

AIRBORNE ASSAULT NORMANDY

Registered Charity 280743

THE TRUST TO PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF 6 AIRBORNE DIVISION'S ASSAULT INTO NORMANDY

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NEWSLETTER 2010

Christmas is with us again. The future and finance is still a great problem for all at home and abroad. All of us in the Management Team send you Christmas Greetings and hope that 2011 will not depress you too much!

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dear members of Airborne Assault Normandy, another year has slipped by; a year during which we said goodbye to another crop of veterans. Thus we are reminded of the increasing need to preserve the history of 6th Airborne Division in Normandy and the memory of the remarkable men who were 6th Airborne Division.

2010 has been a year of steady progress as our Trust continues its work. It has also been a year of evolution as the Managing Trustees have reviewed the way we work, and with the appointment of an historian, we have bolstered our 'historical authority'. I have very much appreciated the work done by all my fellow Trustees and Joint Presidents.

On the Board of Trustees we have said goodbye to Colonel Giles Orpen-Smellie who has taken up a Defence Attaché post in Bucharest and we have welcomed Colonel Ben Arkle and Professor Lloyd Clark. We wish Giles and his family a very pleasant tour in Romania. Colonel Ben Arkle is well known in The Parachute Regiment and is a perennial June visitor to Normandy. Professor Lloyd Clark MA FRHistS is an academic at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and Professor of History at Buckingham University. We extend a very warm welcome to them both!

One innovation we have made is our website at www.airborneassaultnormandytrust.co.uk. This has been a success and has received 1,450 visitors this year; an average of 180 visits per month. The website is one of the tools we will be using to increase awareness of the Trust and its work and to communicate with our members. If I may make a plea to help us communicate with you by email and (vice-versa), could you please send an email to contact@airborneassaultnormandytrust.co.uk and include who you are in it; this will enable us to build a database of email contacts. (We will never pass on your email address to third parties.)

Managing Trustees

Brigadier Johnny Rickett CBE FCMI F Inst D, Colonel Ross Mallock AFC, Colonel David Benest OBE MA FRSA, Colonel Ben Arkle OBE,
Colonel John Power QVRM TD BA(Hons) BSc(Hons) LLB(Hons) CdiPAF MBA FRAeS FIET FIMMM FCMI,
Professor Lloyd Clark MA FRHistS, Monsieur Mark Worthington, Ron McCaffery Esq,
RHQ PARA: Lieutenant Colonel John Handford OBE, PARA

An event to look out for in June 2011 is an intended get-together in the Golf Hotel, Cabourg, Normandy. The intention is to have a get-together for all attending an Airborne pilgrimage provided programmes can be de-conflicted. Watch the website!

I thank all those who have helped our Trust this year and the list is long. I would particularly like to mention those in Normandy. These include the staff at Memorial Pegasus and the Merville Battery Museums and our friends, the Mayors and people of Bénouville, Ranville Amfréville, Bréville, Bavent, Sallenelles, Merville-Franceville, Gonneville-en-Auge, Putot-en-Auge, Hérouvillette, Sannerville and Troarn. There are many more friends and supporters who have not received a direct mention and I hope they will not be offended. Their contribution is valuable and is very much appreciated. Finally, and in no small measure, I thank you, the members of Airborne Assault Normandy for your continued support.

I wish you the compliments of the season, a very Happy Christmas and good health in 2011.

Alan Edwards.

6TH AIRBORNE DIVISION
NORMANDY
66TH ANNIVERSARY REMEMBRANCE
3-7 JUNE 2010

The 66th Anniversary Normandy was led by Major Jack Watson, 13th (Lancashire) Battalion The Parachute Regiment with 20 veterans, next of kin and families with support from Lt Col John Handford, Regimental Colonel, Lt Col Paul Rodgers, Regimental Secretary and The Parachute Regimental Association.

4 June

The day commenced with lunch at Ferme de la Ranconnière, Crepon, a very attractive chateau, followed by a visit to Arromanches; a relaxing day after a late arrival the night before.



