

= James Hill (British Army officer) =

Brigadier Stanley James Ledger Hill DSO & Two Bars , MC (14 March 1911 ? 16 March 2006) was a British Army officer , who served as commander of the 3rd Parachute Brigade , part of the 6th Airborne Division , during World War II . Born in Bath , Somerset , Hill was educated at Marlborough College and the Royal Military College , Sandhurst before joining the British Army in 1931 and being commissioned into the Royal Fusiliers . He commanded a platoon for a short period , and was then attached to the command post of Field Marshal Lord Gort during the Battle of France in May 1940 , where he oversaw the evacuation of Brussels as well as the beach at De Panne during the evacuation of Dunkirk . After a brief period of time in the Irish Free State , he volunteered for parachute training and joined the 1st Parachute Battalion , and was its commanding officer when its parent formation , the 1st Parachute Brigade , was deployed to North Africa .

Hill commanded the battalion during its first airborne operation in North Africa , dropping near the towns of Souk el @-@ Arba and Béja , in Tunisia . It secured Beja and then sent out patrols to harass German troops , ambushing a convoy and inflicting numerous German casualties , and defended a bridge at Medjez el Bab , although it was eventually forced to retreat . Hill was wounded during an attack by the battalion on Gue Hill , in which he attempted to capture three Italian tanks using his revolver ; the crews of two were successfully subdued without incident , but the third opened fire and hit Hill in the chest several times . He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and Légion d 'Honneur for his service in North Africa and then evacuated back to England . There he took command of the 3rd Parachute Brigade in the newly formed 6th Airborne Division , and jumped with the brigade during Operation Tonga , the British airborne landings in Normandy on the night of 5 / 6 June 1944 . After nearly being killed on D @-@ Day , by an aircraft strafing his position , Hill commanded the brigade throughout the rest of the time it was in Normandy , once leading a counter @-@ attack during a German assault and later winning the first Bar to his DSO .

After advancing to the Seine , the 6th Airborne Division was withdrawn to England in September 1944 , but briefly served in the Ardennes in December during the Battle of the Bulge . Hill then commanded 3rd Parachute Brigade during Operation Varsity , the Allied airborne assault over the River Rhine , where he was nearly killed by a glider containing his own personal Jeep . He then commandeered a motorcycle and rode alongside the brigade as the 6th Airborne Division advanced from the Rhine to the River Elbe , at the end of which he was awarded a second Bar to his DSO as well as the American Silver Star . After the war , he was briefly military governor of Copenhagen , for which he was awarded the King Haakon VII Liberty Cross , and also raised and commanded the 4th Parachute Brigade (Territorial Army) . Retiring from the British Army in 1949 , he became involved in a number of charities and businesses . He died on 16 March 2006 , aged 95 .

= = Early life = =

Hill was born on 14 March 1911 , in Bath , Somerset , the son of Major General Walter Hill . He was educated at Marlborough College , where he was the head of the college 's Officer Training Corps , and then attended the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst ; there he won the Sword of Honour and became captain of athletics . He joined the British Army in 1931 , being commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant into the Royal Fusiliers (City of London regiment) , the regiment which his father commanded . He ran the regimental athletic and boxing associations during his service with the regiment , and in 1936 transferred to the Supplementary Reserve in order to marry his first wife , Denys Gunter @-@ Jones . For the next three years he worked as part of his family 's ferry company .

= = Second World War = =

When the Second World War began in September 1939 , Hill was recalled to his regiment and given command of the 2nd Battalion , Royal Fusiliers ' advance party when the battalion left for France during the same month . The battalion was assigned to the 12th Infantry Brigade , part of the

4th Infantry Division . He then commanded a platoon for several months , when the battalion was stationed along the Maginot Line , before being promoted to the rank of Captain in January 1940 and joining the staff at Allied Headquarters . The Battle of France began in May 1940 , by which time Hill was attached to the command post of Field Marshal Lord Gort ; during this period he was involved in planning the evacuation of the civilian population of Brussels , and also carried Gort 's dispatches to Calais ordering the withdrawal of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) . At the end of the campaign , he took command of the evacuation of the beach at La Panne , and was on the last destroyer to leave Dunkirk . For these actions , he was awarded the Military Cross . On his return to Britain , he was promoted to Major and travelled to Dublin in the Irish Free State , where he planned for the evacuation of British citizens from the city should German forces land there . When this task was completed , he volunteered for the fledgling Parachute Regiment , part of the British Army 's growing airborne forces , and undertook parachute training ; when the 1st Parachute Battalion was formed on 15 August 1941 , he was appointed as its second @-@ in @-@ command .

