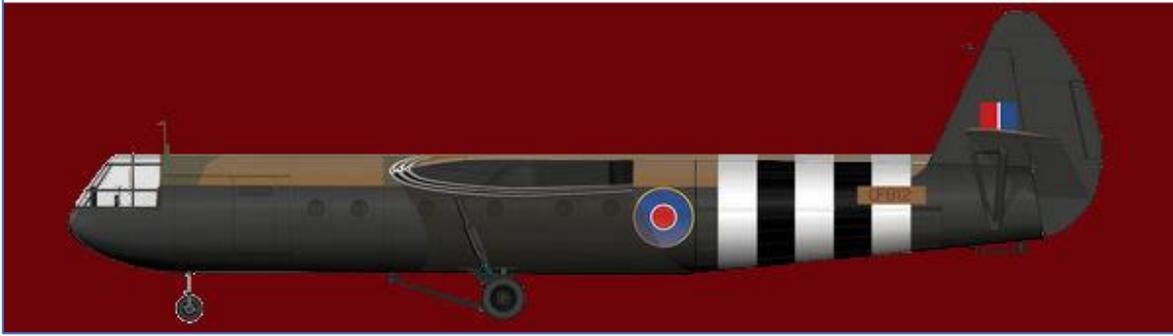




THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



The following articles were originally published in the printed version of the Journal in April 2002, Issue No.6



The Airborne Engineer

April 2002 Issue No. 6



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Publication Deadline - August Edition

Members submitting material for publication in the August edition of the Journal, are advised that the closing date will be Friday 5 July. Articles received after this date will not be published until the December edition. **(Branch Secretaries please NOTE!)**

Kindly ensure that you forward your articles direct to the editor - address as shown above. Please don't leave it until the last minute or you may well miss the deadline!

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From the Chair

Bob Prosser - Association Chairman

The year has started in fine form, with the new barracks, which 9 Sqn are moving into at Woodbridge to be named "Rock Barracks". This puts our adopted hero alongside names such as Kitchener and Gordon and many more. The move has been delayed until 2004 due to Government estimates being a lot less than is required to change the USA buildings to those required for UK use. As a matter of interest, Woodbridge was the home of 591 (Antrim) Sqn before they left for Normandy.

Three names were required to be submitted for selection, of which one was Lt Col J Rock with two VC's; these were submitted by the REA. Ms Rebecca Cheney, the new curator of the RE Museum, did the research on all three names and I am sure you bear with me when we say thank you, considering Lt Col J Rock received no medals or accolades prior to his untimely death by accident in 1942.

While on the subject of Ms Rebecca Cheney, the curator, she and ourselves, are ready to start to build our display at the RE Museum at Chatham. The curator is preparing an inventory of all photos, letters and artefacts to provide a worthy exhibition. The revised space we now have is approx. 30 feet of wall space, which will provide a tremendous display for the general public.

At the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington, York, another piece of good fortune has come our way. The Hartenstein Museum from Holland is preparing an exhibition of Airborne Engineers. Due to the enthusiasm of Elvington and us, they are putting on this Exhibition, which will be opened to the general public on the 29th June 2002 at the Yorkshire Air Museum for approximately 3 months. After which, instead of dismantling it they are leaving it at the Museum forever to be displayed in conjunction with our own display. The Exhibition is in a separate room, which will afford us more space, particularly to build the Bailey bridge model, which has been donated by Harry Lockwood.

When the displays at Chatham and York are completed, approximately 500,000 visitors from all over the world will be able to see the History of the Airborne Engineers.

I have managed to get a sponsor for our web site and thanks to Nick Gibson, it will be up and running in April with a web master capable of maintaining and updating as required. The site address will be circulated through the Branch secretaries.

We have two super weekends being organised, one at Elvington over 29th/30th June, followed by the AGM at Blackpool on 12/13th October. I do hope we have a good turnout at both events, and I look forward to seeing everyone again.

Tragic Death of a Respected Colleague

Editor [Dave Rutter]

It is with great regret that we announce the untimely death of Charlie Dunk, our Association Vice-Secretary and Property Member.

Charlie died on 23rd December aged 47 (a full obituary, written by Bill Rudd, can be found in the Roll of Honour pages on the AEA website)

His funeral was held on Friday 4th January at the Pontefract crematorium. It was Lorraine and Charlie's relatives wishes that this should not be a day of tears and sorrow, and those attending were reminded that this was to be 'Charlie's Day' and to commemorate his life in a manner befitting his character. To this end Charlie was given a great send off. Association members and colleagues lined the route suitably attired with their Red Berets. Former colleagues, ranging in rank from Colonel to Sapper came to pay their respects.



Lorraine had previously advised the family that an "Airborne Send Off" would be something totally different from anything that they had experienced in the past, and that said, they were not disappointed. They were also informed that photo opportunities would be taken and the 'good times' remembered - and that they were.

Charlie I'm sure would have been proud of his 'Airborne Send Off.

Rest in peace dear friend.

Rogues Gallery



Shooting Team - 1966

Rear rank: Alan Peak, Taff Rees, Bev Camp, Pete Burgess & Baz Henderson.

Centre rank: Flash Corden, ?, Fritz Bedford, Ken Bowen, ?, Bob Cooper & Dave Edmonds.

Front rank: Ian Ogilvie, Dave Kitcher, Lt Mike Sims, Maj (OC) Mike Matthews, Lt JJJ Thompson, Capt (2iC) Garth Hewish, Lt Jeff Field, Tubby Linham (SSM) & Ben Guest



Who said Hankley Common was a soft landing



Bill (Lofty) Dickson (Australia) in grand company at Arnhem 1994
Note the then SSM now Capt (QM) Dick Brown third from the right, who persuaded Bill to join the Association



Mick Marshall, Bernie Rooney, Jeff Langford, Paddy Savage and Phil Poulton (UN tour in Cyprus 1972)



Late as usual - waiting for the RAF (Odiham)
Brian Smith, Danny Daniels (1 Tp) & Bob Watts

Exotic Locations

Bahrain 1962

**L to R: Alfie Fisher, Rick Sheldon,
Ken Bowen, Bev Camp, ?,
Ken Turk**



Airstrip Construction at Stanford PTA (Frog Hill) - 1 Troop

**L to R: Tim Fraser, Pete Wager,
Mick Phillips, Dave Edmonds, Atu,
Bobby Jenkins, Tom Cleary, Gordon Small,
Alfie Fisher, Yorkie Lunn, Bernie Baldwin,
Hughie Huntingdon, Ginger McCairns &
Pete Plowman**

Borneo, June 1965
2 Troop on LZ 304

**L to R (rear) Paddy Thackaway, ?, ?, ?,
Taffy (Boyo) Rees, Eddie Corthine, ?,
(front): Phillips, Danny Daniels
(chef), Cpl Gosling, Paddy Martin and
John (Lofty) Aldridge**



Life of a former 3 Troop Sapper

Sean McCargo



Returning to civilian life having spent the previous 15 years in the military was a shock! I had always been in Plant or MT, and thought I was an expert on equipment! Boy What I shock I got! My first job was with a drilling and blasting company in Co. Durham and was employed as the workshop manager's new deputy. I have never seen so much scrap metal, and when he told me that this was the good equipment I was to work with I thought he was joking. I was soon to find out that this was the good equipment and I had not seen the not-so-good equipment. I stayed with this company for two years and learnt more about equipment repair in that time than I did in all my time with the military. Whilst I was with this company I went to work in Scotland on the A9 improvement and to Jersey. It was only after I had departed from Jersey that I was told that an old friend of mine, Bernie Baldwin lived on the island, and I did not get to see him.

