

A Tribute to the American Paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne

Quorn Local History Group encourage members to take on projects and to research areas of Quorn's rich history and heritage. It was agreed that Dennis Marchant rummage through the Parish Councils archives to ensure items that were of historic interest were preserved. In doing so, Dennis came across a 'bulldog' clipped wodge of correspondence relating to the events of Saturday May 3rd, 1952. The day is summarised as follows:

A Memorable Day as Quorn Pays Tribute to the American Paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne

Parade

As the parade approached the main gates to Stafford Orchard the territorial band of the 5th Battalion Leicestershire Regiment struck up 'The Star-spangled banner'. Hillier Northage, the Quorndon Parish Clerk, although anxious, felt some relief when he saw the large gathering awaiting the parade in the field. The procession had left the Village Hall at a quarter to three to head along Leicester Road, pass the policeman on duty at the Cross and into Station Road. The Plan B to hold the ceremony in the Village Hall in case of inclement weather had been abandoned. It was true that rain showers were forecast for this May Saturday but there was no sign that they were imminent.

Hillier had started working toward this day almost a year before when Mr F. A. Stenson had approached the Parish Council with a wish to plant an avenue of lime trees across Stafford Orchard. At an Extraordinary Meeting the council had embraced the offer as they were committed by virtue of the original grant of the field to the parish to develop and beautify it.

Mr Stenson being owner of the Stenson Brewery and Wine and Spirit Merchants based in Loughborough had personal memories of the American Airborne having personally been close to many of them. He knew how much they appreciated the beauty and the smells emanating from the lime trees along the Burton Walks in Loughborough. As owner and supplier to many pubs in the area including the William IV in Quorn, he had worked closely with the troops to make them feel at home.

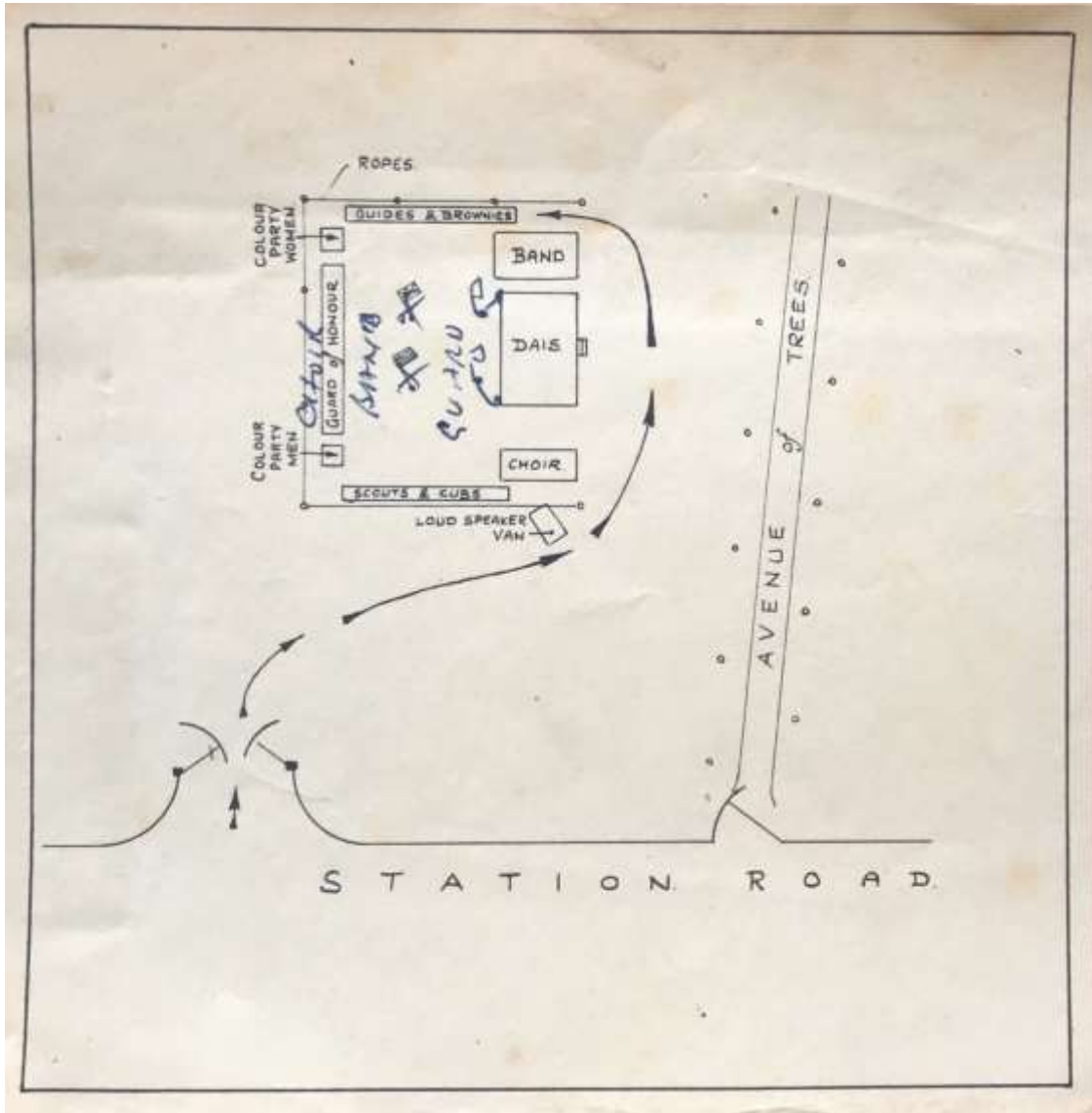
At the William IV he had introduced outside seating and instigated the formation of the Berlin Club providing a room and games suite for those who had the distinction of having carried two bombing missions to Berlin and made it back.