The battalion was part of 1st Parachute Brigade , which by mid @-@ 1942 had been expanded into 1st Airborne Division under the command of Major @-@ General F.A.M. Browning . In July 1942 the 1st Parachute Battalion was selected to participate in the Dieppe Raid , and got as far as being loaded onto transport aircraft before poor weather cancelled the operation ; when the raid was planned for a second time the parachute battalion was removed because their deployment was too dependent on there being good weather on the day of the raid . In mid September , as 1st Airborne Division was coming close to reaching full strength , Browning was informed that Operation Torch , the Allied invasion of North Africa , would take place in November . After being informed that an American airborne unit , the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion , was to be used during the invasion , Browning successfully advocated for the 1st Parachute Brigade to also be included . He argued that a larger airborne force should be utilised during the invasion , as the large distances and comparatively light opposition would provide a number of opportunities for airborne operations . The War Office and Commander in Chief , Home Forces were won over by the argument , and agreed to detach the brigade from 1st Airborne Division and place it under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower , who would command all Allied troops participating in the invasion . After it had been brought to full operational strength , partly by cross posting personnel from the newly formed 2nd Parachute Brigade , and had been provided with sufficient equipment and resources , the brigade departed for North Africa at the beginning of November 1942 .

= = = North Africa = = =

As an insufficient number of transport aircraft were allocated to the brigade , it was only possible to transport the 3rd Parachute Battalion by air . The rest of the brigade arrived at Algiers on 12 November , with some of its stores arriving slightly later . By the evening , reconnaissance parties had travelled to the airfield at Maison Blanche , with the remainder of the brigade following on the morning of 13 November ; it was quartered in Maison Blanche , Maison Carree and Rouiba . After several ambitious airborne operations were planned but then cancelled by British First Army , on 14 November it directed that a single parachute battalion would be dropped the next day near Souk el @-@ Arba and Béja ; the battalion was to contact French forces at Beja to ascertain whether they would remain neutral , or support the Allies ; secure and guard the cross roads and airfield at Soul el Arba ; and patrol eastwards to harass German forces . 1st Parachute Battalion was selected for the task , to which Hill objected . The battalion had been forced to unload the vessel carrying its supplies and equipment itself , and had also to arrange its own transportation to Maison Blanche as no drivers were provided at Algiers ; when it had arrived at Maison Blanche , it had been subjected to several Luftwaffe air raids that targeted the airfield . Hill argued that as a result his men were exhausted , and he did not believe all of the battalion 's equipment could be sorted out within twenty four hours ; as such he asked for the operation to be postponed for a short period , but this was denied .

Hill faced further problems as he planned for the operation . The American pilots of the Dakota

transport aircraft that would transport the battalion were inexperienced and had never conducted a parachute drop before , and there was no time for any training or exercises . There were also no photos of the airfield or the surrounding areas , and only a single , small scale map available for navigation . To ensure that the aircraft found the drop zone and delivered the battalion accurately , Hill sat in the cockpit of the leading Dakota and assisted the pilot . The Dakotas were escorted by four American P @-@ 38 Lightning fighters , which engaged and drove off two roving German fighters , but as the Dakotas approached the Tunisian border they encountered thick clouds and were forced to turn back , landing at Maison Blanche at 11 : 00 . It was decided that the battalion would conduct the operation the next day , which allowed the paratroopers to rest for a night . 1st Parachute Battalion took off on the morning of 16 November , and enjoyed excellent weather that allowed the transport aircraft to drop the battalion accurately around the airfield at Souk el Arba . Most of the paratroopers landed successfully , but one man was killed when his rigging line twisted around his neck mid drop , throttling him ; one officer broke his leg on landing , and four men were wounded when a Sten gun was accidentally fired . The battalion 's second in command , Major Alastair Pearson , remained at the airfield with a small detachment that collected the airborne equipment and supervised the burial of the casualty .