Then it was on to Dubai in the Gulf (home from home) I had spent so much time in this area with the army that it was like going home.

I went out to Libya to work for a large American Construction Company as foreman mechanic dealing with heavy equipment on oil refinery construction. During this period work I got involved with my first serious oil fire. The American company that I worked for, released me to work with the Red Adair Fire Fighting Company who were called in to control an oil fire. After the fire was out, which was two months later, I returned to my company.

Following Libya, it was on to Algeria again dealing with oil refineries and another oil fire. The Red Adair Company was called in to control the oil fire. Once again, I was released to work for them. Two months later I returned to my company, this time with a large bonus and a gold belt buckle from the Red Adair Company.

Nigeria was next, hydro-dam construction, water well drilling and road construction.

After Nigeria it was on to Chad where it was a large mining operation.

Returned to both Algeria and Nigeria for more contracts. Oil Refineries reconstruction.

Ascension Island. Working on the airport improvement - camp construction.

Falkland Islands. Working on airport construction - Port and road construction. Supporting the RAF, P.S.A. and a most every military unit that passed through. In the 3 years I was there I met many old friends from 9 Sqn and other Royal Engineer Sqn's that served on the Islands. At times I was not too sure whom I worked for as we repaired so much equipment for the forces. As we were contractors on the Islands we were not allowed to use the BFPO postal system, but the local REME Workshop arranged for us to have our mail sent direct to the workshops, so each Friday night I would go to collect my mail. I hope that Fred Gray is not reading this.

Pakistan. New harbour and fish processing plant, near Karachi.

India. Oil Refinery. Near Bombay.

Kuwait After the Gulf War putting the oil fires out and returning all facilities to normal. Red Adair Company and a large number of his competitors from around the world needed support. For the firefighting we brought together the largest amount of plant equipment in the world to be concentrated on one project. We extinguished 725 oil fires in less than 8 months both in the North and the South of Kuwait City. For those Plant Equipment people, we were flying in (3) Caterpillar D9 Bulldozers by aircraft every other day direct from the Caterpillar Factory in the USA to Kuwait Airport. We'd unload them from the aircraft on to a low-loader trailer and direct to the fires. We lost two of these new machines in the first few weeks due to the direction of the wind changing and the flames engulfing the machines and the operators jumping out of the cabs and running to safety!. But firefighting in Kuwait is history now. We all received an award from the Kuwait Government when the last fire was shut down.

Tanzania. Port reconstruction.

Ukraine. I.C.B.M . Silo Dismantlement SS 19 & SS 24 missiles

At present I am in the Ukraine and have been here for over 5 years. There's a lot of work to do here and in the former Soviet Union States and Russia. We are already working in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the Aral Sea. Next year we will work in other countries that had or may still have a nuclear threat. This threat can be removed, it is the follow up to make these places environmentally clean so that it is safe for the local people and for our children's children. That is the main reason for this work.

There are many places that I have worked whilst I have been with this American company, but this last location has been the most important. We are not only removing the missiles and destroying the sites, but we are destroying the equipment that would have been used to launch these missiles. The areas where former missile sites or storage areas are returned to the local community as farm land and at the same time we are working on the world's most serious nuclear disaster, Chernobyl. This is an ongoing project. At the same time that we are working on the missile problem, we have people destroying the Air Force bomber's that could transport and drop nuclear bombs, also we have people destroying submarines that were capable of launching missiles, dealing with bombers and the submarines also means dealing with launch areas and storage areas. Perhaps the most dangerous part of our work is to come as we have to recover the rocket propellant fuel and then to destroy these facilities or convert them for commercial use.

During my travels, in addition to many former 9 Sqn lads, I have met someone from the former 16 Para Bde in every country I have worked in. There are too many to mention, but I remember meeting Bill Rudd, Fred Gray, Alex Black, Louie Gallagher and Bidy McMillan and others on the Falkland Islands. And while there going to Sapper Hill each year to pay our respects to those laid to rest there. Though never to return they will be for ever in our memories.

Somewhere along the line I have been promoted from Plant fitter A3 to Major Ian Wilson (OC 9 Sqn's driver), Plant Manager and now Logistics Manager for the American Company I still work for. I must have learnt something while I was with 3 Troop. If I could only find out what it was, I'm sure there is a market for it!

During my time aboard I have been told that I am a good cook! Maybe whilst I was driving the garbage truck for Charlie Edwards in Cyprus I must have learnt a thing or two from him! Then if that is the case I will have to thank Rick Mogg and Dennis Scott for all the information on equipment and transport they taught me. As to vehicles I will have to speak about Caz Cazaly, Yorkie Elmer, Mike Crampton, Stan Marley, Yorkie Crane, Ben Guest and the other Plant and Transport people. After seeing Dennis Scott riding an army motorcycle on the way to Weymouth, I thought even a Paddy can do that! Since then I have always had a great love for motorcycles.

All these people were a guiding light to a 19-year-old Paddy straight from the bogs. My first meeting with 9 Para Sqn. was while I was doing basic driver training at 4 Trg Regt. RE Aldershot and I met Doc Doherty and Fred Matterface who were at 56 Sqn learning to drive. Would I be correct in saying that these were the classic ambassadors for 9 Sqn Recruiting Team?

As and when I am in the U.K. I try to attend as many Yorkshire Branch meetings as possible as I now live in the North East of England between Newcastle and Sunderland. I am not sure what type of member my old friend Bill Rudd has me marked down as, but I know that I am always made very welcome at his branch and I am sure that this would be the same for any branch that I or other ex- Para call in to.

So to all you young and not so young sappers or ex-sapper's, there is another world after (The Sqn) but the skills and the determination and the professional way of doing things which you learn in (The Sqn.) and in the Royal Engineer's will lead you in civilian life.

Each morning before we start work I sit around a conference table to talk about the process of our work, at the table there will be no less 10 people, these consist of a mixture of officers and ex-officers not one is below the rank of full colonel, but based on trust and friendship between us, we are achieving the objective which we set out to do five years ago; and that is to remove the nuclear threat. The last missiles will be removed this summer. So from the things taught to us as sappers and the leadership, which we received, from our officers and SNCO's the average 9 Para Sqn. Troop sapper can sit at the table with King's and Queens (I not sure it that is with the real Royalty or is the name of two bars I used to use in Aldershot.)

The company that I work for is based in San Francisco but has some 30 main offices around the world. They employ 46,000 people and are working in 144 different country's at this present time. I have been to 40 or more of these countries, so I still have a few more to get round to. So it's almost like being in the Army - but better paid!

