

= Frederick Browning =

Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Arthur Montague " Boy " Browning , GCVO , KBE , CB , DSO (20 December 1896 ? 14 March 1965) was a senior officer of the British Army who has been called the " father of the British airborne forces " . He was the commander of I Airborne Corps and deputy commander of First Allied Airborne Army during Operation Market Garden in September 1944 . During the planning for this operation he memorably said : " I think we might be going a bridge too far . " He was also an Olympic bobsleigh competitor , and the husband of author Dame Daphne du Maurier .

Educated at Eton College and then at the Royal Military College , Sandhurst , Browning was commissioned as a second lieutenant into the Grenadier Guards in 1915 . During the First World War he fought on the Western Front , and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for conspicuous gallantry during the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917 . In September 1918 , he became aide de camp to General Sir Henry Rawlinson . After the war , he competed in the bobsleigh at the 1928 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz , Switzerland , in which his team finished tenth . He married Daphne du Maurier in July 1932 .

During the Second World War , Browning commanded the 1st Airborne Division and I Airborne Corps . He led the latter during Operation Market Garden , travelling by glider to participate in the assault . In December 1944 he became Chief of Staff of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten 's South East Asia Command . From September 1946 to January 1948 , he was Military Secretary of the War Office .

In January 1948 , Browning became Comptroller and Treasurer to Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth , Duchess of Edinburgh . After she ascended to the throne to become Queen Elizabeth II in 1952 , he became treasurer in the Office of the Duke of Edinburgh . He suffered a severe nervous breakdown in 1957 and retired in 1959 . He died at Menabilly , the mansion that inspired his wife 's novel Rebecca , on 14 March 1965 .

= = Early life = =

Frederick Arthur Montague Browning was born on 20 December 1896 at his family home in Kensington , London . The house was later demolished to make way for an expansion of Harrods , allowing him to claim in later life that he had been born in its piano department . He was the first son of Frederick Henry Browning , a wine merchant , and his wife Nancy (née Alt) . He had one sibling , his older sister Helen Grace . From an early age he was known to his family as " Tommy " . He was educated at West Downs School and Eton College , which his grandfather had attended . While at Eton , he joined the Officer Training Corps .

= = First World War = =

Browning sat the entrance examinations for the Royal Military College , Sandhurst , on 24 November 1914 . Although he did not achieve the necessary scores in all the required subjects , the headmasters of some schools , including Eton , were in a position to recommend students for nomination by the Army Council . The head master of Eton , Edward Lyttelton , put Browning 's name forward and in this way he entered Sandhurst on 27 December 1914 . He graduated on 16 June 1915 , and was commissioned a second lieutenant into the Grenadier Guards . Joining such an exclusive regiment , even in wartime , required a personal introduction and an interview by the regimental commander , Colonel Sir Henry Streatfield .

Initially , Browning joined the 4th Battalion , Grenadier Guards , which was training at Bovington Camp . When it departed for the Western Front in August 1915 , he was transferred to the 5th (Reserve) Battalion . In October 1915 he left to join the 2nd Battalion at the front . Around this time he acquired the nickname " Boy " . For a time he served in the same company of 2nd Battalion as Major Winston Churchill . Upon Churchill 's arrival , Browning was given the job of showing him the company 's trenches . When Browning discovered that Churchill had no greatcoat , Browning gave

Churchill his own . Browning was invalided back to England with trench fever in January 1916 , and , although only hospitalised for four weeks , did not rejoin the 2nd Battalion at the front until 6 October 1916 .

Browning participated in the Battle of Pilckem Ridge on 31 July , the Battle of Poelcappelle on 9 October and the Battle of Cambrai in November . He distinguished himself in this battle , for which he received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) . The order was generally given to officers in command , above the rank of captain . When a junior officer like Browning , who was still only a lieutenant , was awarded the DSO , this was often regarded as an acknowledgement that the officer had only just missed out on the award of the Victoria Cross . His citation read :

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty . He took command of three companies whose officers had all become casualties , reorganised them , and proceeded to consolidate . Exposing himself to very heavy machine @-@ gun and rifle fire , in two hours he had placed the front line in a strong state of defence . The conduct of this officer , both in the assault and more especially afterwards , was beyond all praise , and the successful handing over of the front to the relieving unit as an entrenched and strongly fortified position was entirely due to his energy and skill .

He was awarded the French Croix de Guerre on 14 December 1917 , and mentioned in despatches on 23 May 1918 . In September 1918 , Browning became aide de camp to General Sir Henry Rawlinson , after which he returned to his regiment . He was promoted to the temporary rank of captain , and appointed adjutant of the 1st Battalion , Grenadier Guards , in November 1918 .

