

Rupert ‘Robin’ Leigh – The Baron’s Second World War

Nijmegen 1944

Rupert William Dudley Leigh – Joined 11th Hussars (‘The Cherrypickers’)



Divisional training was held in 1929. This apparently confused party was in a hurried conference at the crossroads at Bentley in Hampshire. Left to right – Lieutenants Wild, Payne Gallwey, Stuart French, SSM Poile, Captain Verelst, Corporal Paget, Captain Riviere, and Lieutenants Wainman, Forster and Leigh

Born: 1908

Eton: 1921 – 1926

Sandhurst: 1927

11th Hussars: 1928 – 1936

Royal Gloucestershire Hussars: 1938 - 1944

Sherwood Rangers: 1944 -1945 France/Belgium/Holland/Germany

Married Anne Hicks-Beach: 1931

Succeeded as 4th Baron Leigh : 1938

Children

John Piers Leigh:1935

William Rupert Leigh:1938

Benjamin Chandos Leigh: 1942

Michael James Leigh: 1945

Lt. Col Stanley Christopherson – Sherwood Rangers

6 Years of continuous fighting:

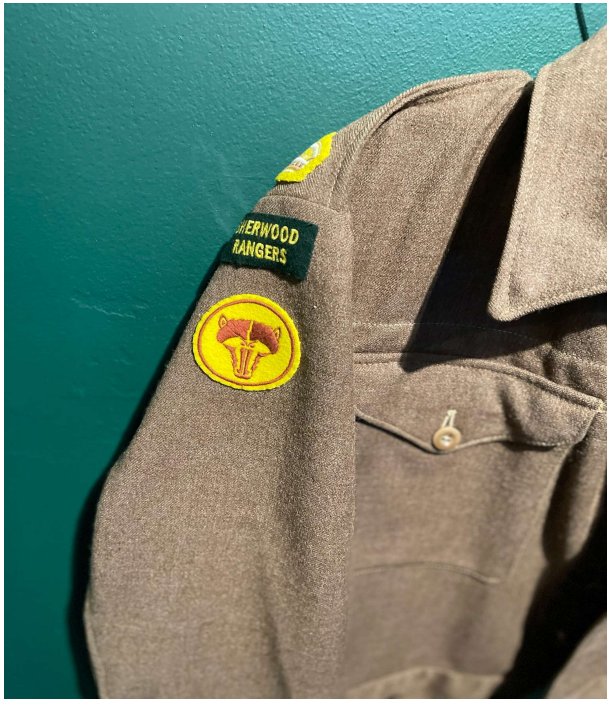
Palestine: 1939 – 1941

North Africa: 1941 – 1943

France – D-Day: 1944

Belgium/Holland/

Germany: 1945





I can hardly imagine a British Army without the Sherwood Rangers – General Horrocks XXX

An Englishman at War – WW2 Wartime Diaries
James Holland

The Baron Arrives in Normandy in France 21st August 1944

Major Leigh bored and wanting to do his bit arrives as Second in Command of Sherwood Rangers (SR) under Stanley Christopherson

The Normandy Campaign finished on the 19th August 1944 as the Falais Gap is closed. During, 10 weeks since D Day SR have lost 44 officers and 175 other ranks

22nd August 1944 Leigh writes I could not be so lucky - home from home – Colonel is a dear and I have been given the most charming servant – Corporal Waite who is looking after me very well.

Stanley immediately calls him 'The Baron' and Waite becomes 'Curley Waite'



The Chase Across North France August 1944

- 24th August 1944 – ‘We had quite a long march yesterday through country which the Germans had only lately left’.
- Leigh saw the utter destruction and Carnage of the 7th German Army at the Falais Gap – Chambois as the Regiment halted for maintenance right in the middle of this carnage.

- ‘A bit of a mess Leigh said.
- ‘Yes, the air force got them fair and square’
- Is it generally as bad as this?
- I have not seen much worse than this I replied

- ‘It was a sight that pieced the soul’ - Desmond Scott
- ‘it could only be described by Dante’ – Eisenhower

- During the day the French heard of the fall of Paris.

The Chase Across North France August 1944

- 31st August 1944 – We are resting for a day having temporarily outrun our supplies. This is definitely not war but it is magnificent fun. We spent a very enjoyable time in this area and even found time to play cricket. Roger Nelthorpe had the foresight to pack two pairs of pads, a bat and a cricket ball. The officers challenged the rest and won. The following day we played football and scored another victory.
- The great sport is to try and be the first Allied troops into a village. Everyone turns out and cheers.
- Don't worry if this letter sounds a bit too enthusiastic. I can promise you that I am extremely careful and not doing anything silly.

Liberation of Brussels
Arrival 7th September 1944

We had an amazing time coming up through France and Belgium. Everyone very relieved to be rid of the Germans and very enthusiastic, particularly in Brussels to which I managed to get back for a nights sleep in a bed and a wonderful hot bath. One was not allowed to pay for a meal or a single drink and everyone was too charming.