Some of the ex- 9 Sqn friends that I know stay in touch by e-mail. I can be contacted on the following e-mail or fax number. Both are in the Ukraine. This is a one-way connection. In other words, if you owe me money you can send it! But, if I owe you money I cannot send it.

E-Mail sean@bt.aip.mk.ua Fax +38(0512)50 04 71 Ukraine.

One last thing. It's the great efforts of people like Chris Chambers (another Paddy from the Bogs) and all our AEA members who find time to recruit more of those lost souls like myself that are scattered around the world. Keep up the great work.

Dates for your Diary

17th/19th May - Ripon Weekend

29/30th June - Airborne Forces Weekend, Elvington

7th September - 6th Airborne Division Reunion/Dinner, London

7/8th September - Veterans Weekend in Chatham

17th September - Double Hills Memorial Ceremony

11th/14th October - AGM/Reunion Blackpool

Colourful Characters from the Past



Home again - to Waterloo Bks East Aldershot 1954 - 1st WO's & Sgts Mess reunion after 3 yrs in the Canal Zone - 9 Indep AB Sqn RE -

3 of the first four SSM's

L to R: Bill Powel 1951-53, Eddy Edwards 55-56 & Jock Docherty 49-51



Colin (the Beast) Evetts
ex 12 Para Sqn the last SSM of 3 AB Sqn RE - No more pack drill!
1st SSM of newly formed 9 AB Sqn RE - Hameln 1948



Local landlady (Mrs Slowley) with Sid Burrell and Wimp Martin



Mess Silver Snatch - Pete Myatt, Bob Knowles, Hatch Lloyd & Jim Connell



Squadron Soccer Team
1957/58

Rear Rank:
Sgt Cusick, Sprs King
McLintock, Wallace, Jones,
Cook LCpl Sheward, WO II
(SSM) Reg Orton DCM,
BEM

Front Rank:
LCpl Tempest, Sprs Price,
McDonald, Humphreys &
LCpl Hendry

Reunion after 49 Years

Dennis (Buzz) Bateman, Melbourne, Australia.

Tom Sherwood and I first met in 1947 when we joined the 'Airborne'. In fact, we did our first balloon jump together and were in the same "stick." On completion of the course and our 'wings' presentation, we were in the same group to be shipped off to 1st Squadron at Camp 141, Haifa, in Palestine, to join 6th AB Division. Following the declaration of Israel as a State; we returned to the UK in May 1948. All of the Engineer Squadrons were combined into the 9th Indep AB Sqn RE part of the 16th Brigade. The amalgamation of all airborne engineers meant that numbers were reduced considerably and the 9th became the first all 'Regular' unit in the British army. Some names which readily come to mind from the Palestine days are Eric O'Callaghan, George Harris, Jock Docherty, George Young, Tubby Linham, Jim Masters, Pat Keily, Darkie Goodman, 'Spud' Taylor and Paddy Padfield, to mention but a few.

They continued to serve in the 9th in Germany, Cyprus and Egypt until 1952 when I was demobbed and immigrated to Australia. However, I did not return to UK again until August and September 2001 - 49 years later.

Tom and I had no contact with each other during that period, but a chance enquiry via the Airborne website in Australia during June of that year (2001) ended up on the computer screen of Wally Gee, a one time member of 9th Squadron in the Fred Gray era. Wally, being a neighbour and good friend of mine, immediately phoned and said. "Do you know this bloke Tom Sherwood?." That was a few weeks before my wife and I left for our long overdue UK holiday. So hasty arrangements were made for the two of us to meet in London.

This Tom and I did, at the Victory Club in Seymour Street on 18th September. A most enjoyable three hours followed - 49 years disappeared very quickly as the recollections (all of them true) came thick and fast.



Airborne Increment 1946

Tom is 5th from right in the centre rank

Dennis is the central figure in the rear rank



September 2001

Tom & Dennis at the Victory Club

Reminiscing of RSMs Past

Ray East

Having read a most interesting article in the August issue of the journal by Eric Richards and his references to RSM Lord started me reminiscing, (do a lot of that these days) back to the time when I was on his Majesty's National Service.

During my service 3 RSMs made an impression on me.

February 1947 I got my 'calling up papers' - "Report to Robinswood Barracks at Gloucester".

Being a Gloucester boy this suited me fine. I must be one of very few people that reported for duty on Shank's pony, even if it was through 2ft of snow.

After about 3 days in my new lifestyle I was making my way across the parade ground (no snow there) and had taken about 5 steps when a loud voice shouted, "That man". Looking round I concluded that must be me. The gentleman that called out to me was RSM Ingram of the Gloster Regiment. He explained to me that one should stand to attention when talking to man of his rank, and that one does not walk across parade grounds, one must walk round. However if you did wish to cross the parade ground you may do so, but at the double, something that I was promptly ordered to do.

A few years after I came out of the forces I went into a pub in Gloucester and lo and behold the barman was no other than my friend 'Ingram.' Who was, I was assured, exceedingly bent! (I did not reintroduce myself.)

After six weeks-initial training, I was sent with others to Portland to join 9 T.B.R.E. at the Verne Citadel. (Now a prison). I did not fall foul of the RSM there. I can't even remember his name. He was called 'Wings' and was the only man in the British Army allowed to salute with his left hand. I was told he had lost most of his right arm in a grenade accident, but was considered too valuable a man to lose. (Perhaps an AEA reader could be more informative.)

After we finished our 12 weeks training about half a dozen of us that had put our names down for 'Airborne' were sent to Aldershot to be put through our paces by those PTI Musclemen whose duty was, it seems, to make us fit to drop.

First morning on parade the RSM stood in front of us and introduced himself, and said something like, "Gentlemen I am RSM J C Lord,' REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR JESUS CHRIST LORD AND GOD HELP ANY OF YOU ... THAT DON'T TOE THE LINE"

He then ordered Cap Badges off for all except the Sappers. Our delight was short-lived. We were told to remove lanyards and open our knives for inspection. (Do they still have and wear these now?)

Some years later I befriended an Arnhem veteran by the name of Ray Sheriff. Ray, blinded at Arnhem, was in the same POW camp as J.C Lord. J.C took him under his wing, and really helped him through what must have been a most traumatic time. RSM Lord kept in touch for years afterwards and Ray constantly sang his praises.

So to anyone who knew RSM J.C Lord, strict disciplinarian that he was, underneath that tough exterior was a heart of gold.

Robert (Bob) Sullivan, 3 Parachute Squadron RE 1943 - 1947



I joined 3 Para Sqn RE at Bulford in May 1943. At that time it comprised of around forty men, plus about another two- dozen no longer fit to parachute. Shortly after I arrived, about half of the fit men were drafted to join the 1st Airborne Division in North Africa. A little later, we were told that the 3rd Parachute Brigade, comprising of the 8th, 9th and the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalions, along with 3 Para Sqn RE, were to be part of the newly formed 6th Airborne Division. Newcomers were arriving from Ringway, and by late summer the Sqn was up to full strength. It consisted of 3 troops of 40 men, plus a small HQ Troop, and the operational strength of just over 150 officers and other ranks.