= = Inter @-@ war period = =

Browning was granted the substantive rank of captain on 24 November 1920 . He retained his post as adjutant until November 1921 , when he was posted to the Guards ' Depot in Caterham . In 1924 he was posted to Sandhurst as adjutant . He was the first adjutant , during the Sovereign 's Parade of 1926 , to ride his horse (named " The Vicar ") up the steps of Old College and to dismount in the Grand Entrance . There is no satisfactory explanation as to why he did it . After the Second World War this became an enduring tradition , but since horses have great difficulty going down steps , a ramp is now provided for the horse to return . Other members of staff at Sandhurst at the time included Richard O 'Connor , Miles Dempsey , Douglas Gracey , and Eric Dorman @-@ Smith , with whom he became close friends . Browning relinquished the appointment of adjutant at Sandhurst on 28 April 1928 , and was promoted to major on 22 May 1928 . Following a pattern whereby tours of duty away from the regiment alternated with those in it , he was sent for a refresher course at the Small Arms School before being posted to the 2nd Battalion , Grenadier Guards , at Pirbright .

His workload was very light , allowing plenty of time for sports . Browning competed in the Amateur Athletic Association of England championships in hurdling but failed to make Olympic selection . He did however make the Olympic five @-@ man bobsleigh team as brake @-@ man . An injury incurred during a training accident prevented his participation in the bobsleigh at the 1924 Winter Olympics , but he competed in the bobsleigh at the 1928 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz , Switzerland , in which his team finished tenth . Browning was also a keen sailor , competing in the Household Cavalry Sailing Regatta at Chichester Harbour in 1930 . He purchased his own motor boat , a 20 @-@ foot (6 @. @ 1 m) cabin cruiser that he named Ygdrasil .

In 1931 , Browning read Daphne du Maurier 's novel The Loving Spirit and , impressed by its graphic depictions of the Cornish coastline , set out to see it for himself in Ygdrasil . Afterwards , he left the boat moored in the River Fowey for the winter , but returned in April 1932 to collect it . He heard that the author of the book that had impressed him so much was convalescing from an appendix operation , and invited her out on his boat . After a short romance , he proposed to her but she rejected this , as she did not believe in marriage . Dorman @-@ Smith then went to see her and explained that their living together without marriage would be disastrous for Browning 's career . Du Maurier then proposed to Browning , who accepted . They were married in a simple ceremony at the Church of St Willow , Lanteglos @-@ by @-@ Fowey on 19 July 1932 , and honeymooned on Ygdrasil . Their marriage produced three children : two daughters , Tessa and Flavia , and a son , Christian , known as Kits .

Browning was promoted to lieutenant @-@ colonel on 1 February 1936 , and was appointed commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion , Grenadier Guards . The battalion was deployed to Egypt in 1936 and returned in December 1937 . His term as commander ended on 1 August 1939 ; he was removed from the Grenadier Guards ' regimental list but remained on full pay . On 1 September , he was promoted to colonel , with his seniority backdated to 1 February 1939 , and became Commandant of the Small Arms School .

= = Second World War = =

= = = Airborne troops = = =

In mid @-@ May 1940 , Browning was given command of the 128th (Hampshire) Infantry Brigade (consisting of three battalions of the Hampshire Regiment) with the rank of brigadier . Part of the 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division , the 128th Brigade was a Territorial Army brigade that was preparing to join the British Expeditionary Force in France . This was pre @-@ empted by the Fall of France in June 1940 , and the division assumed a defensive posture . In February 1941 , Browning became commander of the 24th Guards Brigade Group , whose mission was to defend London from an attack from the south .

On 3 November 1941 , Browning was promoted to major @-@ general , and appointed commander of the 1st Airborne Division . In this new role he was instrumental in parachutists adopting the maroon beret , and assigned an artist , Major Edward Seago , to design the Parachute Regiment 's now famous emblem of the warrior Bellerophon riding Pegasus , the winged horse . However , Browning " designed his own uniform , made of barathea with a false Uhlan @-@ style front , incorporating a zip opening at the neck to reveal regulation shirt and tie , worn with medal ribbons , collar patches , and rank badges , capped off with grey kid gloves , and a highly polished Guards Sam Browne belt and swagger stick " , all of which were worn in the field . He qualified as a pilot in 1942 , and henceforth wore the Army Air Corps wings , which he also designed himself .

