

**BRIGADIER (later GENERAL) SIR Gerald LATHBURY MBE DSO
BRIGADE COMMANDER 1ST PARACHUTE BRIGADE**



Commissioned into the Regiment on 2nd February, 1926 he joined the 43rd in Germany. Two years later he was seconded to the Royal West Africa Frontier Force and served with the Gold Coast Regiment from 1928 to 1934 when he rejoined the 43rd at Bordon.

He was at the Staff College in 1937-38 and served in France in 1940 as a Brigade Major, being made M.B.E. for his services.

After being a G.S.O.2 at the Staff College and G.S.O.1 at the War Office, in 1941 he was given command of the 3rd Parachute Battalion.

In 1942 he was given command of 3rd Parachute Brigade followed in 1943 by 1st Parachute Brigade, serving actively in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, being awarded the D.S.O.

He later commanded the same 1st Parachute Brigade in the Arnhem operation in 1944 where he was wounded but later escaped from hospital and with the help of the Dutch Underground became an evader.

Colonel Commandant of 1st Green Jackets, 43rd and 52nd, from 1960 to 1965, he was much involved in planning the full amalgamation of the Regiment with the King's Royal Rifle Corps and The Rifle Brigade to form The Royal Green Jackets in 1966.

He was also Colonel Commandant of The Parachute Regiment from 1961 to 1965.

**For his conduct during the Sicily operation, Brigadier Lathbury was awarded the
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER:**



This officer organised and led the attack by the 1st Parachute Brigade on a vital river crossing South of Catania in Sicily on the night 13th/14th July 1943.

Although dropped by parachute 1.5 miles away, from a height of only 100 feet Brigadier Lathbury reached the objective, took part in its capture and directed the consolidation, during which he was wounded.

Later, during a heavy counterattack by German parachutists, he remained at the bridge where he fought alongside his troops and provided an example and inspiration which contributed in no small degree to the success of the operation.

**OBITUARY NOTICE EXTRACT FROM THE 1978 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
OF THE ROYAL GREEN JACKETS**

GENERAL SIR GERALD WILLIAM LATHBURY, G.C.B., D.S.O., M.B.E.

The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry

Gerald Lathbury died on 16th May 1978 at his home in Mortimer.

He was the son of Colonel H. O. and Mrs. Lathbury and was born on 14th July, 1906.

He was educated at Wellington College and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst.

Commissioned on 2nd February, 1926 he joined the 43rd in Germany.

Two years later he was seconded to the Royal West Africa Frontier Force and served with the Gold Coast Regiment from 1928 to 1934 when he rejoined the 43rd at Bordon. He was at the Staff College in 1937-38 and served in France in 1940, being made M.B.E. for his services.

After being a G.S.O.2 at the Staff College and G.S.O.1 at the War Office, Gerald was given command of a Parachute Battalion and he was to continue a close connection with The Airborne Forces for the remainder of his life.

After commanding 3rd Parachute Battalion he was given command of 3rd Parachute Brigade followed by 1st Parachute Brigade, serving actively in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, being awarded the D.S.O. He later commanded the same Brigade in the Arnhem operation in 1944.

Gerald ended the war with a first-class reputation and his rise thereafter was rapid. After attending the Imperial Defence College in 1948 he went to command the 16th Airborne Division (T.A.) as a Major-General followed by Commandant of the Staff College from 1951-53. After Camberley he was appointed Vice-Adjutant General.

In 1955 operations in Kenya to defeat the Mau-Mau Rebellion were in full swing. Gerald was sent out to Nairobi as Commander-in-Chief, East Africa, and set about gaining the upper hand with his usual vigour. It was an appointment very much to his heart since he knew and liked Africans, and was also an ardent naturalist. He was also successful in establishing a good rapport with the white settlers — a not particularly easy task given the policy of the British Government for their African colonies and the feelings among the European community in Kenya which were running high at the time. He was successful in bringing the operations to a conclusion and was appointed K.C.B. for his work. He had received the C.B. in 1959.

On return home he was promoted Lieutenant-General in 1957 and became Director General of Military Training.

In 1960 he was appointed G.O.C. in C Eastern Command and promoted General, and in 1961 he became Quartermaster-General to the Forces, which appointment he held until 1965 when he retired from the Army.

He was made Governor and Commander-in-Chief Gibraltar in August, 1965. This coincided with the almost complete breakdown in relations with Spain. The Rock was sealed off from the mainland and every kind of pressure was brought to bear on the Gibraltarians by the Spaniards to persuade them to cast off their allegiance to the British Crown and throw in their lot with Spain. Despite this pressure, which inevitably had serious effects on life in Gibraltar, the Gibraltarians did not falter in their loyalty to Britain, and they were fortified in their resolve by the example set them by their Governor. He was careful throughout to avoid provocation, either by word or deed, but his calm and resolute handling of a very difficult situation won him the confidence of both the people of Gibraltar and the government at home.

He retired in 1969 and lived mostly in Spain pursuing his hobby of ornithology.

Gerald was Colonel Commandant of 1st Green Jackets, 43rd and 52nd, from 1960 to 1965, and was much involved in planning the full amalgamation of his Regiment with the King's Royal Rifle Corps and The Rifle Brigade to form The Royal Green Jackets in 1966.

He was also Colonel Commandant of The Parachute Regiment from 1961-65, Colonel of The West India Regiment in 1959 and Colonel of The Jamaica Regiment from 1962-68. He was made G.C.B. in 1962 and A.D.C. General to the Queen from 1962-65.

He married Jean, daughter of the late Lieutenant-Colonel E. G. Thin in 1942 and had two daughters. This marriage was dissolved in 1972 and he then married Marie Zoe, widow of Patrick Somerset Gibbs.

The funeral was held at Mortimer Parish Church, the bearers appropriately being found from The Royal Green Jackets and The Parachute Regiment.

H.M. the Queen and the Prince of Wales were represented at a Service of Thanksgiving for Gerald's life and work held later in the Chapel of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. The large congregation included representatives from many organisations, charities and Regiments in which Gerald took such an active interest.

J.A.J.R. writes:

As a man Gerald had a strong but reserved personality. Physically he was very tall, and could give an impression of arrogance. He would stand very straight and look down his elegant nose with a frosty look in his eye: lesser mortals, and sometimes not so lesser, trembled in their shoes. This of course was not the real Gerald, but a defensive mechanism forced on him by his natural shyness. When one knew him (and he took a bit of knowing), he was kindness itself, with a warm affectionate nature, and a gay bubbling sense of humour, particularly of the ridiculous.

As befitted a descendant of William Cobbett, he loved the countryside, and was no mean expert on all aspects of it, particularly bird life. When he was a very senior general once or twice on exercises it appeared that he was paying more attention to the movements of the birds than to the tactics of the soldiery. He had a fine discernment for the good things of life: he loved pictures, good wine, good cigars, and above all good company, and good conversation well divorced from military topics.

He was a man of great courage, physical and moral, with a will of iron. When he had decided on a course of action, he stuck to it through thick and thin, and was not to be deflected. He had a shrewd common sense approach to problems, and to practical solutions of them. He did much for the army, and his regiments, and we shall sorely miss his tall elegant soldierly figure and his wise advice.