In addition to specialised Sapper training much time was spent on exercises with the Para Bns who we got to know very well.

About the third week in May 1944, 3 Troop, in which I was a Corporal, moved into a transit camp at Down Ampney airfield with the Canadian Para Bn. We had no contact with the remainder of 3 Sqn, who were located at another airfield.

During the weekend prior to the invasion of France, we were briefed about our "D" Day task. Supported by the Canadians, we were to land at night on a DZ near Varaville. From there, we were to attack and destroy two road bridges across the River Dives, one at Varaville and the other near Robehomme. Afterwards we were to make our way back to a ridge overlooking the River Orne and Caen Canal road bridges, and rejoin 3 Para Bde at Le Mesnil. This was to form part of a defence line and bridgehead to protect the east flank of the seaborne landings.

We were also informed of the rest of the Sqn's tasks. This was supported by the 8th Para Bn, to destroy the road and railway bridges at Bures and the main road bridge to the east of Troarn. All of these bridges crossed the river Dives and the demolitions were intended to delay the Germans from bringing reinforcements to attack the bridgehead.

At our final briefing, it came as a nasty surprise to learn that the Germans had flooded the Dives valley.

We took off from Down Ampney at about 2330 hours on the evening of 5th June, along with the Canadians. The men of 3 Troop were carried in two Dakotas. The flight was uneventful until we neared the French coast, when we ran into flak and tracer fire. The 'red' light came on and we were waiting for the 'green,' when the aircraft gave a severe lurch and a number of men lost their balance and fell. This coincided with the 'green' light coming on. While men were regaining their feet the men nearest the door commenced to jump. Eventually everyone got out of the plane, but it was a shambles, and the stick extended a very long way before the first and last man reached the ground.

I landed on the edge of the flooded area at about 0130 hrs. It took some time for us to assemble and locate the containers loaded with explosives that had dropped with us. Several of my section was missing, and there was no sign of the other half of 3 Troop in the other Dakota, nor of the Canadians who should have landed alongside of us. In their absence it was decided that we should share the explosives between us and form into two groups with one group going to Robehomme and the other to Varaville. I went with my section commander, Lt Jack Inman to Robehomme.

There were about eight of us in my group and we set off for the bridge very heavily laden. Initially we kept to the road, but eventually we had to take to the fields and make our way through the flooded area. Our instructions were to avoid the Germans and make all haste to our objective. On the way, we passed several places where fighting was going on by managed to avoid becoming involved or held up.

With the coming of daylight, we kept to the hedgerows to conceal ourselves. This required us to walk along ditches and dikes where the water was chest high. After a couple of hours of very slow progress we eventually reached the Robehomme bridge feeling very tired. There we found our Troop Sgt, Bill Poole with a small group

of Canadians, and the bridge, a steel girder lattice type, partially destroyed. He had managed to collect sufficient explosives from the Canadians to do the damage. (Every paratrooper carried 2 lbs of plastic HE, for the use in Gammon bombs). We immediately set too, and with the explosives we had brought completed the destruction of the bridge and blew two craters in the road on our side of the river.

Having completed the task, we were told to take cover and rest. I fell asleep and was woken by the sound of firing. Two lorries carrying Germans had arrived on the far bank of the river. Our people fired on them and they quickly returned fire. This short battle ended when the Germans started to use a mortar with good effect on us. We were given orders to withdraw to a small hill about half a mile back from the bridge. There we found a mixed force of about a hundred airborne troops from different units, of which about two-dozen were injured. This was the outcome of the Pathfinders failing to mark the DZ, which resulted in the drop of the main force being very scattered with some people landing miles away from their objectives.

After digging in, we stayed on the hill that night and the following day. During this time we sent out several recon patrols. One discovered a large force of German troops in the nearby village of Bavent, but fortunately for us, they did not attack. Another patrol made contact with the 3 Para Bde, and on the night 7/8th June we made our way, taking our wounded with us, through the Bavent Woods to the Le Mesnil brickyards. There we rejoined the rest of 3 Troop, who in the role of infantry, were dug in with the Canadians around the Le Mesnil cross-roads.

During the next few days, we withstood several German attacks, in addition to erecting barbed wire defences and mine laying.

On the 12th June, the 9th Bn at Chatne Bois De Mont. Breville, were in danger of being overrun. Armed with Gammon bombs, 3 Troop with a small group of Canadians were rushed there to support 9th Para. Our task was to attack the German armour with the Gammon bombs. Fortunately this did not happen because the navy gave support, firing 6" shells, which quelled the German attack. Later that evening, the battle of Breville took place, and the Germans were driven back and the bridgehead was finally secured. Several days later, we march out of Breville to a small quarry nearby. There we met up with the rest of the Sqn for the first time since leaving Bulford, and enjoyed three days' rest, before returning to Le Mesnil cross-roads. We were pleased to learn that the Sqn had achieved 100% success in its "D" Day objectives and that all five bridges had been successfully destroyed.

For the rest of our time in Normandy, we reverted back under command of the CRE carrying out conventional engineering tasks in addition to acting as infantry. The breakout from the bridgehead and the advance to the River Seine also involved the Sqn in more bridging operations.

Our casualties had been fairly high, and eventually we ran out of parachute-trained replacements. We were then reinforced with non-airborne sappers who did not care much for our type of warfare!

The 6th airborne division returned to the UK in early September. The non-airborne sappers were given the opportunity to stay with us. Despite being offered 14 days disembarkation leave plus a further 14 days leave following completion of a parachute course, none of them took up the offer, so they were left back in Normandy.

During the next couple of months the 6th airborne including 3 Para Sqn retrained, reequipped and reinforced, until it was rushed out just before Christmas 1944, to help stem the German attack against the Americans in the Ardennes. Following a month of fighting in very difficult wintry conditions where the Sqn was mostly engaged in mine clearing operations, the 6th Airborne was moved into Holland and took over defences along the River Maas in the Venlo/Roermond area. It returned to the UK at the end of February 1945. There it prepared for the assault across the River Rhine, which took place on 24th March 1945. Only No 1 Troop of 3 Para Sqn took part and they parachuted in with 3 Para Bde. The remainder of the Sqn crossed the Rhine by boat a day or so later when they rejoined the Bde and 1 Troop. They took an active part in the drive across Germany to the port of Wismar on the Baltic coast, where they made contact with the Russians. This coincided with the end of the war with Germany.

Shortly afterwards, the Sqn returned to the UK along with the rest of 6th Airborne Division. After returning from leave they were told the Sqn was being transferred from 3 to 5 Para Bde and would be going to the Far East. It was about this time that it was renamed 3 Airborne Sqn RE and reinforced with a number of ex-glider troops.

Shortly after 5 Bde arrived in India, the Japanese surrendered following the dropping of the atom bombs. After service in Malaya, Bortavia and Indonesia in support of Dutch colonist, it rejoined the 6th Airborne Division in Palestine around August 1946. There it stayed until returning to England and amalgamation with 9th Airborne Squadron in 1947.



