of C Squadron who had been trained to fly the Hamilcar were now based at Tarrant Rushton airfield, where the most powerful aircraft in the transport squadrons – the Halifax – could use the long runway to tow off the huge gliders.

Nearly 90 per cent of the available British glider pilots would be required for Operation 'Market', 1,262 for Arnhem and 76 to take Browning's Corps Headquarters. Because of their long training and the lack of a reserve, glider pilots were usually withdrawn from an operation as quickly as possible; this had been done in Normandy, and only thirty-four glider pilots had been killed there. But they were also well-trained infantry and were given a ground role at Arnhem for what was hoped would be the short interval between landing and the arrival of ground forces. Some were to remain with the infantry and artillery units they carried into action, but were only to be used for defensive action and patrolling; others would form a central reserve under divisional control. The divisional commander would thus have the services of the equivalent of two further battalions of infantry. This fighting capability of the British glider pilot was in contrast to their American counterparts, who were not trained for ground action and actually required infantry to protect them until relieved.

The glider pilots would not be the only addition to Major-General Urquhart's fighting strength, for a Polish brigade – the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade Group – was allocated to Arnhem, albeit not planned to arrive until the third day.[5] This was a unique body, the only Allied parachute unit made up completely of men from one of the occupied countries. Some of the Poles had been waiting for exactly three years to see action, since the brigade's formation in Scotland in September 1941. The unit was an 'independent brigade group', containing infantry, artillery, engineers and support units. The soldiers wore mostly British-type uniforms but with their own parachute beret, steel grey in colour, with their own eagle badge and their rank insignia over the middle of the forehead. The brigade had its own training organization but had not yet reached full strength. It was particularly short of

[5] Appendix 2 gives the order of battle for the Polish brigade.

experienced junior officers, the result of the Russian massacre of approximately 8,000 Polish officers at Katyn and at other as yet undiscovered sites in the spring of 1941. The brigade commander was the legendary Stanislaw Sosabowski, whose service as a soldier went back to his days as a conscript in the Austrian Army in the First World War. Becoming a Regular officer in the Polish Army, he commanded an infantry brigade in the defence of Warsaw until taken prisoner by the Germans on the fall of the city. He managed to slip away, however, eventually reaching Scotland to be given the task of forming the new parachute brigade. Because of the Polish system of promotion – based on service and ability irrespective of the position held – he was now a major-general, equal in theory to Roy Urquhart, under whose command he was to come in the Arnhem operation.

During the first part of its existence, the brigade was responsible only to Polish command and to its own government-in-exile in London. Its men were promised that the brigade's task would be to drop into Poland as soon as conditions were favourable, to join in an uprising of the Polish Home Army and help liberate their country. The brigade's motto was: 'By the Shortest Way'. But this plan had been steadily eroded, to the bitter disappointment of the whole brigade. The change came about through the British realization that a parachute drop around Warsaw would be almost impracticable and also because of the British desire to have the use of the brigade in the campaign following the invasion of France. General Browning, under whose aegis the Poles were being equipped and trained, had initially been on good terms with Sosabowski; he had offered Sosabowski command of a new airborne division in 1942 if he would put his brigade under British command. Sosabowski resisted the offer, stressing the Poles' desire to remain true to their original role. Enormous pressure from the British followed which led to an agreement whereby the brigade was committed to carry out one operation after the invasion and would then be allowed to go to Poland.

So the Polish brigade became part of the First Allied Airborne Army, moving south to the Stamford and Peterborough areas in June 1944, and it was placed under Major-General Urquhart's command on 10 August 1944. Tragically, the Polish Home Army

had started the Warsaw Uprising only ten days earlier. This had been preceded by a message from the Home Army to Polish Army Headquarters in London on 25 June: 'We are ready at any time to fight for Warsaw. When the Parachute Brigade joins us, it will have an enormous political and tactical impact.'[6] But the brigade could not answer the call, and it would be left to the hated Russians to halt their advance short of Warsaw, deny the use of airfields for supply aircraft and allow the uprising to fail, even while the Poles were fighting at Arnhem.

The Poles had few friends in high places in the airborne world and were not in happy mood. Despite their shortage of numbers and lack of some equipment, Browning was insisting that the brigade was ready for action, and relations between him and Sosabowski worsened. Training was pushed ahead, and there was a disaster in an exercise when two Dakotas collided over Tinwell, near Stamford, on 8 July, and twenty-six Poles of the 3rd Battalion and the Supply Company, together with eight American airmen, died. The brigade was now firmly under British command and did not even have a representative on the staff of the First Allied Airborne Army, which would decide the Poles' immediate future. Sosabowski's recent outspoken opposition to Operation 'Comet' had further increased the bad feeling with Browning.

It was planned that the Polish brigade would fly in on the third day's lift to Arnhem, most of the brigade parachuting south of the Rhine. The number of Polish troops who would be despatched by air was 1,689. With his enlarged airlanding battalions, the glider pilots able to act as infantry, and then this large Polish reinforcement, Urquhart should eventually have an infantry strength approaching double that of a normal airborne division.

There were even further potential increases in strength. Waiting in England was the 52nd (Lowland) Division, a Scottish Territorial unit which had undergone a long period of training in mountain warfare but was now part of the First Allied Airborne Army, having been additionally trained as 'airportable'. As soon as Deelen airfield, four miles north of Arnhem, was captured, most of this

[6] Text provided by the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, London.