



A SERVICE TO CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF

VICTOR GREGG

‘Kings Cross Kid’

15th October 1919 – 12th October 2021

11.00am Sunday 21st November 2021 at
The 10th Battalion Memorial, Burrough on the Hill

ORDER OF SERVICE

ENTER TO

'High on a Hill' - A Rifles Salute

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

OPENING PRAYER

HYMN

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.

MEMORIES OF GRANDAD

and a POEM by Emma Smith & Jackie Dennet
'When Great Trees Fall'

A TRIBUTE TO VIC

by Rick Stroud

SCRIPTURE READING

From Luke chapter 3 by Jennifer, Lady Gretton

ADDRESS

by The Revd. Brian McAvoy

REFLECTIVE MUSIC

'Band of Brothers' recorded by The Band and Bugles of The Rifles

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND REMEMBRANCE

Ending with The Lord's Prayer said by all.

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.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

HYMN

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies,
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

THE COMMENDATION AND COMMITAL, INCLUDING:

PRIEST: Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord,

ALL: And let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

THE LAST POST AND REVEILLE

DEPART TO

'Ride of the Valkyries' recorded by The Parachute Regiment Marching Band



Vic:

Husband,

Dad,

Grandad,

Great Grandad,

Great, Great Grandad



To say that Victor Gregg was in the wrong place at the wrong time on February 13, 1945, would be to understate grievously. He, along with 400 other prisoners of war, was locked up in a makeshift prison in Dresden.

Through a huge glass cupola above their heads, they watched red flares drifting down, looking like Christmas trees. They had been dropped by Allied Bomber Command. Minutes later four incendiary bombs smashed through the glass roof, spraying burning phosphorous over the prisoners. Victor survived, lying pressed against an outside wall surrounded by men burning and screaming or injured by huge shards of flying glass. A thousand-pound bomb detonated outside the prison, blowing down the wall and killing many inside. Victor was hurled 50 feet across the room. Temporarily blinded, dazed, and concussed from the blast, he managed to stagger out of captivity and into the streets.

Surrounded by flames and collapsing buildings, and scarcely able to breath because of the heat, Victor and several hundred civilians found temporary safety in a small park. The bombers returned to Dresden three more times that night in what turned out to be the start of a series of Allied raids that live on in infamy. Before the raids had finished, he was dragooned into a rescue squad, working on the edge of the firestorm with bombs still falling all around.

Those days in Dresden scarred him deeply, remaining with him for the rest of his long life. He later wrote that the raid was a war crime that had made him ashamed to be British.

Victor James Gregg was the eldest of three children born in 1919 into poverty in King's Cross, London. When the third child arrived, his father Edward vanished, leaving his mother Emily, a seamstress, to bring up the family on her own in a two-room slum. Young Victor left Corner Street School at 14 and, after running wild among the criminal fringes of Soho for a few years, decided on his 18th birthday that a life in the army would be preferable to a life of crime. He joined the Rifle Brigade, signing on for 21 years.

His first taste of battle was at Beda Fomm in the Western Desert. The fighting went on for two days during which the commanding officer called down fire on his own position trying to destroy the Italian tanks that were over running them.

In March 1942 he joined the Arab Libyan Commando: Popski's Private Army. His orders were to deliver secret intelligence documents. The job taught him lessons about undercover work that he would draw upon in his post-war career.

In July that year he was seconded to the Long-Range Desert Group, tasked with ferrying wounded men across the desert from behind enemy lines to rear area medical units.

Victor was in the front line at El Alamein and during the first night of the battle he lost three bren gun carriers to mines and shell fire. A few days later the battalion laagered down at a rendezvous code-named Snipe. By the end of the action Victor's battalion had taken 72 casualties but had accounted for 52 enemy vehicles, including 32 tanks and five self-propelled guns.

The following year, Victor joined the 10th Parachute Battalion. On September 18, the second day of the ill-fated Operation Market Garden, he parachuted onto Drop Zone Y, eight miles to the west of Arnhem. He recalled that 'as we dropped you could hear all these enormous bangs and the whole area was covered in black smoke'. He had landed in the middle of a full-scale battle on a drop zone that was meant to be in British hands.

As the days passed Victor continued firing his Vickers machine gun, until it ran out of ammunition, and he was ultimately taken prisoner.

He made two unsuccessful attempts to escape and ended up working in a soap factory which he sabotaged by shorting the main electrical fuses. The building burnt to the ground and for this Victor was sentenced to death 'for crimes against the Reich' and sent to Dresden for execution. The sentence was due to be carried out the day after the Allied bombing raids began.



In June 1945, Victor was repatriated. Undoubtedly suffering from what we now know as PTSD, he would reject any form of authority. He became subject to sudden fits of extreme violence and had nightmares which left him sweating and shouting, not knowing where he was. He found escape in bicycle racing and was due to take part in the 1950 Commonwealth Games when he crashed, breaking his

shoulder, and ending his riding career. After this he joined the Communist Party and became an active, troublesome, and effective trade unionist working in the building and transport industries.