Taken a few months before 'D' Day during demolition training on Salisbury Plain.

L to R: Humphries, McDonald, Aylard (killed in Holland), Loomes, Hewitt and kneeling, Bob Sullivan

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2001

held at The Hilton Hotel, Bristol on Saturday 6th October 2001

1. Opening Address - The President Brig G A Hewish, MBE opened the meeting by thanking everyone present for attending. Most have travelled long distances and with an attendance of 97 was extremely pleasing to those members who have worked so hard to make our Reunion an enjoyable occasion. He apologised for the change in timing for the commencement of the meeting, stating this was at the request of many members hoping to see the World Cup match England v Greece on television.
2. Apologies - There were 22 notifications of apology.
3. Silent Tribute - The members stood for one minute in respect to the following colleagues who have passed away during the past year:

William Barber, James Barton, Donald Cooper, Robert Gillespie, Herbert Jackson, Alan McKerracher, Samuel Oliver, John Roseveare, Franklin Shepherd, Robert Stevenson, Cecil Williams, Norman Wood, Len Pearson, Jock Wallace and Spr Ian Collins.

4. Affiliation to the REA - The President introduced Brig R F Semple stating we are all aware of the long team influence he has had in Airborne Engineers and the Corps. Therefore we would certainly not wish this matter dealt with without him being with us.

The objective of affiliating to the REA is about securing our way into the future. Five years ago this subject was raised concerning our relationship with the REA and at that time it was considered the circumstances were not right for us to declare ourselves a group or organisation of the then constituted REA an Association that was based on geographical groups. However, during the past five years the REA has reviewed its shape and structure and has now encouraged and accepted national groupings to affiliate. The central structure remains the same were this very large influential and affluent centre which is the REA is available to all "Sapper Organisations."

As this progressive policy develops many view that the REA has now become friendlier toward our type of structure. Furthermore, a letter has been received from the Chairman of the REA stating that they were pleased to hear that the AEA feel the time is right to review the relationship. It states that they fully understand and respect our wish to retain our present organisation and structure at all levels and will accept us in our exact present form.

Today the committee have considered what advantages accrue if we become formally part of the REA and also any disadvantages which may arise if we do not in this changing scene. Some advantages are that we become eligible for the very professional support of the committees of the REA. which look after benevolence and make available to us percentages of the money that is contributed by the soldiers days-pay-per-year scheme were by law 50% of contributions must go into benevolence. We would also find that members representing the AEA at official functions would be funded from the Central Association.

Your committee has today, having considered all that has been said, unanimously agreed to recommend that we should make formal our relationship with the REA. The recommendation is that we vote today to become a functional group of the REA with the following proviso's. The Proviso's are as follows:

- a. We retain our charitable status
- b. We remain in control of our own financial affairs
- c. That members who are not at this time members of the REA are accepted

Brig R F Semple gave his points of view in a comprehensive address. He stated that the time was now right to formulate a bond with the REA. It is a "window of opportunity" for all concerned and he advises that we grasp this open door and not stay in isolation. We have the provision to opt out if our expectations do not materialise.

There then followed an extensive discussion with many points of view. Stalwarts of the Association both for and against the recommendation voiced their opinions most vigorously. After an extremely protracted debate a vote was requested.

The proposal of the committee is as follows:

"That the Airborne Engineers Association formally seek affiliation to the Royal Engineers Association providing our reservations are resolved to our expectations."

The proposal was passed by a majority vote. 31 members voted against.

5. Minutes of the 2000 Annual General Meeting - The minutes of the 2000 AGM held in Blackpool were passed as a true record of proceedings.
Proposed Tom Tuddenham
Seconded Tom Thornton
Agreed unanimously
6. Chairman's Report - The Chairman gave an extremely comprehensive and lengthy summary on the progress the Association has made during the past year. He stated we have had a very busy and productive year of which we can be proud.

Our liaison with the RE Museum, Chatham and the Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington are going from strength to strength. For the future we are endeavouring to forge a new relationship with REA and he sincerely hopes a satisfactory formula can be found.

7. Treasurers Report - In the absence of the Hon Treasurer Capt (QM) Dick Brown RE (having just returned from duty in Macedonia), Dave Rutter presented the report of the Association audited accounts as at 4 October 2001.

Assets		Liabilities	
Current account	████████	Journal	████████
Deposit account	████████	Museum fund	████████
Value of shop stock (at cost)	████████		
Value of property	████████		
Total Assets	████████	Total Liabilities	████████
Working Capital	████████		

Proposed by Tom Carpenter and seconded by Ron Day, that the audited accounts as presented be accepted.
Agreed unanimously

Again the sensitive subject of the Chairman's allowance was raised. Committee members felt that the matter had been resolved at the OGM on 18 February 2001. (Minute 8) refers. However, senior members felt that the Executive Committee should review the matter and formulate a realistic allowance to include all members of our committees.

8. Membership Secretary - Chris Chambers once again gave the up to date strength of our Association. He has recently issued Membership number 1,100 and thanked everyone who had introduced new members.

9. Amendments to Constitution - The membership were informed that the Association Constitution has been revised and amended by the appointed subcommittee and with minor amendments it is recommended by the Executive Committee and Advisory Committee to be accepted. Unanimously agreed once amendments completed and sanctioned by the two committees.

10. Election of Officers - The following officers were elected unanimously and form the Executive Committee:

President	Brig G A Hewish MBE
Vice President	Mr W Rudd MBE
Chairman	Mr E C Prosser BEM
Hon Secretary	Mr R P Coleman
Hon Assistant Secretary	Mr C J Dunk
Hon Treasurer	Capt R Brown
Hon Membership Secretary	RE Mr C Chambers
Entertainment Member	Mr M Holdsworth
Editor	Mr D J Rutter
Archivist	Mr FW Gray

Col Chris Davies MBE did not seek re-election as Vice President having completed his tenure of appointment. His dedicated contribution to the Airborne Engineers Association over the past five years will be greatly missed. Those assembled showed their sincere appreciation for his service.

11. Election of Life Vice President - The under mentioned members were unanimously elected to assume the appointment of Life Vice Presidents.

Tom Ormiston, Chris Chambers, Ray Coleman

12. Election of Representatives - The under mentioned personnel were unanimously accepted and shall be members of the Advisory Committee.

1 Squadron	R. Jones	9 Squadron	OC, SSM, Cpls Mess
3 Squadron	R. Sullivan MBE	Aldershot Branch	M. Metcalfe
4 Squadron	E. Richards	Birmingham Branch	G. Barrett
9 Field Coy (Airborne)	T. R Carpenter	Chatham Branch	R. Gibson
131 Squadron	B. Brown	Edinburgh Branch	R. A. Drummond
147 Squadron	I. Robbie	South West Branch	T. Brinkman
591 Squadron	A. F. Jackson	Yorkshire Branch	W. Rudd MBE

13. Confirmation of Trustees - The following officers were again appointed as trustees for this Association: Mr Bob Prosser BEM, Col Chris Davies MBE & Mr Bill Rudd MBE Agreed Unanimously

14. Any Other Business (of which notice had been given)

Letter from Major JSR Shave MC, requesting that consideration be given for the members of the 6th Airborne Division RE to integrate their own reunion with us.