Meanwhile , Hill led the rest of the battalion , approximately 525 strong , in some commandeered trucks towards the town of Béja , an important road and railway centre approximately forty miles from the airfield . The battalion arrived at approximately 18 : 00 and was welcomed by the local French garrison , 3 @, @ 000 strong , which Hill persuaded to cooperate with the paratroopers ; in order to give the garrison and any German observers the impression that he possessed a larger force than he actually did , Hill arranged for the battalion to march through the town several times , wearing different headgear and holding different equipment each time . A short time after the battalion entered Béja , German aircraft arrived and bombed the town , although they caused little damage and no casualties . The next day , ' S ' Company was sent with a detachment of engineers to the village of Sidi N 'Sir , about twenty miles away ; they were to contact the local French forces , believed to be pro British , and harass German forces . The detachment found the village and made contact with the French , who allowed them to pass through towards the town of Mateur ; by nightfall the force had not reached the town , and decided to encamp for the night . At dawn a German convoy of armoured cars passed the detachment , and it was decided to set an ambush for the convoy if it returned , with anti @-@ tank mines being laid on the road and a mortar and Bren guns being set up in concealed positions . When the convoy returned at approximately 10 : 00 the leading vehicle struck a mine and exploded , blocking the road , and the other vehicles were disabled with mortar fire , Gammon bombs and the remaining anti tank mines . A number of Germans were killed and the rest taken prisoner , with two paratroopers being slightly wounded . The detachment returned to Béja with prisoners and several slightly damaged armoured cars . After the success of the ambush , Hill sent a second patrol to harass local German forces , but it was withdrawn after it encountered a larger German force that inflicted several British casualties ; Béja was also bombed by Stuka divebombers , inflicting civilian casualties and destroying a number of houses .

On 19 November , Hill visited the commanding officer of the French forces guarding a vital bridge at Medjez el Bab , and warned him that any attempt by German forces to cross the bridge would be opposed by the battalion . Hill attached ' R ' Company to the French forces to ensure the bridge was not captured . German forces soon arrived at the bridge , and their commanding officer demanded that they be allowed to take control of the bridge and cross it to attack the British positions . The French rejected the German demands , and in conjunction with ' R ' Company repelled subsequent German attacks that lasted several hours . The battalion was reinforced by the U.S. 175th Field Artillery Battalion and elements of the Derbyshire Yeomanry , but , despite fierce resistance , the German forces proved to be too strong , and by 04 : 30 on 20 November the Allied forces had yielded the bridge and the surrounding area to the Germans . Two days later , Hill received information that a strong Italian force , which included a number of tanks , was stationed at Gue Hill . Hill decided to attack the force and attempt to disable the tanks , and the following night moved the battalion , less a small guard detachment that remained at Béja , to Sidi N 'Sir where it linked up with a force of French Senegalese infantry . Hill decided that the battalion 's section of 3 inch mortars

would cover ' R ' and ' S ' Companies as they advanced up Gue Hill and attacked the Italian force , while a small force of sappers would mine the road at the rear of the hill to ensure the Italian tanks could not retreat .

The battalion arrived at the hill without incident and began to prepare for the attack ; however , just prior to the beginning of the attack there were several loud explosions from the rear of the hill . The anti tank grenades carried by the sappers had accidentally detonated , killing all but two of them . The battalion lost the element of surprise , and Hill immediately ordered the two companies to advance up the hill . The force reached the top and engaged a mixed force of German and Italian soldiers , who were assisted by three light tanks . Hill drew his revolver , and with his adjutant and a small group of paratroopers advanced on the tanks , firing shots through their observation ports in an attempt to persuade the crews to surrender . This tactic worked on two tanks , but upon reaching the third tank Hill and his men were fired upon by the tank 's crew ; Hill was shot three times in the chest and his adjutant wounded , although the tank crew were swiftly dispatched with small arms fire . Hill survived because of prompt medical treatment , and was replaced as commander of the battalion by Major Pearson , who supervised the routing of the rest of the German and Italian soldiers .