5 June

A visit was made to the Memorial Pegasus again, to meet many friends and tour the Museum. Then the return to our hotel for lunch and a rest before attending the Remembrance Service at Breville with the Mayor Madame Joelle Giroude-Viel commencing in the Churchyard at the graves of Captain Hugh Ward, 53rd (The Worcestershire Yeomanry) A/L Lt Regt RA and Private Charles Masters 12th (Yorkshire) Battalion The Parachute Regiment. The group then moved to the Memorial of the 12th (Yorkshire) Battalion The Parachute Regiment and the 12th Battalion The Devonshire Regiment supported by many Standards and a local band. It was a very moving Remembrance Service with a very large congregation from the Village including many children joining the veterans and families.



Breville 5 June



Memorial to 12th Devons



6 June

The day of Remembrance commencing at the 13th (Lancashire) Battalion The Parachute Regiment Memorial to be greeted by the Mayor of Ranville, M Jean Luc Adelaide. Major Jack Watson replied to thank him for his close friendship and to remember our comrades of the 6th Airborne Division, so many who rest in the Cemetery at Ranville in Churchyards and Communal Cemeteries throughout Normandy. Also not to forget the people within 6th Airborne Divisional area who died during the early days of liberation (**see Annex B**).



It was also good to have the Burgermeister of Motten, the twinned town to Ranville, Jochan Vogel again joining many veterans and families at the Crossroads. Our new President and his dear wife Marie H elene also joined us.

To also make it special was to have the Belvedere Concert Band conducted by WO1 Guy Bennett CAUS of Kneller Hall to play the National Anthem and supporting music.

Then it was the traditional march to attend Mass with the people of Ranville led by the Belgium Pipe and Drums, the Pony Major and Standard Bearers with the Ranville School children waving their flags.

After Mass, wreaths were laid at the French and Belgian Memorials followed by the Remembrance Service at the Airborne Cross conducted by Reverend Paul Abram assisted by Reverend Phyle Fanning, Army Air Corps, with The Belvedere Concert Band in attendance.

After the Act of Remembrance, wreaths were laid at the Airborne Cross by the Mayor and Major Watson followed by a large number of wreaths laid by veterans and next of kin. It was also moving to see so many children of Ranville and a very large congregation attending the Service by the Cross. At the end of the Service, wreaths were laid at the lone Belgian grave with the Belgian SAS veteran and the grave of the unknown German soldier by the Burgermeister Jochan Vogel, together with the Regimental Colonel who laid a wreath with him on behalf of The Parachute Regiment with the Mayor of Ranville and Major Watson in attendance; a sign of close friendship which was very moving for the Burgermeister.

The day ended by joining the Mayor of Putot-en-Auge M Alain Asmant, Nicole Ameline, Minister and the people of the Village for the Memorial Service in the Churchyard conducted by Reverend Paul Abram to remember the 31 men of the 6th Airborne Division who died during a battle in the area 19 August 1944 and rest in peace in this quiet corner of Normandy; a fitting end of a day of Remembrance.

Then it was return to the hotel for the final dinner and the return home very early on 7 June after such a successful Remembrance with good weather.



The Chairman and his Wife Marie H elene



The Piper who led us to the Mass



Putot-en-Auge



The Ceremony at Putot-en-Auge

Again, thank you to Reverend Paul Abram who conducted many moving Services, Ken Price looking as usual extremely smart as the National Standard Bearer, to Barry Ryall who sounded the Last Post and Reveille with perfection and our Pony Major Alex McCrae with Pegasus who again made it a memorable occasion especially for the people and children of the villages we attended.

A special mention must be made of the Belvedere Concert Band conducted by WO1 Guy Bennett with his wonderful support at the Crossroads, at the Remembrance Service in the Ranville Cemetery and also at the Vin d'honneur in the Salle Henri Robert which everyone enjoyed.

Finally, a thank you to Ralph Bennett, Director Tours International, Jackie Parry and Peter the coach driver for their help to make the Remembrance so successful and to the staff of the Mercure Cabourg who made sure we were well cared for.

THE 224 PARACHUTE FIELD AMBULANCE RAMC PLAQUE IN NORMANDY

Brigadier James Hill's 3rd Parachute Brigade established its Headquarters on 6 June 1944 at Le Mesnil de Breville on the high ground that overlooked and dominated the Eastern boundary of the Allied invasion. 224 Parachute Field Ambulance RAMC provided the Main Dressing Station of the Brigade in farm buildings from D-Day to D+13. All 3rd Parachute Brigade combat units, (8th Parachute Battalion, 9th Parachute Battalion and 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion) had attachments from 22 Parachute Field Ambulance.

