

**FRIENDS OF  
TARRANT RUSHTON AIRFIELD MEMORIAL**

A Commemoration of the 80<sup>TH</sup> anniversary of  
the D-Day operations

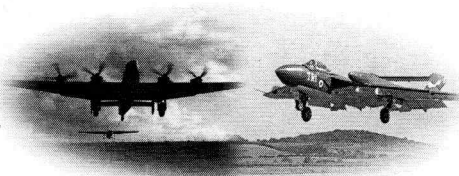
**Saturday 1 June 2024**

**GUEST OF HONOUR  
ANGUS CAMPBELL CVO**  
His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset

**Parade Marshal  
SPENCER HARE**

Commemoration Service conducted by  
Reverend **CAROLYN COUZENS**  
St Mary's Church, Tarrant Rushton

**TR**



**80**

## PROGRAMME FOR TODAY

- 10:00 Gates open to the public
- 12:00 Parade members start to arrive
- 12:45 Gates closed to vehicles & parade forms
- 12:50 Lord-Lieutenant arrives
- 13:00 Welcome and parade inspection
- 13:30 Commemoration service & wreath laying
- 14:30 Dispersal and event closure.

Music will be provided by the Verwood Concert Brass before, during and after the service.

Please all stand for the Dispersal when the Parade Marshal will march off the standards.

# Order of Service

## Welcome from Reverend Couzens

### HYMN

Guide me O thou great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land.  
I am weak, but thou art mighty, hold me with thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and evermore,  
Feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow.  
Let the fiery cloudy pillar, lead me all my journey through:  
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield,  
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside.  
Death of death and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side:  
Songs and praises, songs and praises, I will ever give to thee,  
I will ever give to thee.

### ACT OF REMEMBRANCE

Major General Neil Sexton CB Army Air Corps

Let us remember before God and commend to his keeping,  
those who died for their country in war; those whom we knew, and whose  
memory we treasure; and all who lived and died  
in the service of humanity.

### EXHORTATION

Colonel Rebecca Jaques-Grey OBE Blandford Garrison

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,  
We will remember them.

**All say: We will remember them.**

## **THE LAST POST**

performed by Marcus Adams

**Two minutes silence**

## **REVEILLE**

## **KOHIMA EPITAPH**

Air Chief Marshal Sir Roger Palin KCB, OBE Royal Air Force

When you go home, tell them of us and say,  
for your tomorrow we gave our today.

**Wreath laying at memorial stone, led by Lord-Lieutenant.**

Anyone wishing to lay a wreath or personal tribute,  
please follow the directions of the Parade Marshal.

## **A poem, High Flight**

**by John Gillespie Magee, Royal Canadian Air Force.  
Read by Sarah Barkway-Bound, daughter of glider pilot  
Geoff Barkway, who flew Horsa LH469 'chalk 93'  
to Pegasus Bridge on June 5/6th 1944.**

## **PRAYERS**

Led by the Reverend Carolyn Couzens

At the end of each prayer, the minister will say  
Lord in thy mercy

**All say - Hear our Prayer**

## **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. **AMEN.**

## **Act of Commitment**

Let us pledge ourselves anew to the service of God  
and our fellow man; that we may help, encourage  
and comfort others; and support those  
working for the relief of the needy and  
for peace and welfare of the nations.

## **Pledge**

**All say: Lord God, we pledge ourselves to serve you and all mankind  
in the cause of peace, for the relief of war and suffering,  
and for the praise of your name.  
Guide us by your spirit, Give us wisdom,  
Give us courage; Give us hope;  
And keep us faithful now and always. AMEN.**

## **PARADE**

brought to attention by the Parade Marshal

## **BLESSING**

## **THE NATIONAL ANTHEM**

## **PARADE DISPERSAL**

**Standards march off under direction of parade marshal**

## Royal Air Force Tarrant Rushton - June 5th 1944

On the evening of June 5th, 1944, this airfield was a scene of intense activity. The preparations and training undertaken by the several thousand men and women stationed here over the previous 18 months were about to be put to the ultimate test of battle. The gates were sealed against unauthorised entry, top secret missions were about to commence and history was being made in Dorset.