Agreed Unanimously

The Chairman suggested that an Illuminated Scroll be commissioned to commemorate the Queen Elizabeth Golden Jubilee, and every member to be presented with one.

Agreed Unanimously

There being no other notified business the meeting closed at 1640 hours.

15. Date and venue of next Annual General Meeting - The next Annual General Meeting will be held on 12th October 2002 at the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool.

Retake After 47 Years

Tom Tuddenham

We first met in the 1950's while serving in 9 Sqn and became great pals but later went our separate ways. After Suez in 1956 Ken Ramsden and Frank Robinson left the Sqn for civvy street. Ken later re-enlisted into the RAF and done his time. Tom Tuddenham left the Sqn in 1958 and completed his service in other units and Stan Jones left the Sqn in 1961 and moved on to 121 Para TA and later finished his time in other units.

The original photograph was taken in Aldershot on their return from the Canal Zone in 1954, and the most recent one was taken 47 years later at the AEA AGM/Reunion in Bristol 2001.



**In both photographs -
Standing: Tom Tuddenham & Stan Jones
Sitting: Ken Ramsden & Frank Robinson**



'Queer' Folk in Civvy Street

Jonah Jones

In the early 80s, I was working in London with a mate of mine, Cliff. At that time we were building a studio in Battersea. This particular studio was used to do all the sets for the animation type of film work for various Companies, like Beechams, Lemsips, prize guy yoghurts and that sort of stuff. It was well paid interesting but jam packed with "poofters," all mincing about. The blokes we worked for were 'nice boys,' Ron and John. Ron was a big jock ex para. John was his girl - as it goes!

Anyway we were working on an advert for a South America Company and the shoot had been going on for a couple of days. Each time it came to the shoot we all had to stop work and watch. Well the scenario was a Boeing 707 aircraft being saved by Superman. Superman was a 10 year old boy, a very obnoxious little brat.

Twice a day the shoot went on with 3 cameras, one being a high speed camera. The plane was stood on its tail with a scaffold rig up its rectum so it was vertical. It was about 15 ft high. On top of a gantry were two blokes with a trough of water and dry ice and two large fans. When the water and ice mixed you got steam like clouds; which when the fans kicked in, blew down and created clouds giving the illusion of the plane in flight.

So far so good! There was an expert demolition guy doing the special effects for the plane blowing up and getting into difficulties. For two days the large bangs were getting louder and the producer chief used to kick his teddy into the corner and have a tantrum. This was because when he called, "Action," there was a loud bang and the little superman was yanked up into the air under the wing which had just been blown off; and save the jet by supporting the aircraft under the wing. Things were going bad; the expert and puffs were all having a fit so at lunch time we had a break. I asked John if I could be of any help. Well the dems expert 'puff' was not happy, but the chief said, "OK what do you know about explosives?" John told him I could do anything he wanted. So I said. "What is it you want exactly?." He said, "Flames, sparks, fire anything." Well that was OK, so I set about the gear that was available and sent Cliff out for 4 boxes of Swan Vestas and I powdered about 8 oz of sugar. I had Cliff strip the heads off the matches and I made up 3 charges of a nice mix. Now the expert had only 5 gram detonators, so I taped 3 detonators together with insulation tape and with baking foil made nice packets of the mix which was match heads first at the end of the detonators with a nice pink mix of sugar and heads at the end of that and all wrapped up tight in foil and insulation taped 3 separate charges; which I placed 2 in the wing and 1 in the main body of the aircraft. I then told the chief it was ready. I had wired it all up myself but the expert wanted to fire it. Well I was OK with that. I went as far back as we could and told John and Ron that they should be with me, and they got the gist of what was going to happen.

Everything was set, the 'expert' got behind a plywood screen. I told him he should move back, but he said he knew what he was doing! I wasn't going to argue with an expert, so it was all ready. The chief 'puff' got everybody quiet, Superman was ready, he gave the orders for the clouds and fans and it was looking good. Plenty of clouds, all cameras going and on "Action," the high speed and close up cameras clicked in to operation. Then came a horrendous bang, the expert did a cracking somersault screaming and holding his head. The wing shot off across the studio and into the office door, the plane leapt about 5ft into the air and flames and sparks were all over the brat as he was yanked into the plane screaming which was now on fire and wrecked beyond any hope. The film crew ran for the door, the chief 'puff' was leaping up and down clutching his crutch; shouting, "Keep the cameras rolling." The place looked like Belfast in the early 70's. It was great, there was bodies hiding all over the place. The chief was ecstatic and looked it like I was in for a kiss! Well, I didn't get anything for it apart from a good laugh and the offer of work with that lot! Well I draw the line with that bunch of poofters, but I did get a few offers which I declined. They were a queer bunch of mincers.

Memoirs of a Sapper

Jon "Bing" Crosbie

My life as an Airborne Sapper started on a bleak November in 1969. Myself and 28 other intrepid and enthusiastic sappers stood shivering outside the wooden spider huts at Training Regiment barracks, Cove. Anxiously awaiting the arrival of the pre-para course selection staff we anticipated they would be huge fierce looking paratroopers, what we actually got were three moderately proportioned extremely fit smooth looking guys, George Dunn, Phil Philipson and Robin (Henry) Morgan.

Oh boy. what a torrid time they gave us! At the end of three weeks only Brian (Cass) Casterton and myself were remaining and this was "before" the P Company selection course had started. The following four weeks continued with regular runs from Crookham Camp along the tank tracks. Log running became somewhat difficult with just two of us but with Phil's support and gentle persuasion he assured us it was good preparation for 'P' Company. To my disappointment I developed a shin injury (wear and tear the MO said) I was unable to continue but Cass went onto 'P' Company where he excelled himself, so he told me, he joined the squadron in Northern Ireland on their first tour of 1969/70. As for myself, three weeks rest! I reported to George and was relieved when he said he would not RTU me and delighted when he offered me DRO. Apart from the fact it meant not going to Germany wearing my black beret, I thought DRO was a promotion! It didn't take long before I learned otherwise and that the Catering Corps was not my forte. Under the expert supervision of Tony Manley, Keith (Canada) Frost and Paddy Boyce my dishwashing skills were second to none. Who needed a rest anyway? A few weeks later, almost A1 fit I completed 'P' Company and eagerly joined the Sqn in their exclusive tented accommodation at Antrim Bridging Camp in N.I. I was accompanied on the ferry crossing by an old stalwart of the Sqn, Sid Davies. During my seven tours of N.I. there were many highs and lows. I enjoyed the great successes of the rugby team as we were steered expertly by George Dunn and Captain (Chopper) Ashcroft. A memorable match was when one Guards regiment (the hats) came over from London Barracks to play the Sqn in the Army Cup major units. Huge guardsmen towered over Mick (Clogg) Claughton Jim Harrower and Pete Sudnick thinking they had us beat, they had not contemplated the Sqn thrashing them 103-0. A hasty retreat to the airport for the Guards!