In 1955 he joined the Moscow Narodny Bank, employed as a chauffeur to the chairman. In this role he found himself ferrying VIPs and carrying sensitive documents between various Russian cities. He was certain that one of his passengers one day was a British MP. Word of this reached MI6 and not long afterwards Victor was recruited as an informant.

In 1943 Victor had married Freda, for more than 20 years Freda was his support, faithful companion, and mother to their three children. Alan became a taxi driver; David became a computer programmer and the youngest, Judith, became a teacher. They are now all retired. After their divorce Freda became a social worker. Freda died in 1999.

In 1972 he married Bett, a bus conductress on the bus that he was now driving, and with this marriage he found some contentment in his life. Bett died in 2018.

Soon after his second marriage, Victor started to visit motorcycle rallies behind the iron curtain. On one of his trips, he met Arthur Junger, a tall, one-armed, silver-haired German officer who had fought at Arnhem. The two men got on, sharing their reminiscences of the battle from opposite sides. As well as telling Junger his war stories Victor also described how he had worked as a courier in Soviet Russia.

This chance meeting led to Victor being recruited to do some more work as an undercover courier, risking arrest and imprisonment Victor carried secret letters, papers, and maps. The message that Victor helped to send to the Hungarians was: 'There will never be another Prague.' It was heard.

In July 1989, Victor, now 70, was the guest of honour at a Democratic Forum rally in Sopron on the Austrian border. The machine gun towers were empty and the border guards not in evidence. A crowd surged across the field to the barbed wire marking the border and Victor was given a set of wire cutters and asked to make the first symbolic cut. The barbed wire came down and the crowd surged into the west. Four months later the Berlin Wall came down.



Arnhem 2010 (Rick Stroud)

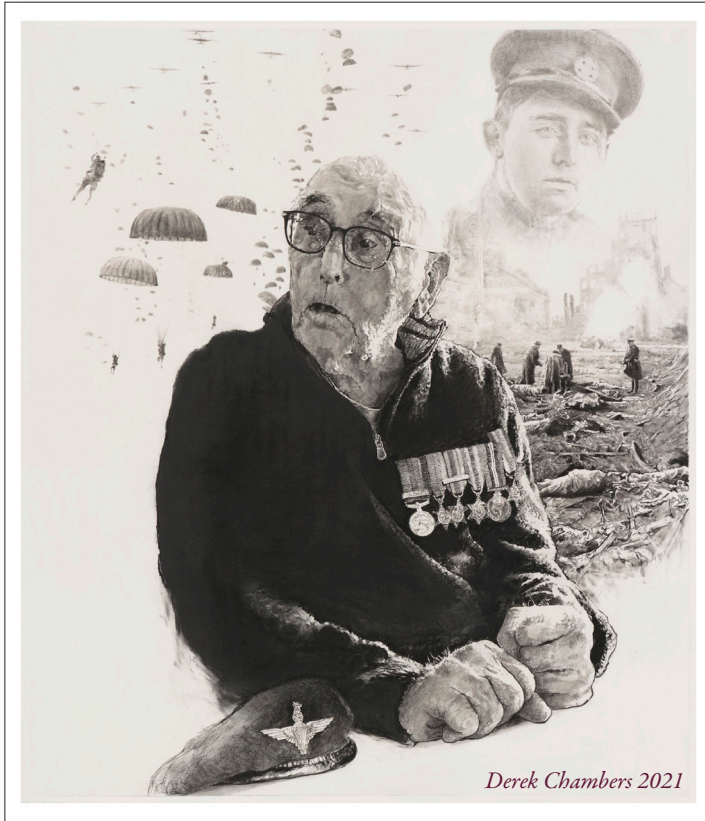
Around this time Victor wrote down his memories for his grandchildren but for twenty years they lay unread in a drawer. Then, in 2010, he met the military historian Rick Stroud who collaborated with him to bring his story into the world. The result was a trilogy of books that became bestsellers. Radio 4 produced an hour-long documentary of Victor's life narrated by John Hurt.

His Army Discharge Book states what today could be Victor's epitaph:

'During an exceedingly colourful career, this rifleman has served long and continuous periods in active operations with front line units. He is an individual of great courage, capable of applying himself best to a task when the need is greatest.'

Victor Gregg, Soldier, Trade Unionist, Spy and Author was born on October 15, 1919. He died on October 12, 2021, aged 102

Rick Stroud 2021



**Rifleman, The Rifle Brigade
(1937-1943)**



**Paratrooper and 'Last Man Standing'
10th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment
(1943-1944)**

**DONATIONS IN MEMORY OF VICTOR GREGG WILL BE EQUALLY
DIVIDED BETWEEN THE FOLLOWING CHARITIES:**

**Down's Syndrome Oxford, Matt Hampson Foundation
and Friends of The Tenth**