Browning supervised the newly formed division as it underwent a prolonged period of expansion and intensive training , with new brigades raised and assigned to the division , and new equipment tested . Though not considered an airborne warfare visionary , he proved adept at dealing with an apathetic War Office and an obstructionist Air Ministry , and demonstrated a knack for overcoming bureaucratic obstacles . As the airborne forces expanded in size , the major difficulty in getting the 1st Airborne Division ready for operations was a shortage of aircraft . The Royal Air Force had neglected air transport before the war , and the only available aircraft for airborne troops were conversions of obsolete bombers like the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley . Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris in particular felt that the 1st Airborne Division was not worth the drain on Bomber Command 's resources .

When Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the United States Army Chief of Staff , General George C. Marshall , visited the 1st Airborne Division on 16 April 1942 , they were treated to a demonstration involving every available aircraft of No. 38 Wing RAF ? 12 Whitleys and nine Hawker Hector biplanes towing General Aircraft Hotspur gliders . At a meeting on 6 May chaired by Churchill , Browning was asked what he required . He stated that he needed 96 aircraft to get the 1st Airborne Division battle @-@ ready . Churchill directed Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal to find the required aircraft , and Portal agreed to supply 83 Whitleys , along with 10 Halifax bombers to tow the new , larger General Aircraft Hamilcar gliders .

In July 1942 , Browning travelled to the United States , where he toured airborne training facilities with his American counterpart , Major General William C. Lee . Browning 's tendency to lecture the Americans on airborne warfare made him few friends among the Americans , who felt that the British were still novices themselves . Browning was envious of the Americans ' equipment , particularly the C @-@ 47 Dakota transports . On returning to the United Kingdom , he arranged for a joint exercise to be conducted with the 2nd Battalion , 503rd Parachute Infantry . In mid ? September , as the 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 . When he found that the 2nd Battalion , 503rd Parachute Infantry , was to take part , Browning argued that a larger airborne force should be utilised , as the vast distances and comparatively light opposition would provide opportunities for airborne operations .

The War Office and the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief , Home Forces , General Sir Bernard Paget , were won over by Browning 's arguments , and agreed to detach 1st Parachute 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 .

The results of British airborne operations in North Africa were mixed , and the subject of a detailed report by Browning . The airborne troops had operated under several handicaps , including shortages of photographs and maps . All the troop carrier aircrew were American , who lacked familiarity with airborne operations and in dealing with British troops and equipment . Browning felt that the inexperience with handling airborne operations extended to Eisenhower 's Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) and that of the British First Army , resulting in the paratroops being misused . He felt that had they been employed more aggressively and in greater strength they might have shortened the Tunisia Campaign by some months . The 1st Parachute Brigade had been called the " Rote Teufel " or " Red Devils " by the German troops they had fought . Browning pointed out to the brigade that this was an honour , as " distinctions given by the enemy are seldom won in battle except by the finest fighting troops . " The title was officially confirmed by General Sir Harold Alexander and henceforth applied to all British airborne troops .

On 1 January 1943 , Browning was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath . He relinquished command of the 1st Airborne Division in March 1943 to take up a new post as major @-@ general , Airborne Forces at Eisenhower 's AFHQ . He soon clashed with the commander of the US 82nd Airborne Division , Major General Matthew Ridgway . When Browning asked to see the plans for Operation Husky , the Allied invasion of Sicily , Ridgway replied that they would not be available for scrutiny until after they had been approved by the U.S. Seventh Army commander , Lieutenant General George Patton . When Browning protested , Patton backed Ridgway , but Eisenhower and his chief of staff , Major General Walter Bedell Smith , supported Browning and forced them to back down .

Browning 's dealings with the British Army were no smoother . His successor as commander of the 1st Airborne Division , Major @-@ General George F. Hopkinson , had sold the commander of the British Eighth Army , General Sir Bernard Montgomery , on Operation Ladbroke , a glider landing to seize the Ponte Grande road bridge south of Syracuse . Browning 's objections to the operation were ignored , and attempts to discuss airborne operations with the corps commanders elicited a directive from Montgomery that all such discussion had to go through him . Browning concluded that to be effective , the airborne advisor had to have equal rank with the army commanders .

In September 1943 , Browning travelled to India , where he inspected the 50th Parachute Brigade , and met with Major @-@ General Orde Wingate , the commander of the Chindits , an airborne special force . Browning held a series of meetings with General Sir Claude Auchinleck , the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief , India ; Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse , the Air Officer Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief ; and Lieutenant @-@ General Sir George Giffard , the General Officer Commanding Eastern Army . They discussed plans for improving the airborne establishment in India and expanding the airborne force there to a division . As a result of these discussions , and Browning 's subsequent report to the War Office , the 44th Indian Airborne Division was formed in October 1944 . Browning sent his most experienced airborne commander , Major @-@ General Ernest Down , to India to command it . Down 's replacement as commander of the 1st Airborne Division by Montgomery 's selection , Major @-@ General Roy Urquhart , an officer with no airborne experience , rather than Browning 's choice , Brigadier Gerald Lathbury of the 1st Parachute Brigade , would become controversial .

