

**St Vincents Caythorpe
and
Arnhem
17-26 September 1944**



St Vincents Church has a long and proud association with the Signals Division of the Parachute Brigade since the second World War.

Post D day, Allied troops had a strategy to proceed through France and Holland into Germany. They would need to cross the River Rhine using the bridge at Arnhem. Without crossing the bridge, it would be extremely difficult to move onwards into Germany. German troops still held large parts of Belgium and were headquartered in Arnhem.

The bridge at Arnhem was therefore strategically significant and a huge operation was planned to capture the bridge and hold it until reinforcement Allied troops could reach it.

The operation was planned in Fulbeck Hall and large numbers of troops were



stationed around Caythorpe in preparation for the attack.

The operation involved British, American and Polish forces. The complex operation involved use of gliders, support aircraft and services. It would involve 8,000 men.

Major General Roy Urquhart (above) took command of the division in September 1944 and was billeted in Fulbeck Hall. Polish troops were commanded by Stanislaw Sosabowski.



Glider aircraft loaded with men and equipment took off from RAF Barkston Heath, near Cranwell and headed for Arnhem on September 17th. The landings were difficult and not at the planned drop site, but 8 miles from the target. The rapid deployment of men and equipment was not possible and necessary supply took three days. The brave soldiers had lost the vital element of surprise. Some gliders failed to reach the landing zone, some crash landed and there was loss of life and equipment.

Fierce fighting over the ensuing days was ineffective in breaking through the German defences. Troops became separated and had to conduct operations from local houses on a building by building, street by street basis. Fierce fighting ensued and many were wounded or killed. Local civilians risked death by helping the Allied forces.

For each day of the battle the German military strength increased with reinforcements, whilst the limited British supplies diminished. By the end of the fifth day the German forces outnumbered the allies by three to one. At the outset of the battle the Germans had about 6,000 troops, a tank company, self propelled guns and reconnaissance and artillery battalions

On Monday 25th September, the order was given to withdraw. Urquhart's planning was the basis for the rescue of some 2398 men of 1st Airborne with a total of nearly 4000 evacuees.

The evacuees had to cross the flooded River Rhine at Oosterbeek, near Arnhem, in grave danger, in darkness and under continual gunfire. The crossing of the river started at 10pm



in heavy rain facing German artillery fire. Men needed to be guided to waiting boats using parachute cord. Soldiers stood for their turn in a 150 yds queue on the river bank. In order to not arouse German troops, it was necessary to proceed in silence and in a disciplined manner.

Prior to this river crossing Urquhart had visited the soldiers too wounded to be evacuated who were in the cellars of the local homes, where they were being cared for by medics and locals.

The last of the almost sinking boats left the northern shore and headed across just before 5am, with the boats coming under increasing German fire. Many men swam across to leave space for others in the boats.

Tragically many men drowned making the crossing.

Reinforcements failed to arrive after making less progress than planned and meeting greater resistance than expected.

Casualties were substantial with the following deaths

1st Airborne **1,174**

Glider Pilot Regiment **219**

RAF **368**

Polish Brigade **92**

Royal Army Service Corps **79**

XXX Corps **25**

IX Troop Carrier Command **27**

In total **1984** Allied Forces men died, **1,300** German troops died and **453** Dutch civilians lost their lives.

The Victoria Cross. the highest award for gallantry, was awarded to five of the British participants in the battle-

Lance-Sergeant John Baskeyfield

2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment

Major Robert Cain

2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment (the only VC to survive)

Flight Lieutenant David Lord,

271 Squadron RAF

Captain Lionel Queripel

10th Battalion Parachute Regiment

Lieutenant John Grayburn

2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment.



IN REMEMBRANCE

In memory of our Airborne Comrades

Never to be forgotten



From all members of the

AIRBORNE SIGNALS OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION



SEPTEMBER 1994

THIS WINDOW WAS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE
AIRBORNE SIGNALLERS
WHO LOST THEIR LIVES SINCE 1941
BY THOSE WHO FOLLOWED IN THE AIRBORNE TRADITION.
216 PARACHUTE SIGNAL SQUADRON



**CARPET IN
THE
ARNHEM
AISLE**



ON SEPTEMBER 15TH 1974 THE NORTH AISLE WAS NAMED
THE ARNHEM AISLE
AND WAS DEDICATED BY THE BISHOP OF GRANTHAM
TO THE MEMORY OF THE MEN OF
1ST AIRBORNE DIVISIONAL SIGNALS
WHO WERE BILLETED IN THIS PARISH AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD
BEFORE FLYING TO HOLLAND IN THEIR VALIANT ATTEMPT
TO ESTABLISH A BRIDGEHEAD OVER THE RIVER RHINE
AT ARNHEM
SEPTEMBER 17TH 1944



8,000 ALLIED FORCES TOOK PART IN THIS OPERATION

2,000 RETURNED

1,984 ALLIED FORCES LOST THEIR LIVES

453 DUTCH CIVILIANS DIED

1,300 GERMAN FORCES DIED



The continuing Book of Remembrance

It is our great privilege to be able to continue to honour our soldiers who have lost their lives in operations since WWII