A memorial plaque for the remarkable work done at this Main Dressing Station was installed in 1989 on the Mesnil farmhouse building. Its inscription reads:

“224 Parachute Field Ambulance RAMC. The Main Dressing Station of the 3rd Parachute Brigade was established in these farm buildings from D-Day to D+13, during which time 112 major life-saving operations were carried out and 822 serious casualties were treated. The Field Ambulance itself lost 4 officers and 63 other ranks.”

At a service of dedication in 1989 during the 45th Anniversary of the D-Day landings, Brigadier Hill said it had not been intended for the MDS, showing a customary Red Cross on its roof, to have been established so close to his Brigade HQ against normal conventions. However, by the time he arrived on the scene, delayed by the off-target parachute drop, the MDS was carrying out vital work on casualties and he did not want to interrupt the work by ordering a change of location. In any case, the Allies had air superiority.

Although wounded, James Hill ran the Brigade's battle from top of the wooden steps leading to his room, his “perch” as he called it, to spare his staff the smell of his festering leg wound (received early on 6 June 1944 from friendly aircraft fire on the east of the flooded Dives Valley). Hill was one of the many dropped wide of DZ “V”, the Dakotas of Number 46 Group variously mistaking the River Dives for the River Orne or veering away from anti-aircraft fire.

The years had taken their toll and 224's memorial plaque was in need of maintenance. It was renovated at the initiative of Airborne Assault Normandy Trust. Today the property at Le Mesnil is owned by M and Mne Roy, who care about and are keen to preserve the history of events at their farm. Discreet visitors to the memorial plaque, who respect the owners' privacy are welcome.



REGIMENTAL UPDATE

16 Air Assault Brigade (2 and 3 PARA) have deployed to Afghanistan. They have carried out intensive training and sport before they moved.

1 PARA. Continue to serve with the Special Service Support Group.

4 PARA. Continue to support the Regular battalion.

ITC. Continue to produce a high standard of recruits for the Regiment. Unfortunately there is a lack of aircraft to complete their parachute training. The plan is to complete training later. In the meantime they reinforce two battalions.

RHQ is now completely settled in the new Merville Barracks in Colchester with the Headquarters. 16 Air Assault Brigade and their supporting Arms. Airborne Forces Day was held at the new barracks. It was a great success. It was just like the old days with the battalion on parade. The PRA had a March Past followed by a Regimental Party and plenty to refresh the Families throughout the day. The Dakota in all its glory is on display at the entrance to the barracks.

Airborne Forces Charities have now been merged into one Airborne Forces Charity.

The Museum of The Parachute Regiment. The Museum continues to attract many visitors. It is planned to exhibit some of the items which cannot be displayed at Duxford through lack of space in the hall of HQ 16 Air Assault Brigade.

The Book about the Life of Brigadier James Hill. The book has now been printed and will be on sale at Memorial Pegasus Museum in France as well as at the Merville Battery.

THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO NORMANDY

The President, Major Jack Watson MC attended on behalf of the Colonel Commandant, a Memorial Service on 11 November at the French Memorial at Ranville Church in memory of those who fell during both World Wars, followed by laying a wreath at the Airborne Cross in the Military Cemetery.

MEMORIAL PEGASUS

The Museum continues as a great success The one-millionth visitor passed through the door on 26 October 2010 (see Annex A).

SALES

Sales are still available. Tapes for old cars or equipment are held. Attached at Annex C is a list of items available.

THE MERVILLE BATTERY

The Merville Battery continues to attract a large number of visitors. These have been improved over the years. There are still British representatives on the Committee.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2011

25-28 Mar	The Ardennes	- Belgium
3-7 Jun	Normandy Commemoration	- France
16-18 Sep	Arnhem Commemoration (Please note that Tours International will not be available for Arnhem)	- Arnhem, Holland
11 Nov	St Paul's & St Lawrence Jewry	- London
12 Nov	Remembrance Day Parade	- Cenataph, Whitehall, London

Watch for further dates in Pegasus!

Enquiries for Overseas Tours should be made to Tours International Ltd, PO Box No 45, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9XY, Tel: 01892 515825, Fax: 01892 515515.