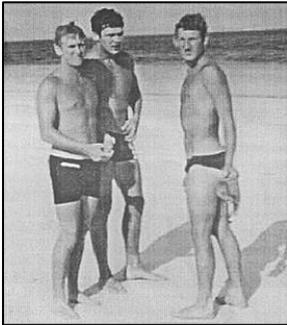
Socialising in Antrim was limited but with the camp adjacent to a river it allowed the Sqn to enjoy "nautical activities" during and after happy hour in the bar. I am still baffled why the 2iC's 17-foot yacht sank. I have flash backs, myself on the riverbank looking on as 36 sappers climbed aboard at the same time waiting on deck to see if it would stay afloat. It didn't!!

We frequently held "jam sessions," Dave Grimbley, Paul Dunkley, Pete Sudnick, Keith King and myself. On a more serious note, the Sqn's role was expansive throughout N.I. with duties ranging from combat engineering projects to infantry support to the many units serving in the province. The early 70's was particularly hectic. The Sqn covered a vast area from Londonderry to South Armagh. I recall one of the busiest nights when about 17 bombs exploded in Belfast City centre. Some of the Sqn were based at Girdwood Park with the Royal Marines and Plant Troop played a key role that night, the expertise of heavy plant troop operating the Allis Chalmers and Muir-Hills helped clear the carnage off the streets. Around this time morale in the Sqn went to an all-time low as the news filtered through that Alex (Froth) Beer had been involved in an explosion whilst working on an operation in Lurgan (AE Journal Aug. 2001). Froth, a few others and myself were trained as Explosive Ordnance Devices (EOD) search teams.

Several weeks in Musgrove Hospital and Froth was transferred to a hospital in England. Initially my thoughts and concerns were for Froth's wellbeing until I realised he was going to the military hospital where my fiancée Marion was nursing with the QARANC (she-hats). I had seen Froth in action and knew what a smooth talker he could be. I was somewhat concerned that she may fall for his "unscrupulous line of patter"!

On a lighter note, looking back, my favourite tour was to Kenya in 1971. It proved to be both memorable and amusing. The main role of the Sqn was to build a bridge and construct access roads through the area of the Shimba Hills. Located approx. 20 miles from Mombasa a major problem on camp was the supply of clean water. As good sappers do, we provided ourselves with sterilised water by pumping water from the river through a very efficient filtration system to three 5000-gallon S tanks. These were covered by tarpaulins on the steep

embankments and the water was then pumped from the tanks to the shower and washing areas. Oh what a surprise for the camp guards as they discovered 8 young Masai swimming in the S tanks. There was much waiving of arms and legs as the children headed off in the direction of the local Masai village.



Most socialising was in the banda hut on camp. The Sqn's outdoor cinema created great interest amongst the locals, word travelled around on jungle drums and tribes people walked for miles to see the latest film! Willy Kattonga (The Masai Del Boy) an unsavoury character known locally as a villain, landed himself in prison for stealing the Sqn's water generator. It would be unthinkable of me to identify the sapper seen "tabbing" with a sheet of corrugated iron under his arm heading towards Willy Kattonga's hut to seek favours with his wife.

Cass Casterton, Bing Crosbie & Froth Beer on Mombasa Beach 1971

The Sqn rugby team excelled themselves beating most of the top teams in Kenya culminating in winning the East Africa Sevens tournament. Who could forget the majestic powerful running of Mika (Mick) Quariku, the quick thinking and speed of Dave Grimbley and George Dunn, even I scored a try.

In 1975 I finally succumbed to marriage. My bachelor days were over and Marion and I were married (what a good turnout it was by the Sqn too). I completed my service with the Sqn in Canada in 1977.

I lived in Cheshire until moving to Devon in 1980. For the past 12 years I have worked at North Devon College as a senior lecturer in the technology dept and a retained firefighter with Devon Fire Service. When moving to the South I had no idea that Louis Gallagher and Mick (Porky) Willis would be such close neighbours!

When I joined the Army in 1966 I went to the Army Apprentice College, Chepstow. My younger brother Nigel joined the RE in 1974 frequently recognised in the Corps as "Bing". Recently as a WOI, he completed 25 years' service (still a hat). The saga of the Crosbie sappers is not quite finished, there is now my son David, with unmistakable "Bing" features, plays rugby and the guitar, he has ambitions to join the RE and ultimately the Sqn! Having completed his A levels last year at Welbeck Army 6th form College, he is now studying for a degree in Civil Engineering at the Royal Military College of Science (RMCS) Shrivenham before progressing to Sandhurst. Marion and I went to Sandhurst! (I played rugby Marion swam for the QA's). I am confident that if my son achieves his own ambitions he will enjoy the same camaraderie as I did all those years ago when I joined the Airborne Engineers!

Have Rapier Will Travel

Brigadier J H Hooper OBE DL



YOU too can be a high sheriff. The qualifications are minimal. To paraphrase the clerk to the privy council, for consideration for the appointment of high sheriff the candidate has to have played a prominent part in the life of the county, be seen to represent the county as a whole, own property within the county (a pup tent is not considered to be suitable) and not be over 70 years of age when assuming the appointment. There are a few excluded categories such as members of parliament, Welsh Assembly members or members of the European Parliament, special commissioners of income tax, officers of the armed forces on full pay, clergymen and barristers or solicitors in practice and similar small fry, otherwise the field is wide open. Oh sorry, the candidate should be of "unblemished reputation in the county and should remain so up to and including the time their names may be picked by Her Majesty." It makes it difficult but not impossible for former 9 Squadron personnel to be considered but you can always try a county where the squadron has never served as I did and got away with it. Of course, it says nothing about how you carry on after your name has been

picked. As my very first OC (in 9 Squadron funnily enough) said on learning of my impending appointment, "I never thought of you as an Establishment figure." Such a wise and sensible man.

So what's it all about then?

The office of High Sheriff is the oldest continuous secular office under the crown. It is, of course, older as a continuous office than the crown (remember Cromwell!?) Naturally, like everything else it is not what it used to be. Many of the powers which were once vested in the high sheriff have been given to the lords lieutenant, high court judges, magistrates, local authorities and, perish the thought, the Inland Revenue. However, it can still be fun even if you cannot go around giving the local peasantry a hard time. The appointment is restricted to one year only as it, apparently, was at one time a fruitful source of income via a spot of sleaze and corruption. The opportunities are sadly diminished these days; notice that members of parliament are excluded. But as I say, things are not what they used to be and nothing attractive came my way.