10th - 12th Sept 1944, the Regiment experienced some of the bitterest fighting of the whole war which cost very heavy casualties. Stanley wins immediate DSO

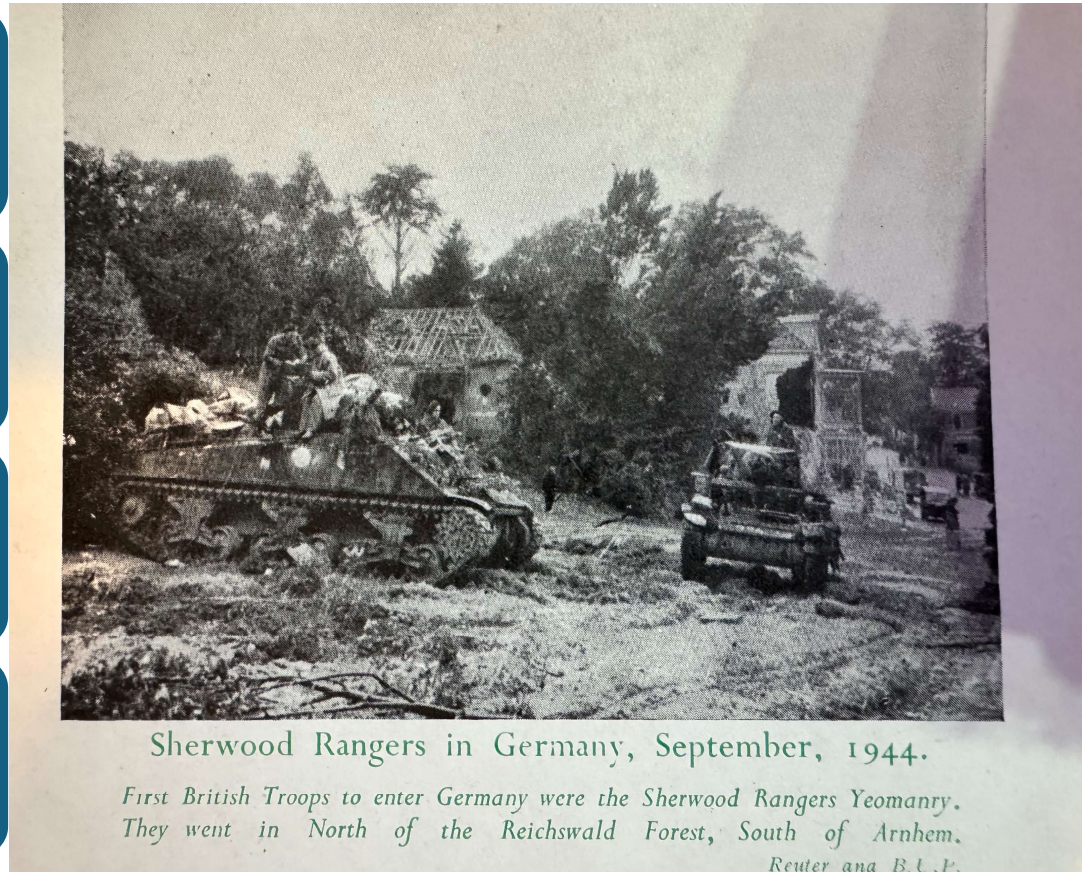
Market Garden – A Bridge Too Far

Sherwood Rangers were asked to support General Gavin - American 82nd Airborne Division at Grossbeck heights

On 21st Sept Sherwood Rangers became the first British tank on German soil – Wyler near Beek with great fanfare recorded on pathe film and newspapers after the failure at Arnhem.

As you may have seen in the papers we have been into Germany – it was not very interesting, and we were not there long enough to be able to judge how difficult it will be.

We all have terrific admiration for the fighting qualities of the American Airborne Troops



