

**Major Gerald Ritchie 8th (Yorkshire) parachute regiment, to his sister (WW2)**

July 3, Chesterfield  
My dear Muriel

We **emplaned** late in the evening of the Monday and it all seemed very unreal. It was difficult to imagine that by dawn on the next day, we should have been tipped out of an aeroplane over France and should have landed in a place where there were quite a number of evil-minded **Boche**, whose one object would be to **liquidate** us before we could do the same to them. The doors of the aircraft were opened while we were still over the sea and being No1 to jump in my aircraft, I had a grand view as the coast of France appeared below us.

A few moments more and the red light came on and then the green, and out I went, my mind a complete blank as usual when I jump. I can remember very little of my descent, it didn't take long anyway. I did rather a poor landing, my own fault entirely, and bruised my knees which made crawling most painful, and I had a certain amount to do during that day! Anyway, I scrambled to my feet and unhitched myself from my parachute and took a look around.

There were some machine-guns firing at the planes over to the east and quite a lot of flak and stuff to the south, but no sign of any enemy in our **vicinity** or in the direction I was going. There were numerous others about from our battalion and in a little while I met one of my platoon commanders and then the colonel and then another captain and we checked our position and arrived at our objective, a quarry, without any untoward incident.

A lot of it I've given rather sketchily, and I could never hope to give you the atmosphere, as it were; it is really quite indescribable. The extraordinary smell of broken buildings and explosives; the countryside, very like the Cotswolds really, littered with gliders and parachutes; gliders everywhere, in hedges and fences, some broken so much that it looked that no one could have survived and yet in very few cases was anyone hurt on landing. It was really an amazing but very unpleasant and tragic two days. The second-in-command of my company never appeared at all and was found four days later, he had been killed soon after landing; and my best friend in the battalion never turned up at all, nor anyone from his plane, so what happened to him I don't know.

After I left they had rather a sticky time and most of the officers were either killed or wounded, more the **latter** than the former fortunately. Our colonel was killed, the announcement was in today's Telegraph.

Yours ever  
Gerald

1. Find the definition of the following words, which are in bold in the extract:

emplaned: \_\_\_\_\_

liquidated: \_\_\_\_\_

vicinity: \_\_\_\_\_

latter: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which regiment does Major Gerald Ritchie belong to?

3. In which country is Major Ritchie landing? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What does Major Ritchie say that he can smell? Write the exact quotation: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Which three adjectives does the writer use to describe the two days he is writing about: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which two people does Major Ritchie find out have not survived? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How would you describe the tone of the letter? Find evidence from the text to support your chosen answer.

a) matter-of-fact      b) overwhelmed      c) unconfident