= = = Normandy = = =

After his injuries were treated , Hill was evacuated to a hospital in North Africa to recover ; although forbidden to do so , he often exercised by climbing out of the window of his hospital ward at night . For his actions in North Africa , he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) , which " paid tribute to the brilliant handling of his force and his complete disregard of personal danger , " as well as the French Légion d 'honneur . By February 1943 he had recovered from his injuries , and was flown back to England where he met up with Brigadier Gerald W. Lathbury , commander of the newly raised 3rd Parachute Brigade . The War Office had authorised the raising of the brigade on 5 November 1942 , comprising the 7th , 8th and 9th Parachute Battalions , all converted infantry battalions . The 9th Parachute Battalion was in need of a commanding officer and Lathbury offered the job to Hill , who accepted . His first action was to send the entire unit on a forced march , at the end of which he announced that the battalion would " work a six and a half day week " with Sunday afternoons off , until it was well @-@ trained and fit . The 3rd Parachute Brigade was initially attached to the 1st Airborne Division , but in April 1943 Lathbury was given command of 1st Parachute Brigade , which departed with 1st Airborne Division at the end of April for the Mediterranean theatre and Operation Husky , the invasion of Sicily . The 3rd Parachute Brigade was detached from the division in March and remained in England , and on 23 April it was transferred into the newly formed 6th Airborne Division with Hill as the brigade 's new commander . On 11 August , 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was attached to the 3rd Parachute Brigade ; although meant to be assigned to the newly formed 5th Parachute Brigade , also attached to the 6th Airborne Division , it instead replaced the 7th Parachute Battalion , which was transferred to the new parachute brigade .

The 6th Airborne Division , under the command of Major @-@ General Richard Nelson Gale , was fully mobilised by late December 1943 , with orders to prepare for airborne operations to be conducted during mid @-@ 1944 . The division 's first airborne operation would also be the first time it saw combat , conducting Operation Tonga , the British airborne landings in Normandy on the night of 5 / 6 June , D @-@ Day . It was tasked with guarding the left flank of the British amphibious landings by securing the area east of the city of Caen , capturing a number of bridges that spanned several rivers and canals , and then preventing any Axis forces from advancing on the British beaches . The 3rd Parachute Brigade was given several tasks to accomplish . The 9th Parachute Battalion , commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Terence Otway , was to assault and destroy the Merville Gun Battery , as well as capturing high ground and setting up roadblocks . The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was to destroy two bridges , and the 8th Parachute Battalion had the task of destroying three bridges . When the operation began , the brigade suffered from a combination of poor navigation by the pilots of their C @-@ 47 Dakota transport aircraft , heavy

cloud cover and incorrectly marked drop zones , which led to all of its units being scattered over a wide area ; Hill himself was dropped with several sticks from the 1st Canadian and 9th Parachute Battalions near the River Dives . He landed in a submerged river rank approximately half a mile from Cabourg , and was forced to wade through four feet of water and a number of flooded irrigation ditches before reaching dry land ; the same flooded areas claimed the lives of a number of paratroopers from his brigade .

