

# Presentation on the Airborne Engineers Association (AEA)

by the

National Chairman, Mr J J Ferry



# Formation and Title

The Association was formed in 1989 because of an incident that happened to the Squadron Duty Officer, Captain Joe Holsten during Airborne Forces weekend.

Whilst working late in Rhine Barracks, he was locking up the front door, when he noticed three elderly gentlemen standing by the Falklands memorial plinth. 'Bugger' he thought, 'now I am going to be harassed by some Parachute Regiment, 'golden oldies' who are probably lost! He walked down the steps and noticed they were wearing Corps ties, and asked if they need help?

They asked about the plinth, and he explained and when asked they told him who they were. They were ex-airborne engineers from the very early days of parachuting.

One had even been on the Tragino Aqueduct raid, the very first Airborne Operation in the Army. Capt Holsten then decided to take them up to the Squadron offices, and show them the memorabilia on the walls and stored in the training wing. They were a walking history on the formation of Airborne and Parachuting Operations.

As a result of this chance meeting he decided the next day to talk it through with other Officers and Senior NCOs in the Squadron, with a view to forming an Association. Initially the idea was that veteran and serving Airborne Sappers could come together a few times a year, have a beer or two and reminisce on past events, before our history just passes away.

The very first concept meeting was held in the Corporals Club (where else!) with a small gathering of serving and ex members of the Squadron.

This meeting was originally met with a muted response, but after explaining what happened to him over the Airborne Forces weekend, those gathered quickly agreed that we should have an Association of our own.

So the Association was formed unofficially, with a basic 'Mission statement' and organisational committee.

During this meeting the group decided on the title 'Airborne Engineers Association' in the early stages, rather than Parachute Engineers, due to the historical links with Airborne Forces and decided on a motto:

'Service Not Self'

# Membership

Although the title states Airborne Engineers, this small group of men unanimously voted to include *all* personnel who have served, or are still serving, on the strength of any Airborne Engineer Unit, and other units with an official military Parachute and Airborne role, e.g. Members of the Corps serving with Special Forces.

Therefore this includes all personnel posted into those units be they RAOC, REME, RAPC and ACC, rather than just members of the Corps.

This also includes parachute trained Royal Engineers who have served, or are presently serving with any TA unit, which has in its order of battle a parachuting capability.

Membership may also be given to any person who in the opinion of the Executive Committee has rendered special service to the Airborne Engineers.

One such person is Mr Peter Yates Ex Royal Navy Rating, who was responsible for organising the first Double Hills memorial service at Paulton, where the first casualties enroute to Arnhem were killed when their Glider exploded during the towing flight.

34 years later he is still organising the service to remember the 21 members from 9<sup>th</sup> Field Company RE (Airborne) and 2 members from the Glider Pilot Regt.

# ORGANISATION

The Association has an Executive and Advisory Committees, and a thriving Shop and Archivist.

The Association is a registered charity No: 1009201 and has a formal Constitution to ensure that everything is legal, formal and abiding, to include an AGM each year, followed by a Gala Ball. The AGM is held in a different area each year and we do invite members of the 23 Engineer Regiment to attend each year as our guests.

This year's AGM and Ball will be hosted by our Chatham branch during the week-end of 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> Oct.

# ORGANISATION Cont'd

We have Branches located in:

- Aldershot.
- Birmingham.
- Chatham.
- Yorkshire.
- Scotland.
- 299 Association Hull.
- And an unofficial branch in Germany, where ex Airborne Warriors meet and greet in Hameln!



# Basic Aims & Objectives

- ❑ To have an Association where both 'Past & Present' members of Airborne Engineer Units can meet and socialise, thereby fostering mutual relationships.
- ❑ To provide assistance to members of the Association who require access to welfare support.
- ❑ To preserve the memory and traditions of airborne units of the Corps of Royal Engineers.
- ❑ To provide a focus for social and other gatherings of members of the Association with their wives and partners.
- ❑ To attend as many memorial services as possible throughout the country and overseas involving past Airborne Operations.
- ❑ To publish twice a year a Journal, with future events, historical sections and general notices.
- ❑ To raise charity monies.