Some saw him as " a ruthless and manipulative empire builder who brooked no opposition " .

Brigadier @-@ General James M. Gavin , assistant division commander of the 82nd Airborne Division , recalled that when he travelled to England in November 1943 , Ridgway " cautioned me against the machinations and scheming of General F. M. Browning , who was the senior British airborne officer , and well he should have . " Major @-@ General Ray Barker told him that Browning was " an empire builder " , an assessment that Gavin came to agree with .

= = = Operation Market Garden = = =

Browning assumed a new command on 4 December 1943 . His Directive No. 1 announced that " the title of the force is Headquarters , Airborne Troops (21st Army Group) . All correspondence will bear the official title , but verbally it will be known as the Airborne Corps and I will be referred to as the Corps Commander . " He was promoted to lieutenant @-@ general on 7 January 1944 , with his seniority backdated to 9 December 1943 . He officially became commander of I Airborne Corps on 16 April 1944 .

I Airborne Corps became part of the First Allied Airborne Army , commanded by Lieutenant General Lewis H. Brereton , in August 1944 . While retaining command of the corps , Browning also became Deputy Commander of the Army , despite a poor relationship with Brereton and being disliked by many American officers , including Major General Ridgway , now commander of the U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps . During preparations for one of many cancelled operations , Linnete II , his disagreement with Brereton over a risky operation caused him to threaten resignation , which , due to differences in military culture , Brereton regarded as tantamount to disobeying an order . Browning was forced into a humiliating backdown .

When I Airborne Corps was committed to action in Operation Market Garden in September 1944 , Browning 's rift with Brereton had severe repercussions . Browning was concerned about the timetable put forward by Major @-@ General Paul L. Williams of the IX Troop Carrier Command , under which the drop was staggered over several days , and not to make two drops on the first day . This restricted the number of combat troops available on the first day . He also disagreed with the British drop zones proposed by Air Vice Marshal Leslie Hollinghurst of No. 38 Group RAF , which he felt were too distant from the bridge at Arnhem , but Browning now felt unable to challenge the airmen .

Browning downplayed evidence brought to him by his intelligence officer , Major Brian Urquhart , that the 9th SS Panzer Division Hohenstaufen and the 10th SS Panzer Division Frundsberg were in the Arnhem area , but was not as confident as he led his subordinates to believe . According to Major @-@ General Urquhart , commander of the British 1st Airborne , when informed that his airborne troops would have to hold the bridge for two days , Browning responded that they could hold it for four , but then added : " But I think we might be going a bridge too far . "

'Boy ' Browning landed by gliders with a tactical headquarters near Nijmegen . His use of 38 aircraft to move his corps headquarters on the first lift has been criticised . Half of these gliders carried signal equipment but for much of the operation he had no contact with either the British 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem or Major General Taylor 's U.S. 101st Airborne Division at Eindhoven . His headquarters had not been envisaged as a frontline unit , and the signals section that had been hastily assembled just weeks before lacked training and experience . In his pack , Browning carried three teddy bears and a framed print of Albrecht Dürer 's The Praying Hands .

Major General Gavin , now commanding the 82nd Airborne Division , was critical of Browning , writing in his diary on 6 September 1944 that he " ... unquestionably lacks the standing , influence and judgement that comes from a proper troop experience his staff was superficial ... Why the British units fumble along ... becomes more and more apparent . Their tops lack the know @-@ how , never do they get down into the dirt and learn the hard way . "

After the war , Gavin and his staff were criticised for the decision to secure the high ground around Groesbeek before attempting the capture of the Waal bridge at Nijmegen . Browning took responsibility for this , noting that he " personally gave an order to Jim Gavin that , although every effort should be made to effect the capture of the Grave and Nijmegen bridges as soon as possible , it was essential that he should capture the Groesbeek Ridge and hold it " .

After the battle , Browning was awarded the Order of Polonia Restituta (II class) by the Polish government @-@ in @-@ exile , but his critical evaluation of the contribution of Polish forces led to the removal of Major @-@ General Stanisław Sosabowski as commanding officer of the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade . Some writers later claimed that Sosabowski had been made a scapegoat for the failure of Market Garden . Field Marshal Montgomery attached no blame to Browning or any of his subordinates , or indeed acknowledged failure at all . He told the Chief of the Imperial General Staff , Sir Alan Brooke , that he would like Browning to take over VIII Corps in the event that Richard O 'Connor were transferred to another theatre .