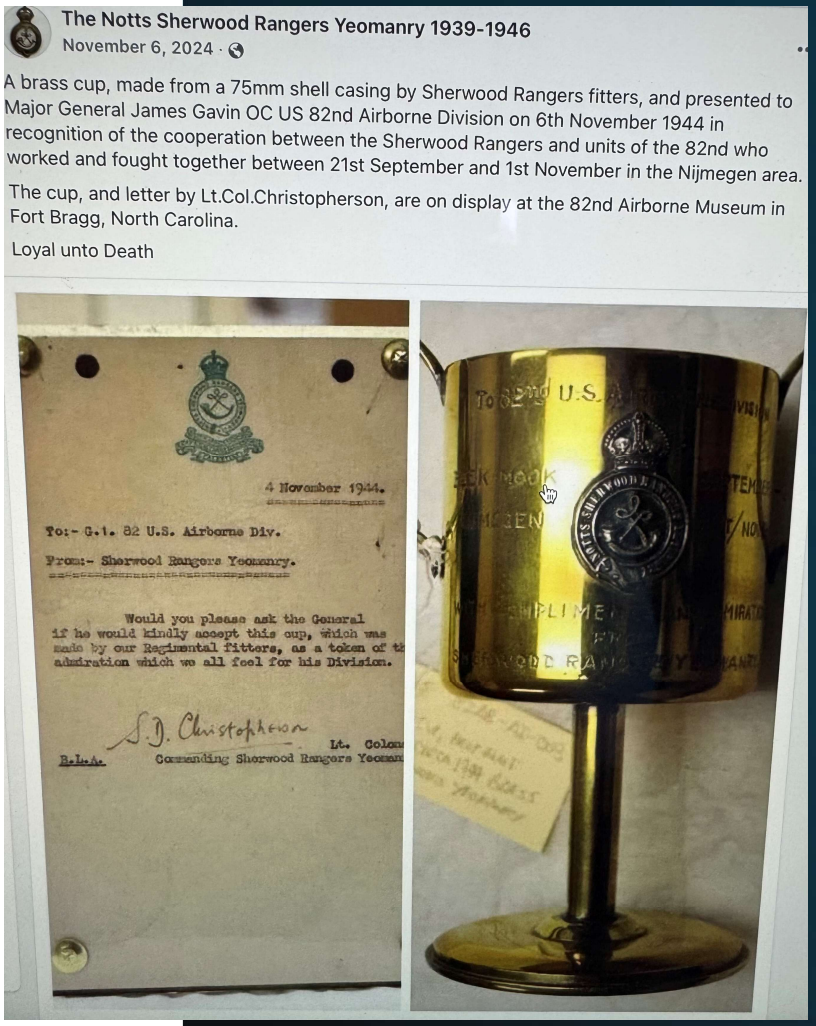
Sherwood Rangers 1944 Christmas Card

Visits to Brussels in October 1944

- October 4th - Leigh goes to Brussels to pick up 6 of Leigh's best sublaterns from the Gloucester Hussars as much needed reinforcements.

- October 31st – Leigh attends Sunday horse racing at Hippdrome De Boitsfort

- November 6th – A Brass Cup presented by Stanley to General Gavin in recognition of the cooperation between Sherwood Rangers and units of the 82nd Airborne Division



Nijmegen – Winssen - R&R – 1st - 9th Nov 1944

My Darling Orphan

My dance went off very well. There were not many girls but those who did come all enjoyed themselves enormously and it was the most orderly party.

I enclose three rather moderate photographs of the Colonel, Curley Waite and self.

Corporal Curley Waite is great fun and gives me the most terrific rockets. He has just appeared with a brim of steaming water and said in his most threatening voice ‘ I’ll put this on top of the stove, but if you don’t go to bed soon it will only be cold’

Our relationship delights everyone particularly Frenchie as he really looks after me. Before going anywhere, I am always put through it. ‘Now have you got etc’ .. It is the sort of thing which would drive one to a frenzy at home, but it is rather a good game out here, particularly as he always knows exactly what is really needed and never forgets the brandy when we have any.

Well, I must go and wash or I shall get another rocket.

18th – 24th Nov 1944 Gielenkirchen Battle and Christmas at Schinnen

We have pulled back for the moment after some pretty hard fighting. The corps commander came himself to congratulate the regiment for its performance which is particularly nice.

On 30th November 1944 at Brunssum Monty presents medals to Stanley – DSO and MM to Stuart Hill, Major John Semkin and Major Jack Holman

3rd December – I am staying at a Dutch Jam Makers house. I am trying to organize a children's party on 6th December which is their equivalent to Christmas, but I am temporarily stumped by the food question and will probably give up.

Officers helped with the Christmas lunch at Schinnen, followed by the regiment laying on a party for the children of Schinnen. Father Christmas and an acrobatic clown – together they rode down the main street on a sleigh towed by a tank. Following behind were the children, laughing and trying to clamber on the sleigh. Every man had been asked to save up their sweet and chocolate rations so that each child might have a gift handed out by two of the men from the Christmas tree. Finally, the officers had their dinner.

Remembering Lord Rupert William Dudley Leigh "Robin"

Lord Leigh was a very popular character among the Stoneleigh villagers and was known for his genial personality and generosity.

He died on 24 June 1979 at Adlestrop, aged 71, and was buried at Stoneleigh on 6 July

There was to be a private memorial service at Stoneleigh Church on Wednesday, July 25 but instead, it was held at Coventry Cathedral because of the large number of people wishing to attend. It was held on the same date, at noon.

In addition to the churchyard headstone, Section F, Row 8, Grave 10, there is a touching memorial stone in the Leigh Chapel which states that Rupert was married to Anne from 1931-1977 "In which he was most fortunate". They are the last members of the family to be commemorated in the Leigh Chapel.



