



History of the Glider Pilot Regiment

Claude Smith

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The Glider Pilot Regiment, having been raised as the first element of the new Army Air Corps in 1942 and disbanded in 1957, can probably claim the dubious distinction of having been the smallest and shortest-lived Regiment ever to form part of the British Army. Nevertheless, in those few years the Regiment gained as much distinction as it has taken other units hundreds of years to achieve. Yet, strangely enough, the story of these heroic men who piloted their flimsy gliders to most of the important battlefields of the Second World War has never before been told. It is indeed a remarkable story and no one is better qualified to tell it than Claude Smith, who himself served with the Regiment and took part in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day, 6 June 1944, and later in the ill-fated landing at Arnhem, where he was taken prisoner. Claude Smith tells the story of these supremely brave men, factually and unemotionally, but it is impossible to read this book without being moved by their heroism. As General Sir John Hackett says in his foreword: 'Those who went to battle in gliders and above all those who got them there, the Glider Pilots, deserve our enduring esteem'.

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