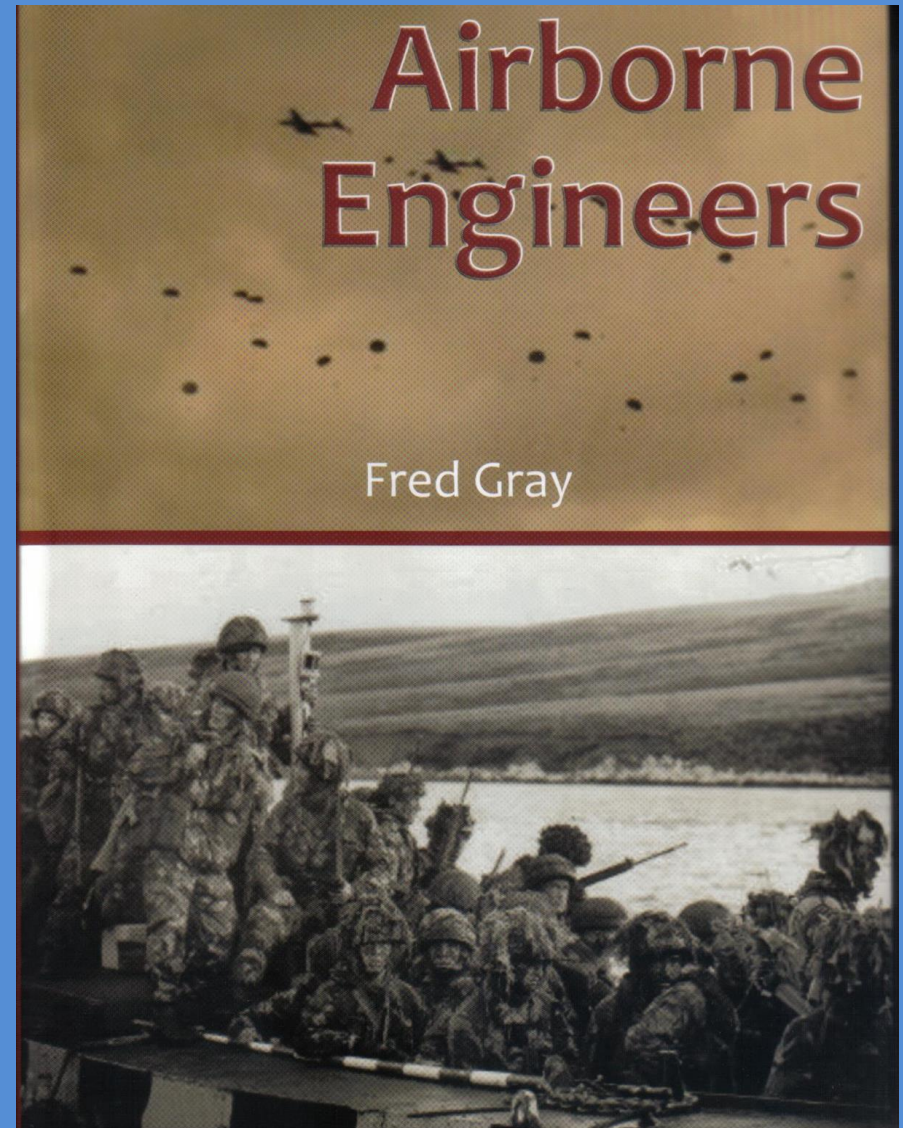
# ORGANISATION Cont'd

We have the 'Ultra Club', where a small group of members carry out regular charity events to raise monies by challenging themselves to complete 'crazy events' like recently going back to the Falklands and running the whole route that 3 Para Group tabbed during the war, 75 miles in less than 20 hours. They raised over £4000 and presented an iPad to Stanley hospital.



# Fred Gray's Book

One of our members, Mr Fred Gray published his book on Airborne Engineers.