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR GREETINGS

The President and Managing Trustees wish you and your Families a Very Happy Christmas and Good Wishes for 2011. We look forward to meeting you again throughout the coming year.

Annexes:

- A. Presentation of the one-millionth visitor after 10 years.
- B. Jack Watson's thank you to the Mayor of Ranville for his continued support.
- C. List of goods available from the Secretary.
- D. The Presentation of €4,000 to the Church at Ranville for repairs to roof.



Alas the Church roof is still under repair hence the marquee had to be put up again. Airborne Charities and the Trust have donated €4,000 to help. If you feel inclined to help, please send your donation, which should be made payable to the AANT Trust Fund to the Secretary who is still at Browning Barracks Aldershot (**see Annex D**).



Ranville Church (the Paras Church!)



The presentation by our Chairman to the one-millionth visitor to Memorial Pegasus, officially passed through the doors on 26 October 2010.

ANNEX B TO THE AANT NEWSLETTER 2010

M Le Maire

Thank you again for your wonderful welcome today on this 66th Anniversary of D Day at these crossroads; a place of close affection since 1946.

Again M Le Maire, Ranville with its Church and separate tower such a landmark 66 years ago, you have created a wonderful feeling of love and friendship for all who come to Ranville. I know it comes from me but I am speaking also on behalf of the veterans, next of kin and families who are here today who come to Normandy to remember.

It is also wonderful to have the Burgermeister of Motten, the twinned town to Ranville, Jochan Vogel standing with us today.

Today is the day of Remembrance to remember our comrades who rest in the Cemetery here, in churchyards and communal cemeteries throughout Normandy all cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves and by the villagers with affection away from Ranville's main Cemetery. They will never be forgotten.

Also not to forget the people within the 6th Airborne Division area who died during the early days of liberation.

Again our heartfelt thanks to you M Le Maire from all of us here today and also our gratitude to the people of Ranville and surrounding villages whose friendship and love has never faltered since the early hours of 6 June 1944.

AIRBORNE ASSAULT NORMANDY TRUST

To support the Trust, the following items are available and can be ordered from the Secretary, AANT, RHQ PARA, Browning Barracks, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2BU.

Video Cassette (VHS)

“Airborne Assault Normandy” £12.00 (incl P&P)

Booklet

“Red Berets into Normandy” £1.80 (incl P&P)

“Pegasus Trail”

Taped recording of the Airborne Assault into Normandy including maps etc £5.00 (incl P&P)

“Beaches Trail”

Taped recording of the Landings on Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches including maps etc £5.00 (incl P&P)

Taped recording of the Airborne Assault and Landings on Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches £2.50 (incl P&P)

AANT/ABFSF DONATION TO THE FONDATION DU PATRIMOINE - RANVILLE

Airborne Assault Normandy Trust and the Airborne Forces Security Fund jointly gave a cheque for €4,000 to Ranville Heritage Foundation on 10 November 2010, to help with the repairs to the church ceiling. The cheque was presented by our Joint-President Major Jack Watson MC, who jumped into Ranville on 6 June 1944 as part of the 13th Battalion. He related his arrival early that morning and the liberation of Ranville by 0230 hours and thanked everyone in Ranville for the wonderful friendship they had shown over many years.

The Chairman of AANT said "Ranville has a very important place in the history of British paratroopers. General Gale installed his headquarters in the Chateau du Heaume in Ranville and thousands of troops arrived on the adjacent DZ/LZs by parachute and glider. On exiting the DZ the paratroops used Ranville Church Tower as a landmark. Laid to rest in Ranville Commonwealth War Cemetery are 2,235 British Commonwealth graves, mostly airborne soldiers, and 330 German. In the churchyard there are a further 47 Commonwealth graves and one German. Amongst them is Lieutenant Den Brotheridge, who arrived by glider at the bridge over the canal at Benouville at 0016 hours on 6 June 1944. He was the first British soldier to die by enemy action on D Day. British paras have excellent relations with the people of Normandy, and we consider Ranville Church to be our chapel in Normandy. Therefore we are delighted to play our part in the renovation of Ranville's heritage".

The picture shows Jack Watson with Alan Edwards, Jean-Luc Adelaide, the Mayor of Ranville and Vice-Patron of AAN, and Yves Bonhomme of Fondation du Patrimoine-Ranville.

