

## **Annual Glider Pilot Regiment Ceremony – 22nd February 2020**

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The annual commemoration of the Glider Pilot Regiment was conducted by the Very Reverend Alan Jeans, Archdeacon of Sarum in the Church of England Diocese of Salisbury, at the Tilshead Memorial, on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, in the presence of over 100 people, which included WWII Veteran glider pilots and both serving and former Army personnel, including former Army Air Corps, Parachute Regiment and Special Forces soldiers. FONFA was represented at the ceremonies by Dr Henry Goodall, Chair of Trustees, who served briefly in 10th Btn, The Parachute Regiment, in the 1960s.



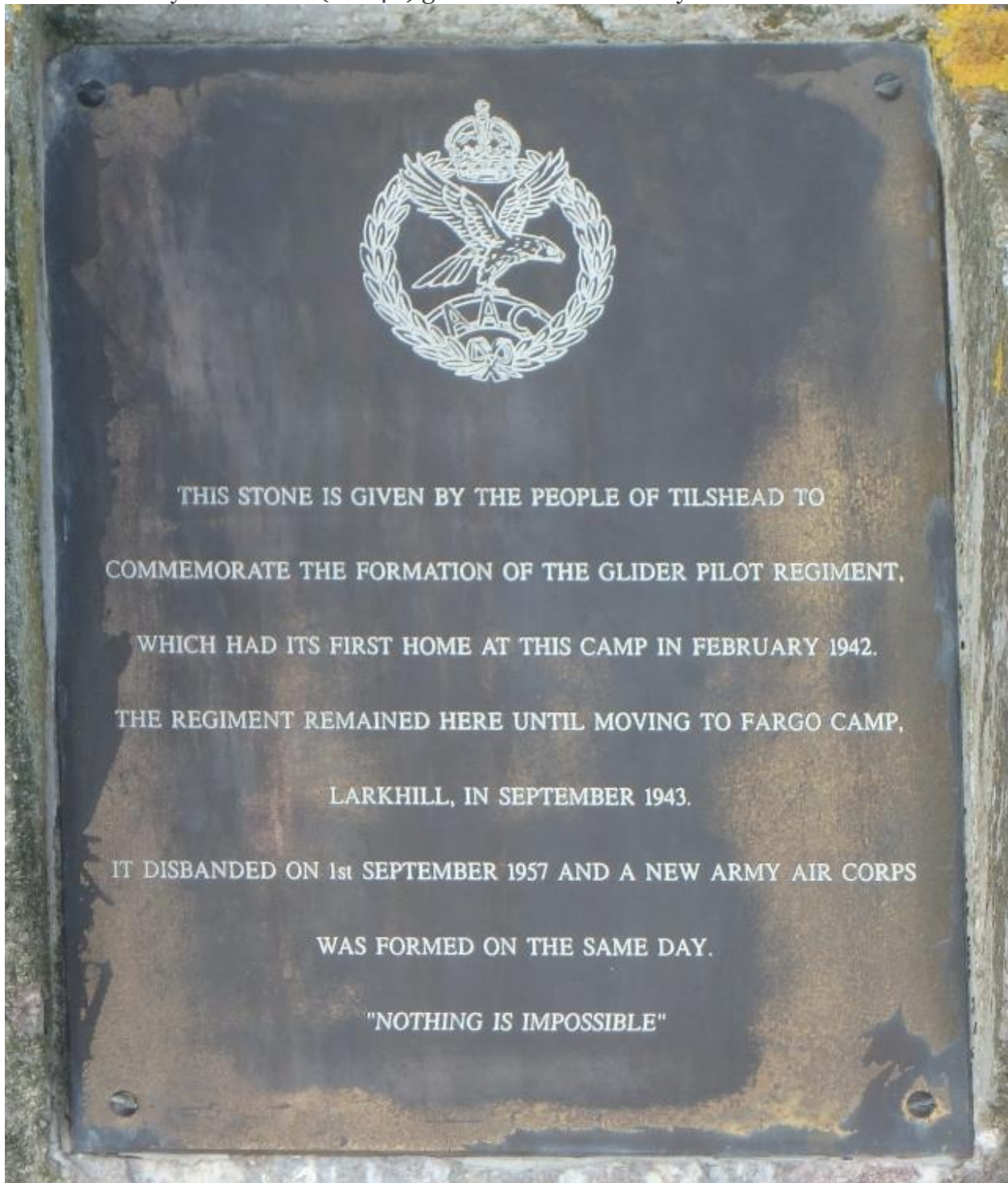
Veterans saluting the memorial. In addition to the Annual Service, two new memorial seats were dedicated; one next to the Memorial and the other adjacent to Tilshead

Village Hall, in the centre of the village.



Very Rev. Alan Jeans conducts the seat dedication at Tilshead village hall. Tilshead camp was the original residential training base for Glider Pilots in WWII. Training operations were distributed all over Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset, on suitable airfields, notably at Netheravon, Christchurch, Stoney Cross, Beaulieu, Holmsley South and after Operation Overlord in June 1944, a 'Glider Snatch' Unit was based at Ibsley,

for the recovery of Hadrian (CG-4A) gliders from Normandy.



Glider Pilot Regiment plaque



Parachute Regiment plaque

Literally thousands of training flights were carried out in the New Forest area during WWII, involving gliders and parachute drops, in less than three years, all practicing for the assault operations on the continent, in 1944 and 1945. The original design and testing of the Horsa glider was carried out at RAF Christchurch, before the construction was farmed out to major furniture manufacturers, all over the country. Glider assembly was then concentrated at major centres, notably at RAF Christchurch and RAF Brize Norton, in Oxfordshire.



The Horsa (A.S.51) was the main British operational glider in WWII, used in large numbers in Normandy (in June 1944), Arnhem (September 1944) and the Crossing of the Rhine (Operation Varsity) in March 1945. With an 88 foot wingspan and 67 foot length, it could carry 25 fully equipped troops, or a jeep and small artillery piece, plus crew. The Horsa first flew on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2041, piloted by Airspeed's Chief Test Pilot, George Errington, towed by an Armstrong Whitworth Whitley, from what is now London's Heathrow Airport. Over 3,600 were built, in three and a half years, with over one third of those being used during actual assault operations. Veteran WWII Glider Pilot Frank Ashleigh's photograph and extracts from his logbook are shown below:

YEAR		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PVT. OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
1944	1945	TYPE	No.			
JUNE	6 <sup>th</sup>	HORSA	270	SELF	SET WITHINGTON	TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD "OPERATION" HALLARD
JUNE	23 <sup>rd</sup>	HORSA	670	SELF	SGT WILCE	"INVASION OF FRANCE"; SUCCESSFUL LANDING
"	20	HORSA	670	SELF	SGT WILCE	LOW FLYING TAIL UNIT LOW FLYING.





