

Bygones

# Remembering the heroes of Market Garden

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More than 17,000 Allied soldiers killed, wounded or taken prisoner during Operation Market Garden 66 years ago will be remembered at ceremonies taking place this weekend. **Andy Smart** looks ahead



THE deep-throated roar of veteran military aircraft will shatter the quiet of the Dutch countryside at the weekend as old soldiers remember the Arnhem campaign of 1944.

Parachutists will leap into the sky to re-enact Operation Market Garden, Field Marshal Montgomery's ill-fated scheme to land British, American and Polish forces in Holland, capture key bridges across the Rhine and shorten the war by months.

It looked good on paper, but a combination of poor planning and logistics, combined with overwhelming German opposition, turned the invasion into a nightmare. The Allies suffered more than 17,000 killed, wounded and captured.

It is a sacrifice which veterans, their families and supporters, will never allow to be forgotten and this weekend, thousands will gather again around the battlefields of 66 years ago.

Among the jumpers paying a very real tribute will be ex-Para Jason Dickman, a 47-year-old motor engineer from Ruddington.

Mr Dickman will be making his second Arnhem jump, having taken part in the 65th anniversary last year.

In military uniform, he will join members of the international Pathfinders Parachute Group who will jump out of a wartime DC3 Dakota aircraft - which still bears the bullet holes it received in Operation Market Garden - on to Ginkel Heath, where the Allied soldiers landed 66 years ago.

"I admire everything the Paras did, but especially Arnhem, as it was the biggest airborne operation



**Ferocious fight:** This iconic photograph, taken at the battle of Arnhem, shows men from C Company, 156 Parachute Battalion, with Private Dugdale, left, and Lance Corporal Rosenberg at the back, holding a pistol.



**Honour:** Jason Dickman, 44, from Ruddington (left) is taking part in the Arnhem tribute and, above, a Dakota drops paratroopers at the annual commemoration

ever undertaken. It is wonderful to be able to pay our respects, and to meet them and listen to their exploits."

Mr Dickman served with 4Para, a TA unit in Lincoln. "I always wanted to be in the

minute I changed my mind. I joined the TA instead, because it gave me the opportunity to jump without having to join the regular Army," he explained.

An experienced jumper with nearly 20 drops to his credit, he is looking forward to returning to Arnhem.

"Last year, we jumped on to Ginkel Heath for the first time since the war. There were 40,000 people watching, it was quite an experience."

Among those on the ground this year will be soldier's son John O'Reilly from Thoroton, who last year published an authoritative history of the battle.

Called "From Delhi to Arnhem", it follows the exploits of 156 Parachute Battalion throughout World War Two, with emphasis on Operation Market Garden and the survivors' subsequent escape. Among them was his late father, also called John, an Irishman who lived most of his life in and around Nottingham.

Since the book came out, Mr O'Reilly has become a recognised expert on the battle and is regularly contacted by military researchers and family members trying to piece together the movements of individual soldiers and, particularly, the exact locations where men were killed in action, and the circumstances.

"I have met people and been in a unique position to

find things out that no one else has been able to."

He has befriended members of the Dutch resistance, and their families, who helped Allied soldiers on the run after the battle plan collapsed.

"There are now only around 80 veterans left and from 156 Battalion just five survive," he said.

Mr O'Reilly hopes they will be joined by German ex-combatants at the commemoration.

"To be honest, I would like to see them there. There were many Germans lost at Arnhem. Feelings are changing, it is starting to mellow after all these years."

Mr O'Reilly is also supporting the creation of a fellowship organisation to maintain bonds of friend-

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**Jason Dickman**

ship forged during the Battle of Arnhem, and to educate future generations.

Trustee Colonel John Waddy, an Arnhem veteran, said: "We want to maintain the fellowship and friendship of anyone involved in the battle. It is not only for the Airborne brotherhood, but families, children... anyone interested in maintaining this fellowship. There will be a British and Dutch part to it."

Copies of John O'Reilly's epic book "From Delhi to Arnhem, the history of 156 Parachute Battalion", is available from Thoroton Publishing Ltd, Thoroton Hall, Main Street, Thoroton, Notts NG13 9DS, priced £35 (plus £7 p&p - but free p&p to Post readers).

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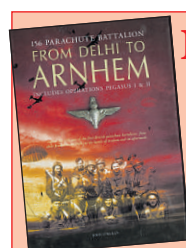
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Paras, especially after the Falklands War, which really aroused my interest.

"I went through all the selection tests but at the last



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