= = = South East Asia Command = = =

Events took a different course . Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten , the Supreme Allied Commander , South East Asia Command (SEAC) , had need of a new chief of staff owing to the poor health of Lieutenant @-@ General Henry Royds Pownall . Brooke turned down Mountbatten 's initial request for either Lieutenant @-@ General Archibald Nye or Lieutenant @-@ General John Swayne . Brooke then offered Browning for the post , and Mountbatten accepted . Pownall considered that Browning was " excellently qualified " for the post , although he had no staff college training and had never held a staff job before . Pownall noted that his " only reservation is that I believe [Browning] is rather nervy and highly strung " . For his services as a corps commander , Browning was mentioned in despatches a second time , and was awarded the Legion of Merit in the degree of Commander by the United States government .

Browning served in South East Asia from December 1944 until July 1946 ; Mountbatten soon came to regard him as indispensable . Browning had an American deputy , Major @-@ General Horace H. Fuller , and brought staff with him from Europe to SEAC headquarters in Kandy , Ceylon . SEAC headquarters developed an adversarial relationship with that of Lieutenant @-@ General Sir Oliver Leese 's Allied Land Forces South East Asia (ALFSEA) . Matters came to a head when Leese attempted to replace the victorious commander of the Fourteenth Army , Lieutenant @-@ General Sir William Slim . In the resulting furore , Leese was relieved instead . Slim took over ALFSEA and was replaced as Fourteenth Army commander by Browning 's friend General Sir Miles Dempsey . For his services at SEAC , Browning was created a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire on 1 January 1946 . His last major military post was as Military Secretary of the War Office from September 1946 to January 1948 .

= = Later life = =

In January 1948 , Browning became Comptroller and Treasurer to Her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth Duchess of Edinburgh , although he did not officially retire from the Army until 5 April 1948 . This appointment was made on the recommendation of Lord Mountbatten , whose nephew Philip Mountbatten was now the Duke of Edinburgh . As such , Browning became the head of the Princess ' personal staff . He also juggled other duties . In 1948 he was involved with the 1948 Summer Olympics as Deputy Chairman of the British Olympic Association , and commandant of the British team . From 1944 to 1962 he was Commodore of the Royal Fowey Yacht Club ; on stepping down in 1962 , he was elected its first Admiral .

Upon the death of King George VI in 1952 , the Duchess of Edinburgh inherited the throne as Queen Elizabeth II . Browning and his staff became redundant , as the Queen was now served by the large staff of the monarch . The domestic staff remained at Clarence House , where they continued to serve the Queen Mother . The remainder were reorganised as the Office of the Duke of Edinburgh , with Browning as treasurer , the head of the office , moving into a new and larger office at Buckingham Palace . Like the Duke they served , the office had no constitutional role , but followed his sporting , cultural and scientific interests . Browning became involved with the Cutty Sark Trust , set up to preserve the famous ship , and in the administration of the Duke of Edinburgh 's Award . In June 1953 , Browning and Du Maurier attended the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II .

Browning had been drinking since the war , but it had now become chronic . This led to a severe

nervous breakdown in July 1957 , forcing his resignation from his position at the Palace in 1959 . Du Maurier had known of his taking a mistress in Fowey , but his breakdown brought to light two other girlfriends in London . For her part , Du Maurier confessed to her own wartime affair . For his services to the Royal Household , Browning was made a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in 1953 , and was advanced to Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order in 1959 . He retreated to Menabilly , the mansion that had inspired Du Maurier 's novel Rebecca , which she had leased and restored in 1943 . In 1960 he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Cornwall . Browning caused a scandal in 1963 when , under the influence of prescription drugs and alcohol , he was involved in an automobile accident in which two people were injured . He was fined £ 50 and forced to pay court and medical costs . He died from a heart attack at Menabilly on 14 March 1965 .

= = Legacy = =

Browning was portrayed by Dirk Bogarde in the film A Bridge Too Far , based on the events of Operation Market Garden . A copy of Browning 's uniform was made to Bogarde 's measurements from the original in the Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Museum . The Airborne Forces Museum , which opened in 1969 , was for many years located in Browning Barracks , which had been built in 1964 and named after Browning . Browning Barracks remained the depot of the Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces until 1993 . The museum moved to the Imperial War Museum Duxford in 2008 , and Browning Barracks was sold for housing development .