Collecting up a number of his men , he headed for the town of Sallenelles , where he hoped to find out how the 9th Parachute Battalion had fared assaulting the Merville Battery . En route , however , he and his party were strafed by low @-@ flying German aircraft , forcing the paratroopers to dive for cover ; when the aircraft had departed Hill stood up again , finding that he had been wounded in the buttocks and the officer next to him had been killed . Most of the other men had either been killed or wounded during the attack , leaving only himself and the commander of his headquarters defence platoon ; once first aid had been administered to the wounded , Hill continued on and finally managed reach Ranville , where the headquarters of the General Officer Commanding (GOC) , Major @-@ General Gale , had been set up . After being informed by Gale that his brigade had successfully completed its objectives , Hill had his wound tended to , and then travelled to his own headquarters ; there he found Lieutenant Colonel Pearson in temporary command , who informed him that many the brigade 's staff had been killed during the drop . By 00 : 00 on the night of 6 / 7 June , the entire division was fully deployed on the eastern flank of the invasion beaches . The 3rd Parachute Brigade was holding a 4 @-@ mile (6 @.@ 4 km) front , with the 9th Parachute Battalion at Le Plein , 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion at Les Mesneil and the 8th Parachute Battalion in the southern part of the Bois de Bavent .

For the rest of its time in Normandy the division acted in an infantry role . From 7 June until 16 August , it first consolidated and then expanded its bridgehead . The 3rd Parachute Brigade was responsible for a section of front around the Chateau Saint Come and a nearby manor , with the latter being used as the brigade 's primary defensive position . The brigade was positioned next to the 1st Special Service Brigade , and from 7 June onwards German pressure rapidly increased against both brigade 's positions , with a number of attacks being repelled between then and 10 June . On 10 June the decision was taken to expand the bridgehead to the east of the River Orne , with the 6th Airborne Division tasked with achieving this ; however , it was deemed not to be strong enough , and the 5th Battalion , Black Watch was placed under the 3rd Parachute Brigade 's command ; the battalion launched an attack on the town of Breville on 11 June , but was met with extremely heavy resistance and was repulsed after suffering a number of casualties . The next day 3rd Parachute Brigade 's entire front was subjected to fierce artillery bombardment and assaults by German tanks and infantry , with the Germans particularly focusing on the positions held by 9th Parachute Battalion . Both the 9th Parachute Battalion and the remnants of the 5th Black Watch defended the Chateau Saint Come but were gradually forced to retreat . Lieutenant Colonel Otway informed brigade headquarters , some 400 metres (1 @,@ 300 ft) away , that his battalion would be unable to hold its ground for much longer ; upon hearing this message , Brigadier Hill gathered together forty paratroopers from the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion and led a counter @-@ attack that forced the German troops to withdraw .

German attempts to breach the 9th Parachute battalions ' positions did not end until 12 June , and Hill stated that the period 7 ? 12 June were " five of the toughest days fighting I saw in five years of war . " It was during this period that Hill was awarded the first Bar to his Distinguished Service Order , after supervising an assault by 12th Parachute Battalion on the town of Breville ; the town dominated a long ridge near the Allied bridgehead , from which the German 346th Infantry Division launched repeated attacks . From then on until mid @-@ August the division remained in static positions , holding the left flank of the Allied bridgehead and conducting vigorous patrolling . Finally , on 7 August the division was ordered to prepare to move over to the offensive , and on the night of 16 / 17 August it began to advance against stiff German opposition , its ultimate objective being the mouth of the River Seine (see 6th Airborne Division advance to the River Seine) . Hill 's 3rd Parachute Brigade led the division 's advance , being held up until nightfall at the village of Goustranville , but then securing several bridges and allowing the 5th Parachute Brigade to pass

through its positions and continue the division 's advance . The brigade remained around the Dives canal for several days , and then on 21 August it advanced towards Pont L 'Eveque , but was stalled by German infantry and armour near Annebault until 8th Parachute Battalion secured the village . Fighting continued to be fierce , but by 24 August the entire division had advanced across the River Touques . After another three days of reorganising and patrolling , the division 's time in Normandy came to an end ; in nine days it had advanced 45 miles , captured 400 square miles (1 @, @ 000 km2) of occupied territory and taken prisoner over 1 @, @ 000 German soldiers . Its casualties for the period were 4 @, @ 457 , of which 821 would be killed , 2 @, @ 709 wounded and 927 missing . It was finally withdrawn from the frontline in the last days of August , and embarked for England at the beginning of September .

