

Joe Hughes (1924 – 2003)

Joe Hughes was dropped by parachute just before midnight on 5 June 1944 in the raid by 9 Para on the [Merville Battery](#) (simultaneous with the attack on Pegasus Bridge). He was one of only 75 soldiers who walked out unscathed. He survived the war and died in 2003 aged 79. His ashes were scattered round an ash tree (a pun he would have appreciated) at his daughter Janet's house in Roncey.

Extract from Neil Barber, [The Day the Devils Dropped In](#) (Leo Cooper [Pen & Sword] 2002)
This photograph below appears in the foyer of the [Museum](#) and also on the wall in the casement.



Joe Hughes.

This was a situation that could not be allowed to continue for long.

*

At 10.00am the Paras in Ranville counter-attacked and cleared many of the Germans lying in front of them on the LZ, taking twenty prisoners. The survivors joined others who had earlier taken cover in the nearby woods at Le Mariquet.³ This had caused another problem because a gap remained in the Airborne perimeter between the 3rd and 5th Parachute Brigades, and the German occupation of one of these woods severed road contact. Private Joe Hughes of the 3rd Brigade Defence Platoon discovered this a little later. He was the assigned escort for the BRASCO (Brigade RASC Officer), Captain Donald Cooper, and a driver on one of the supply trips to the Divisional dump:

The road was not controlled by us and after a while the lorry stopped and the driver shouted there were Jerries blocking the road. I shouted to get going and we went through them. I opened up with my Sten and definitely got three of them. Just as we went through, one of them must have thrown a grenade and it went off in the road behind us. I sprayed them with my Sten to keep their heads down.

We checked the lorry when we arrived at the Div. Dump and the amount of holes in the lorry! It was a wonder we were not wiped out.

*

Postscript:

Joe's eldest grandson, Tony, came to live in France in 1994. A gifted and visionary builder, he converted many derelict farm buildings into beautiful homes. Tony was killed in a car accident in 2012, but left a daughter Maddison and a son Marty (French great-grandchildren of Joe). In 2014, Maddison started her studies in Medical Sciences at Caen University Hospital, barely 20 kilometres from Merville.