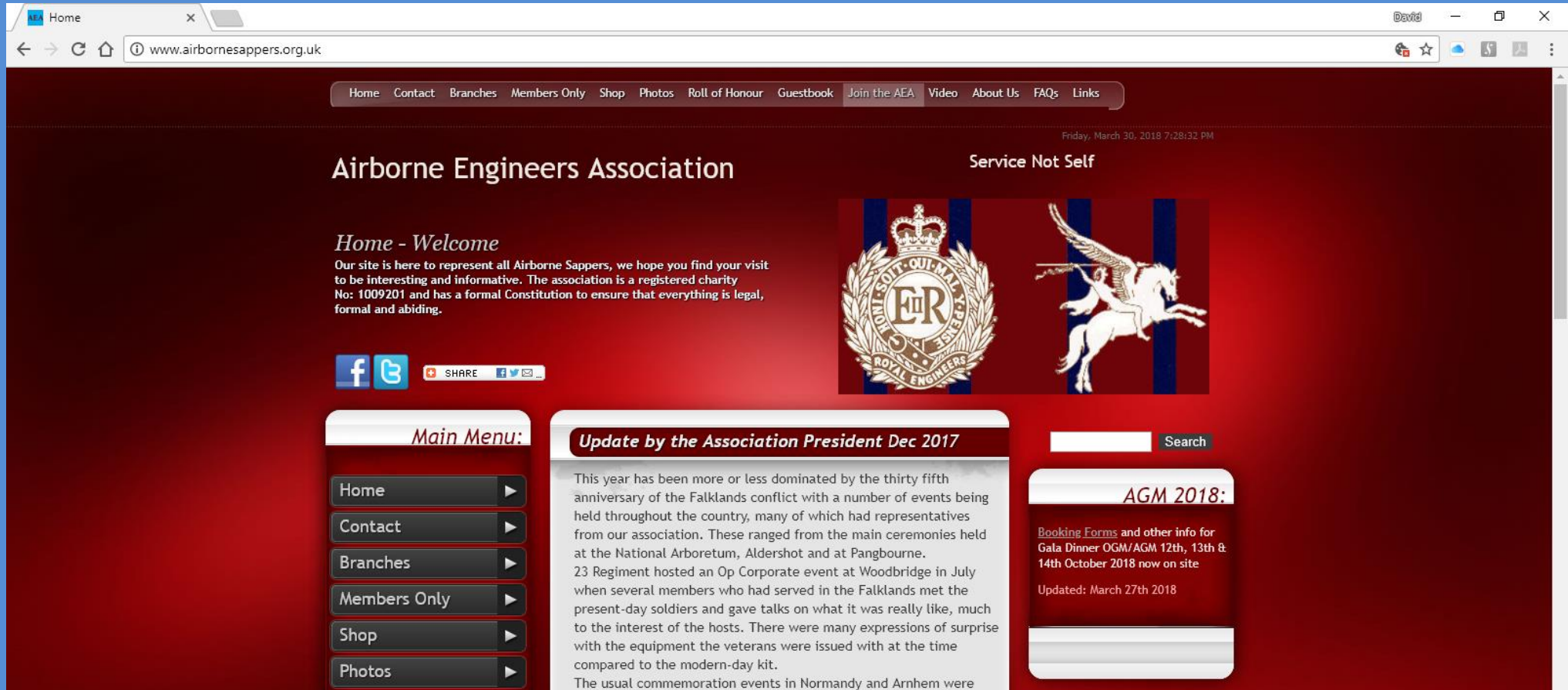


# Our Web-Site

[www.airbornesappers.org.uk](http://www.airbornesappers.org.uk)

which you can also access via

[www.aea.org.uk](http://www.aea.org.uk)



# MEMBERSHIP TOTALS

The Association currently has

1,485 members

Sadly our numbers have reduced due to the age of many members from the Second World War era.

Go to the Association website, 'Join the AEA' where you will find an application form in PDF format.

Our Membership Secretary, Mr Billy Morris will receive your form and process it.

**Cost: Single one off payment for Life Membership £25.00**

	<h1 style="margin: 0;">AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM</h2>	
Registered Charity No 1009201		
<p><b>1. ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP</b></p> <p>a. All personnel who have served on the strength of an Airborne Engineer unit.</p> <p>b. Personnel who have served in any capacity as an Airborne Engineer soldier.</p> <p>The committee reserves the right to veto an application for membership where they feel that this is in the best interest of the Association. See Constitution Paragraph 3 available at: <a href="http://www.airborneappers.org.uk/constitution.html">http://www.airborneappers.org.uk/constitution.html</a></p> <p><b>2. MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION RATES</b></p> <p>Life Membership £25.00</p> <p>(The rate above includes a membership card,apel badge and subscription to the current year of the Airborne Engineer Journal).</p> <p><b>3. PROOF OF ELIGIBILITY</b></p> <p>a. Applicants may be requested to provide proof of eligibility commensurate with paragraph 1 a. above.</p> <p>b. Although optional, a passport size photograph of the applicant would be helpful and can be affixed to the membership card.</p> <p><b>4. GIFT AID</b></p> <p>Applicants who are UK taxpayers are strongly encouraged to complete the Gift Aid Declaration Form attached in order that all sums donated to the Association including those fees at Paragraph 2 above may be treated in accordance with current legislation and tax recovered to the Association.</p> <p><b>5. PAYMENT</b></p> <p>Cheques in accordance with paragraph 2 above should be made payable to the "Airborne Engineers Association" and forwarded with the completed application form and the Gift Aid declaration if applicable, to:</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <b>Mr. Steve 'Billy' Morris 23, Cambridge Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 3JZ</b>  <b>Tel: 01252 343617 E-mail: <a href="mailto:sf-morris244@hotmail.co.uk">sf-morris244@hotmail.co.uk</a></b> </p>		
<p><b>BLACK CAPITALS PLEASE</b></p> <p>Surname.....Forenames.....Date of Birth .....</p> <p>Army No/Rank/Title.....Awards.....Wife/Partner .....</p> <p>Address.....</p> <p>.....Post Code .....</p> <p>Tel: (Home).....(Mobile).....E-mail.....</p>		
<p><b>AIRBORNE UNITS SERVED WITH</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>		
<p><b>DATES (APPROX. MONTH/YEAR)</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>		
<p>Signature.....Date.....</p>		

# SUMMARY



- The Association is growing from strength to strength.
- More and more serving members are joining each year.
- We now have a formal slot at the National Remembrance Sunday parade, at the Cenotaph, London each year.



# HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Operation Freshman  
Norway



1<sup>st</sup> Air Troop, the earliest  
paratroopers in the Army with  
Maj John Rock RE, later re-  
titled  
1<sup>st</sup> Para Sqn RE





# HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

2 Tp, 9 Para Sqn RE  
Operation Corporate Falklands  
War 1982



Cpl Scott Wilson KIA



The RM Flag captured during the Argie invasion, recovered by Scotty Wilson on D-Day 21<sup>st</sup> May at Port San Carlos, along with their personal kit. Now in the Airborne Forces Museum