= = = Ardennes = = =

On 16 December 1944 , the Germans launched a huge offensive in the Ardennes forest , with the German objective to split British and American forces apart and capture the port of Antwerp , an important logistical base for the Allies . The initial assaults were extremely successful , creating a salient some fifty miles wide and forty @-@ five miles deep , and by 23 December German units were advancing towards Dinant . American resistance was fierce , however , and blunted German advances in several areas , particularly the U.S. 101st Airborne Division around the town of Bastogne . By Christmas Day the offensive had been halted and contained , and an Allied counter @-@ offensive began . Although the majority of the troops committed belonged to the American First and Third Armies , British XXX Corps also participated , with the British 6th Airborne Division as one of its leading divisions . The division had been in England since the beginning of September , and had been due to go on Christmas leave only days before the counter @-@ offensive began ; however , it was quickly transported to the Ardennes , arriving on the night of 24 December . By 26 December the 6th Airborne Division , now commanded by Major @-@ General Eric Bols , had positioned itself between the towns of Dinant and Namur , and on 29 December it advanced against the German salient , with the 3rd Parachute Brigade , under James Hill , occupying an area around Rochefort .

When the German offensive had begun , Hill had been in hospital , undergoing reconstructive plastic surgery ; this meant that he was unable to join the 3rd Parachute Brigade for two days . When he had recovered , however , he and his batman were flown to the Ardennes and he was able to rejoin the brigade . The 5th Parachute Brigade launched several attacks against German positions in the village of Bure , which resulted in heavy British casualties , and both brigades conducted a large number of offensive patrols . The 3rd Parachute Brigade did not see any action , as those German units occupying positions opposite to it withdrew without fighting . By the end of January , however , the division was transferred back to the Netherlands and set up new positions along the Maas river , where it conducted more patrolling against elements of the German 7th Parachute Division , which held positions on the other side of the Maas . These operations came to an end in late February , when the 6th Airborne Division was withdrawn back to England to prepare for a major airborne operation in March .

= = = Rhine = = =

On 24 March 1945 Operation Varsity began , an airborne operation to aid in the establishment of a bridgehead on the east bank of the River Rhine which involved the British 6th Airborne Division and the U.S. 17th Airborne Division , under Major General William Miley . Varsity was the airborne component of Operation Plunder , in which the British Second Army , under Lieutenant @-@ General Miles C. Dempsey , and the U.S. Ninth Army , under Lieutenant General William Simpson , crossed the Rhine at Rees , Wesel , and an area south of the Lippe Canal . Both divisions would be dropped near the town of Hamminkeln , and were tasked with a number of objectives : they were to seize the Diersfordter Wald , a forest that overlooked the Rhine , including a road linking several towns together ; several bridges over a smaller waterway , the River Issel , were to be seized to

facilitate the advance ; and the town of Hamminkeln was to be captured . The 6th Airborne Division was specifically tasked with securing the northern portion of the airborne bridgehead , including Hamminkeln , a section of high ground to the east of Bergen , and several bridges over the River Issel . Hill 's 3rd Parachute Brigade was to drop at the north @-@ eastern corner of the Diersfordterwald forest and clear the western portion of the forest . It would then seize a hill known as the Schneppenberg , secure a road junction near Bergen and eventually link up with the 5th Parachute Brigade .

The 3rd Parachute Brigade dropped nine minutes later than planned , but otherwise landed accurately on drop zone ' A ' . Hill landed near to the Diersfordterwald forest , which was occupied by German soldiers " who are switched @-@ on people , " killing a number of paratroopers whose parachutes became tangled up in the trees . His brigade headquarters was positioned by a copse which was supposed to have been immediately cleared , but when he arrived it was still occupied by German troops ; Hill immediately ordered a company commander of the 8th Parachute Battalion to clear the copse . The officer did so , but was killed in the process . Hill then moved his headquarters to the copse , but was then nearly killed by an approaching glider which barely managed to pull up in time , landing in the trees above him ; upon investigation , Hill discovered that it contained his batman and personal Jeep , which took some time to lower down safely . The brigade suffered a number of casualties as it engaged the German forces in the Diersfordter Wald , but by 11 : 00 hours the drop zone was all but completely clear of enemy forces and all battalions of the brigade had formed up . The key town of Schnappenberg was captured by the 9th Parachute Battalion in conjunction with the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion , the latter unit having lost its commanding officer to German small @-@ arms fire only moments after he had landed . Despite taking casualties the brigade cleared the area of German forces , and by 13 : 45 Hill could report that the brigade had secured all of its objectives .

