



Brigadier Geoffrey Proudman CBE

Geoffrey was born on 24 March 1922, and educated at Birkenhead School and Manchester University. He was subsequently commissioned in R Signals, and became one of the first operational parachutists in Airborne Forces.

On D-Day, as the Airlanding Brigade Signal Officer, with a troop consisting of a 2ic, 2 Sgts and 46 soldiers, Geoffrey suffered the loss of his 2ic, 1 Sgt wounded on arrival, and 12 soldiers killed or wounded, all during the first day. He was able nevertheless to establish and maintain communications to all the battalions, and a direct Morse link to the UK for resupply. The 3 carrier pigeons taken along for emergencies were subsequently to prove an expensive snack when rations ran short!

During the first 24 hours, Geoffrey and 6 soldiers laid 40 miles of cable to reinforce the low-power manpacks they had brought, which involved moving around in forward areas in constant danger of enemy fire. During the battle of Breville, being concerned that operational comms would not provide adequate control of mortars and supporting artillery, he climbed a telegraph pole to check the civilian line, and heard a German voice issuing instructions. To discourage their use, he connected a pedal generator and got one of his biggest Linemen to apply his strength, after which there was complete silence. The short section of the line could then be used! The following day, a mortar blast caused him temporary blindness and concussion, but he continued in action until eventually seeking medical treatment. Geoffrey was Mentioned in Despatches for his actions on D-Day.

In March 1945, Geoffrey took part in Operation Varsity, the airborne assault over the Rhine, when his glider was hit some 40 feet above the ground, and, as he put it, "Quite a lot of things got bent." However, he and 6 soldiers survived the crash. He was later promoted Major in the field. Immediately afterwards, he served with distinction with 6th Airborne Div in Palestine. He was Mentioned in Despatches for his part in the campaign against the terrorists.

In April 1948, after an eventful two years in Palestine, 6 AB Div returned to UK, and was reduced in number to Bde strength. The new Bde was designated 16 Independent Para Bde Group, to which the words Sig Sqn were attached to cover R Sigs involvement. The Sqn was commanded by Maj G Proudman until Oct 1948.

In 1952, Geoffrey attended the Staff College at Quetta, passing out top, and shortly after he became GSO2 Ops in Malaya, serving throughout the emergency against the communist terrorists. In 1960, he was selected to attend the US Command & General Staff College, where he passed out equal second of some 800 students. Promoted Lt Col in 1964, Geoffrey commanded 3 Div Sig Regt, where he served in Cyprus with the UN. Having a horror of serving in peacetime BAOR, which he regarded as a waste of time, he was posted as DAA & QMG to the Aden Bde, a large formation with 7 major units, and all the base installations. He remained in Aden until the British withdrawal, and was once more Mentioned in Despatches for distinguished service.

Having a flair for teaching the young, Geoffrey was made a Company Commander at RMA Sandhurst from 1948-52. He formed the YO Training Wing at Catterick in 1958, and returned to command Victory College RMAS in 1968. Promoted Brig in 1969, he became CSO Strategic Command, and then Director of Operational Requirement in MOD. There his responsibilities included the initiation, development, and introduction of special anti-terrorist equipment for Northern Ireland during the early part of the emergency. His last appointment was Dep Adj Gen at UKLF. Geoffrey retired from the Army in 1977.

Geoffrey was awarded the MBE in 1964 and the CBE in 1975. On retirement, he took up an appointment with the Community Council for Wiltshire, and worked successfully to improve the lot of village halls, sports, and playing fields in the county. He became Director of the British Deer Society, where he pursued his special interests for animals and the environment. Latterly, he devoted his time to the welfare of his local community.

Geoffrey Proudman died suddenly on 6th May 2006. He had married Pamela Caw in 1943; there were no children.

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