The noise from a hundred and forty four aero engines on 36 Halifax bombers would be starting up. They would be towing Horsa wooden gliders, each containing up to 30 tough men from the Airborne Division and their equipment. As well as a wide range of rifles, machine guns, grenades and anti-tank missiles, the gliders also carried Jeeps and field artillery.

The 298 Squadron and 644 Squadron Royal Air Force crews of the Halifax tugs had been practicing for this night for over a year. Many had survived glider-towing operations in Sicily or low-level flying missions taking arms and equipment, and Special Operations Executive agents, into occupied France. The ground crews that kept their aircraft flying were probably exhausted but just as excited about tonight's missions as the flying crews themselves.

The pilots of the gliders were very special soldiers from the Glider Pilot Regiment. They were total soldiers, pilots in the air and soldiers on the ground, ready to take their men and equipment on a dangerous flight that would end in a forced landing, totally silent; a true weapon of stealth. On landing, they would then fight alongside the airborne forces. They knew their chances of survival were not high.

The men of the Airborne Division wore a distinctive red beret, their legendary nick-name of the Red Devils earned on the battlefields of Sicily in 1943. They came from several of the British Army's toughest regiments. They had been camped down in the Tarrant valley in a field still known today as Airborne field. These men would be leaving the safety of that tented encampment as part of the spearhead force ahead of the main Allied invasion forces already crossing the English channel in a huge fleet of ships and landing craft.

Their task was to secure important bridges inland from the beaches of Normandy towards which that fleet were sailing, to prevent them being used by enemy forces to resist the invasion and to make the eventual movement away from the beaches easier for our invading force.

The first six gliders carried 180 men from the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry on the opening mission of the entire D-Day operation. They took off just before 11pm, tasked with capturing two bridges on the Caen Canal and River Dives, just a few miles inland from Sword beach. They had been practising their mission for many months, perfecting landing into a tiny area of open field on Salisbury Plain and using the canal bridge at Exeter where it closely resembled the target bridge in France.

Operation Coup de Main was a total success. The first glider landed at a quarter after midnight on June 6th, just 50 yards from its target in total silence, enabling those brave men to capture the bridge intact and hold it until relieved. They suffered the first casualty of D-Day operations on that bridge. The secret code words Ham and Jam were transmitted back to England to inform the D-Day commanders of their heroic achievement.

Today, of course, we know the site of that opening battle as Pegasus Bridge, named after the Airborne Division's symbol of the mythical flying horse Pegasus. Those courageous young men, and all those who followed them over the next days and weeks into the battlefields of France, ultimately achieved the liberation of Europe and the end of five years of war. Today, we commemorate their efforts and we remember those who would make the ultimate sacrifice.

Today we celebrate the years of peace that we have all enjoyed as a result of their bravery and sacrifice.

If you would like to know more about the history of Tarrant Rushton airfield please visit our website at [www.raftarrantrushton.org](http://www.raftarrantrushton.org)

**The TR80 organising committee wish to thank the following for their generous help and support for this special event.**

The Harding family of Preston farm  
The Lear family of Tarrant Rushton farm

The Verwood Concert Brass  
St John Ambulance service  
Basement Hire Ltd. Wimborne for the PA system  
Brandons Hire Ltd Wimborne  
St. Michael's Middle School Colehill  
Local town and parish councils  
Stewarts garden centre

David Maidment & other exhibitors of vintage vehicles

Army Air Corps 676 Squadron troop  
The Royal British Legion  
The Royal Air Force Association  
Wing Commander Nick Watt & Dorset Squadrons of Royal Air Force Cadets  
Wimborne and Winterbourne Whitechurch Scout groups

The Glider Pilot Regiment Society

Friends of Tarrant Rushton Airfield Memorial

**And finally**

All who joined us today to  
Commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day

**We wish you all a safe journey home.**

**TR80 organising committee**

Anne Gardner Terry Clarkson John Nicholson  
Matt Slater Robert Seymour Andrew Wright