With Varsity a success , the 6th Airborne Division was ordered by Major General Matthew Ridgway , commander of U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps , to advance eastwards . It was supported by the 6th Guards Tank Brigade , and many of the airborne troops used unconventional transport during the advance , including captured German staff cars , prams and even horses . Hill requisitioned a motorcycle for his batman and travelled alongside the 3rd Parachute Brigade as it advanced ; at one point his batman stopped the motorcycle and relieved a captured German colonel of his binoculars before driving off again . Hill disapproved of battlefield looting and admonished his batman , although eventually relented by stating " If you can get me a pair [as well] , you can keep them ! " At midnight , 27 / 28 March the division came under the control of British VIII Corps , commanded by Lieutenant @-@ General Evelyn Barker , and became part of the general Allied advance through Germany towards the Baltic Sea , with the 3rd Parachute Brigade as the division 's leading unit . German resistance continued to be heavy , but the division managed to advance at a rapid pace despite this , with the brigade at one point advancing fifteen miles in twenty @-@ four hours , with eighteen of those being spent in combat . By early April the 6th Airborne reached the River Weser , with the brigade approaching it near the town of Minden , accompanied by armoured support ; as it did so , the brigade found itself moving parallel to several German tanks , with Hill sitting on the rear of one of the British tanks . Both sides opened fire , but did little damage , the two German tanks managing to outpace the brigade .

The brigade continued its fast pace of advance , with Hill continuing to ride pillion on his motorcycle , and by 23 April it had reached the River Elbe , having advanced 103 miles in fourteen days ; the division had captured more than 19 @,@ 000 prisoners during this period . After crossing the Elbe , the division once again came under the command of U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps , with General Ridgway informing Major General Bols that it was vital the division reach the port of Wismar before the approaching Russian Army did , to ensure that Denmark was not occupied by the Soviet Union . Although the 5th Parachute Brigade was ordered to lead the division 's advance , Hill was determined to reach Wismar first ; after an extremely rapid advance he succeeded , with troops from the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion being the first to enter Wismar , beating an advancing Russian tank column by only a few miles . A few days later , on 7 May 1945 , Germany surrendered and the war in Europe came to an end . Hill was awarded a second Bar to his DSO for his command

of the 3rd Parachute Brigade during its advance from the Rhine to the Elbe , as well as the American Silver Star .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

In May 1945 Hill served as military governor of Copenhagen , for which he was awarded the King Haakon VII Liberty Cross , and then assumed command of the 1st Parachute Brigade and oversaw its demobilisation . He retired from the British Army in July 1945 , although he continued to serve as an officer in the Territorial Army , raising the 4th Parachute Brigade (Territorial Army) in 1947 and serving as its commanding officer until 1949 . After standing down as commander of the brigade , Hill served on the board of a number of companies , including Lloyds Bank , the Associated Coal and Wharf Companies , and Powell Duffryn of Canada . Hill was an avid birdwatcher , with a particular claim to fame for being only the second person to discover a cuckoo 's egg in the nest of a whinchat . He also helped to set up the Parachute Regiment Association and the Airborne Forces Security fund , acting as a trustee of the latter organisation for thirty years and chairman for five years . Hill married for a second time , wedding Joan Patricia Haywood in 1986 . On 6 June 2004 he attended the 60th Anniversary of the Normandy landings , and a bronze statue of him was unveiled at Le Mesnil crossroads by Charles , Prince of Wales , Colonel @-@ in @-@ Chief of The Parachute Regiment . He died on 16 March 2006 , two days after his 95th birthday . He is survived by his second wife and a daughter from the first marriage , Gillian Bridget Sanda .