F.A. Stenson owned a brewery, wine merchant and several pubs in the Loughborough area including Quorn's King William IV

As the parade was brought to a halt in Stafford Orchard by ex-policeman 'Bill' Norman from Barrow Road the dignitaries, who had been treated to a luncheon at the Bulls Head Hotel made their way to the dais. The guides and brownies and the scouts and cubs settled into position either side of the dais with the guard of honour comprising of members of the British Legion, the band and the

St Bartholomew's Church choir facing the podium. Two scouts were proud to have been selected to provide the Stars and Stripes and Union Flag duties one either side of the dais. By this time, what at first was thought to be just a shower had become persistent rain.



From the correspondence file, a plan of the day's proceedings

Lime Trees

The avenue of young lime trees had been supplied and planted by William Barron and Sons of Borrowash at a cost of £50 contributed by Mr Stenson. They had been planted and staked in February and were looking splendid with their leaves glistening in the rain.

Colonel Toller welcomed all to the ceremony and following the US National Anthem the guard of honour was inspected by Major Norman E. Pehrson, Assistant Military Attaché, US Embassy



Major Norman E. Pehrson inspects the guard of honour and with him is Mr W. Norman

Mr Bowler accompanied Mr Stenson to the microphone as his sight was deteriorating, ready for him to make the formal presentation of the avenue of trees. He hoped that his idea of a 'living' memorial of lime trees would stand as a reminder to future generations of those who had given their lives.



*Mr F. A. Stenson formally presents the trees watched on by
Major Norman E. Pehrson and Col. W.R.N Toller*

The Parish Council Chairman E.C.Russ responded with a prepared statement dedicating the trees in memory of the paratroopers of the U.S.A. who had been based in the parish and did not return. He mentioned that in addition to Mr Stenson's 50 lime trees, each councillor and the girl guides had purchased trees for the park and how these would enrich the place. He went on to express his personal memories of the Americans in Quorn who he recalled had crowded our buses, drank our beer and pinched our girls but admitted they were good fellows.

Dedication

Major Pehrson acknowledged the dedication of the trees and thanked Mr Stenson and the village for their warmth in welcoming the troops in the war and for this living memorial which was very appropriate for where the troops spent their last days.

Reverend Pilling stepped forward for the Invocation followed by the first hymn 'Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord'. After prayers from both the Baptist Minister Reverend Worsnip and the Methodist Minister Howard Ford, the final hymn 'O God our Help in Ages Past' was sung. Following a prayer, trumpeters sounded the Last Post and after a short break, Reveille. Everyone then joined in to sing the National Anthem. After the vicar's blessing the dignitaries left the field to assemble on the north side of Station Road where Major Pehrson took the salute as the parade returned to the Village Hall.

Letters of Thanks

Despite the inclement weather Hillier Northage was relieved that the ceremony, was both impressive and enjoyable. Letters of thanks were now to be prepared and sent to all of those who participated.

He thanked Peter Brookman for his help and Mr Hall of High Street who had provided the Public Address system for free and had arranged a dance that raised enough money to pay off all the expenses. In a letter to Mrs Long, Chairman of the Womens Branch of the British Legion, he mentions that 'The final little gathering over a cup of tea set the seal on a really enjoyable day'. To Miss Sawdon Headmistress of Rawlins Grammar School thanking the ladies who catered for the teas that 'it was such a simple little ceremony that it impressed the representatives of the American forces far more than a 'flashy' show of banner waving'. To the vicar he mentions that the matter cannot be

considered complete until the piece of masonry from Holland and the plaque are in place.

May 3rd, 1952, certainly was a memorable day and an important one for the Stafford Orchard and for the village.

Acknowledgments:

Quorn Local History Group, Quorn Village Online Museum, Quorn Parish Council and the Loughborough Local History Volunteers.

Additional Information

Errors in the original published article have been corrected: New Walk to Burton Walks and E.C.Ross to E.C.Russ.

Also publication of this article led to further research to try to find out why today's avenue has far fewer Lime Trees than was the case in 1952, seventeen as opposed to fifty. So what happened to the missing thirty-three trees. Further research into the Parish Council Archive brought to light a further batch of correspondence dating from the period 1968 to 1971 which goes some way to explain but does not cover all. In 1968 work was commenced to remove three trees from the line to replace three that had died at the Station Road end. 16 were sold to a company called Civic Trees for £16 each. Where are the others? Well, the file intimates that some may have found their way to the then new County Hall and the associated landscaping project. Could the remainder still be around the village? There are lime trees next to the Parish Hall and one in a garden opposite, on the Loughborough Road approach to Farley Way and off Poulteney Drive. If you know if these were transplanted from the avenue maybe you could let us know. By the time of the Stafford Orchard refurbishment in 2010, two gaps in the lime tree avenue at the Station

Road entrance were replaced with new trees, it seems that the earlier transplants did not survive.



Original poster courtesy of the Quorn Parish Records