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ARNHEM

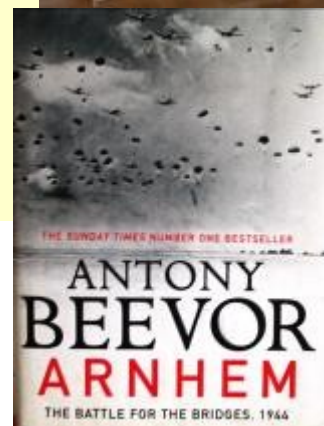
The Battle For The Bridges 1944

By

Anthony Beevor

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Reviewed by **DAVE HAMMOND**



Following my attendance at the 75th anniversary commemoration service at Down Ampney church in Gloucestershire of the Arnhem operation I was given a book by my family that I feel would be of interest to anyone who has an interest in military history. . The book is entitled as shown above.

On September 17th 1944 one of the most daring (some would argue foolish) military operations in World War II commenced. It was called **Market Garden** and it was in reality two separate but interlinked operations, **Market** being the airborne phase and **Garden** the ground force phase. The overall plan was to take and hold a number of strategic bridges which crossed various rivers in Belgium and Holland. In theory, if successful the operation would allow allied forces to thrust from Belgium into the heart of Nazi Germany and end the war by Christmas 1944. The plan was conceived by Field Marshall Montgomery and General 'Boy' Browning Montgomery was at the time in command of all the British and Canadian forces that had landed in Normandy from D-Day onwards. Browning was the commander of the British 1st Airborne Division.

The details of the plan which had been approved by the Allied Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, involved the insertion of thirty thousand British, American and Polish troops behind enemy lines by parachute and glider to secure the bridges. The ground forces were then tasked with racing at speed to secure the bridges, the final one being at Arnhem. Beevor's book explores in detail the plans for the operation from the allies' side and the subsequent response from the Germans. The author also focuses on the friction that at times became hostility between the allied commanders. Major General Sasabowski of the Polish Independent Parachute Brigade was treated both during and after the operation in an appalling manner. The book deals with the apparent disregard for intelligence gained by ariel reconnaissance and from information supplied by Dutch civilians in the Arnhem area. This intelligence failure was to have a significant if not disastrous outcome for the airborne forces and the attempts to resupply them.

Despite Market Garden being deemed to be an overall failure, elements of it were a success. The British did reach Arnhem Bridge and held it for a number of days before being overwhelmed by the enemy. The American airborne were successful in taking their objectives, allowing the ground forces to get within a few miles of Arnhem before the decision was taken to withdraw the surviving British and Polish forces.

Arnhem was finally liberated in April 1945 having suffered from considerable shelling and fighting.

The book is an excellent and very detailed read. I recommend it to all members of the WRFA.

Dave Hammond