



Willis Douglas Hackney, III  
Staff Sergeant  
Served 4 years in  
the Engineers Corps  
Volunteered at start  
of war

Stationed at Indian  
Loren Gap

Lancaster, Pa.

Trained there before  
leaving for Europe  
from Fort Dix, N. J.

**Support Our Troops ~ Remember Our Veterans**

11/28/05



He was stationed in London and then into France - He visited Jack Riley's grave - He was a brother of Bruce and John Riley - Jack was killed in a glider -

I am enclosing article that might be of interest - Please return - Thanks  
Louise

**Support Our**



**Ms. Louise W. Hackney  
919 Raleigh Rd. W.  
Wilson, NC 27896-2085**



# Wilson Men In London Reunion

**Sixteen Wilson Men Gather  
At Club In London For  
Reunion; Major Holden  
Writes of Event.**

A group of 16 Wilson boys met at a Red Cross Club in London on January 3 and organized a group that plans to meet at least once a month to talk over things at home, it was disclosed here Tuesday in a letter from Major Needham Holden of Wilson, who met with the group.

The meeting was held after Gardner Ashe, also of Wilson, inserted an ad in the "Stars and Stripes" army newspaper urging all Wilson men to meet at a certain time in London.

Here's Major Holden's letter about the party:

"Just a word of hello to the folks back home from their folks over here and a bit that might prove interesting to a number of people in Wilson. You might call it "Reunion in London" I suppose.

## WILSON MEN IN LONDON REUNION

(Continued from page one)

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So recently Gardner inserted in the "Stars and Stripes," army newspaper a notice that all Wilson men would meet in the "Rainbow Club" the night of January 3. I was quite curious to see how many we'd have. Expected five or six. Anyway I ran up to London that night. Reached the "Rainbow" one of London's numerous Red Cross clubs. It's about two blocks from Picadilly circus, and quite a large place. Did a bit of scouting around but no soap. Not a soul around that I knew.

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1944



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"We did nothing but sit around and gas for a couple of hours. But we've agreed to try it again on February 15 if things allow. Then we'll have a meal together and we hope to have a large number. Pretty sure we will. So you might give us a thought on February 15 at 7:00 p. m. (2:00 p. m. to you) and I assure you we shall think of you.

"Here's a list of those present:

"S. Sgt. William E. Flowers, Pvt. Jeff Barnes, Lt. John F. (Fully) Edmundson, Sgt. William C. (Billy) Herring, Pfc. Horace O. Ricks, Sgt. William G. Ashe, Lt. Tommy Owens, Jr., Pfc. Willis D. Hackney, Lt. Jack Riley, T. Sgt. Champ C. Lucas, Lt. Selby Skinner, Lt. Charles A. Baker, Sgt. Oscar C. (Carol) Kemp, Major Needham C. Holden, T. Sgt. Donald A. Decker and T./3 Frank E. Daino (last two were members Company A awhile in Wilson) and Sgt. George J. Leloudis of Rocky Mount. Here's hoping to see all of these and many more at our next gathering."



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→ 1944

Pete Ray -

U have already  
Contacted Bill Davis  
and families of  
Tommy Owens, Horace  
Ricks, Billy Herring  
Can you help  
find some of the  
others? For

For Rusty Rains

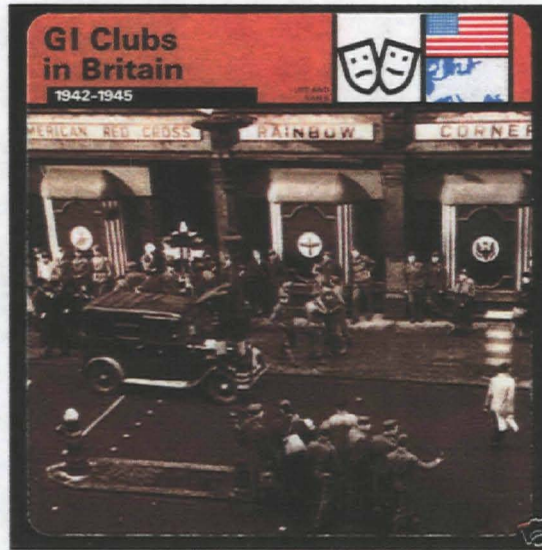
Wilson County Library

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File this one with

Doug Mackey  
BIO. -





## REUNION OF WILSONIANS IN LONDON-1944

Maybe he was homesick for some Eastern North Carolina Barbecue, but who knows what led Sgt. W. Gardner Ashe to put buy an advertisement in the London edition of the "Stars and Stripes" armed forces newspaper, asking all Wilsonians in the London area to meet at the Rainbow Corner Red Cross Club, two blocks from Piccadilly Circus, on January 3, 1944. One supposes that he hoped to find just a few people who pronounced "Wilson" with a "t" just like they did back home.

By 1944 "the Rainbow" was one of London's most fashionable clubs for soldiers, and many American celebrities, and celebrated Londoners, both visited the club and volunteered their time there. Fred Astaire's sister, Adele (Lady Charles Cavendish) volunteered at the club to help "the boys." She would write letters to their mothers, wives and sweethearts. One might see Irving Berlin, George Raft, Jimmy Stewart, or General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., or even General Eisenhower sticking their heads in from time to time. Glenn Miller made his "Eagle Broadcasts" from the Rainbow, and Artie Shaw's Navy Band played on a special occasion. A young girl, then unknown, named Petula Clark sometimes performed for the soldiers. Nearly 70,000 people passed through its doors on VE-day alone.

So, when Gardner Ashe placed the ad in the "Stars and Stripes," not having had contact with any of his friends from home he likely expected only a few people to show up. What actually happened was far different. Here is how Major Needham Holden described the event in a letter home: "Finally, however, I reached the right spot and found—not five or six—but sixteen men from the Wilson vicinity. Ranging in sizes from Doug Hackney [small] to Gardner Ashe [husky]. Ranging from blond Fully Edmundson to brunette Horace Ricks. From private to major. But all alike in one respect--beaming countenances and broad smiles. I've never been



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[Note: Lt. Tommy Owens died in April 1944 when his P-47 was shot down over Germany, and Lt. Jack Riley was killed in Normandy after the D-Day landings. It appears all the rest made it home after the war.]