The High Sheriff was, from the time of the instigation of the office in Saxon times, the first in precedence in the county until 1908 when an Order in Council gave the lord lieutenant the prime office under the crown. (These Johnnies come lately get everywhere, with due deference to my fellow Sapper, Colonel John Timmins, see *RE Journal* December 1990.) Although Lords Lieutenant came into being in 1547 for military duties the High Sheriff was, and remains, the sovereign's representative for all matters relating to the judiciary and the maintenance of law and order. (Stop laughing in the back!) So apart from being in attendance when the sovereign visits the county the High Sheriff is really concerned with legal matters which in turn requires him (or indeed her, as my predecessor was the very first lady High Sheriff in Gwent and a very good High Sheriff she was too):

- To ensure the wellbeing and protection of Her Majesty's high court judges when in the county (hence the rapier!) and to attend them in court
- To execute high court writs and orders (the undersheriff whom you appoint deals with these, thank goodness)
- To act as returning officer in parliamentary elections
- To proclaim the accession of a new sovereign
- To maintain the loyalty of subjects to the crown.

It does sound a little worrying at first but, working on the tried and tested principle of "If he (or, indeed, she) can do it I'm damned sure I can" (which has got me through a few initially daunting situations), when I was approached and asked if would take the job on I said I would ... if...

The first question I asked of the person who put me up for the job was "How much?" I have to say the response to that question was conservative to say the least... but then I've always liked a party! I took advice from a school chum of mine who was also a high sheriff of Gwent. He said it can vary, in Gwent anyway, from one chap who spent £500 to another who admitted to £39,000. If you are seriously unlucky and get caught for one of the more expensive bailiwicks, it can be a lot more than that. As a matter of interest was entertaining my second judge to dinner when he informed me that one of my brother High Sheriffs was, by this time, entertaining his thirty fifth judge!

Anyway, "a nos moutons" as they say in foreign parts, I added a bit for inflation a bit more for my 9 Sqn training and was still a bit short of the final bill. Luckily I am aided and abetted by a party minded wife so I was in with a chance. My bank manager can take his place in the queue. However, it was quite amazing how many people, particularly local councillors, think one is paid to do the job. They were quite horrified when they found I did not get any expenses either and had to provide all the gear. They, quite clearly, thought I was mad to do it.

Having committed oneself to being a High Sheriff, in due course, one slides into the comforting limbo of being "High Sheriff in Nomination" for a few years.

Eventually the great day came when my name was "picked" by her Majesty. Even the Times took note of this! A pretty smart piece of paper arrived a few days later informing me that I was required to "take the Custody and Charge of the County (Gwent, actually, which does not exist anymore except for the purpose of the lieutenancy and the shrievalty!) and duly to perform the duties of High Sheriff thereof during Her Majesty's Pleasure, whereof you are duly to answer according to law." This all looked a bit serious. Worse was to come. I had to declare before a legal officer. (In some cases a high court judge, or in my case a long-standing friend who is a justice of the peace.)

The declaration is written in incredibly difficult 18th century English and despite intensive coaching by my son (a Cambridge graduate in history) I suspect I cocked it up. I then had to nominate my undersheriff (he does the tricky bits on high court writs etc.) and a sheriff's officer both of whom had to be sworn in. You have to watch this very carefully! You are responsible if the undersheriff legs it with umpteen million pounds due to the court (or whoever) so check his premiums for professional indemnity insurance very carefully. You would have to be very brave (or stupid) to appoint someone other than a chap who has been doing the job for years. After the ceremony we got at the champagne and had a jolly nice lunch in the Castle in Monmouth, courtesy of the CO Royal Mons RE (M) (whose RHQ it happens to be).

The legal aspect of the appointment brings one into regular contact with the police, prison service and probationary workers. In Gwent, one of my extremely able predecessors raised a very large sum of money to create the Gwent Police Shrievalty Trust that provides money for police initiatives which benefit the local community but which could not be otherwise funded. Some excellent schemes have been started to keep young people away from drugs, to steer young tearaways away from stealing cars and to provide meeting places for young people to keep them from congregating on street corners and being a nuisance. The trust also, amongst many other things, provides money to fit new locks to houses which have been burgled!

But, in general one is expected to try to do a bit of good in the bailiwick. Naturally one gets asked to all sorts of functions: mayor making, Scout events, Red Cross events, and so on. I tried to get to any event which was concerned with helping youngsters to get a decent start in life so Scouts, St John, the Army Cadet Force, Boys' Brigade and so on got a fair bit of attention from me. You do spend a lot of time in church though! The mayors all have civic services as do the various youth organisations but the hymns are all ones, which the youngsters and I enjoyed so it was no hardship. However, I averaged over two events a week up to Christmas and things hotted up a bit as I headed for the finish in late March.

As High Sheriff one is expected to entertain the great and the good of the bailiwick but as my wife and I have always done a fair amount of entertaining this was no particular hardship. Entertaining the judges to dinner and being entertained in return by them was always great fun. I have long considered judges to be the best after dinner speakers and I can assure you that they produce vastly entertaining anecdotes at dinner! (Well, at least

the ones we were lucky enough to meet did.) Members of the local constabulary were also great value and I must say were a most dedicated and efficient lot with whom it was a pleasure to work. Some of the civic leaders and local politicians were not such fun and far too many of them could talk about nothing except politics and their re-election prospects. Are mayoral and council chairman chains magnetic? They seem to attract each other. But, as always, there were some whose dedication to serving their fellow men was exemplary and whose friendship I will value for years to come.

There is no silly democracy, thank goodness, about the post of High Sheriff and one of the perks is nominating a person to be High Sheriff in four years' time. I have nominated the High Sheriff for Gwent for 2004 and provided he keeps his nose clean and Her Majesty approves and picks his name, in due course he will be High Sheriff. I like the system. But can you believe it... the High Sheriff of Gwent in 2003 will be the chap who was my troop officer in 9 Squadron in Cyprus in 1956. Wonders never cease. Of course, he will have to keep his nose clean, which could be a problem.

So if you served in 9 Squadron and want to be a High Sheriff I suggest you move to Gwent sharpish. Oh, and by the way, my velvet jacket, knickers and nylons are fit for nothing except a museum so you'll have to get your own. The shoes are size eight by the way. Going cheap!

Previous Article- Response

Tony "Toots" Ridgway

Tony "Toots" Ridgway

I really take umbrage at Taff Brice's article (accelerated promotion-Rhodesian style) in issue No. 5 of the Journal. Taff, me old buddy, how dare you think that you were unique in joining as a sapper and finishing as a sapper after 9 years' service.

I joined as a sapper after having done a 5-year apprenticeship in civvy street and started as an A2 tradesman from day one, and still managed to keep my rank as sapper. In fact, if I hadn't been politely requested to leave Her Majesty's employment after 7 years. (Retention undesirable in the interests of the Service) as Brig Farrar-Hockley put it in my discharge book - no sense of humour! I would have beaten your record and been busted to recruit.

In your other article 'Greetings from South Africa,' where you mention your wedding, I do apologise for not attending. On your wedding day, they wouldn't let me out of Maida guardroom until midday (28 days that time). I then had to make my way back to camp, pick up some civvies, cadge £5 off Gobble Turk and hitchhike down to Hereford. When I got there, everything was all over bar the shouting and you and Lyn had gone. However I did have a good night down at Hereford. I went for a few drinks with some old mates and they kindly let me doss down in a bunk belonging to someone away on ops. I got back to Aldershot and reported sick a few days later with scabies, "Thanks mate."

P.S. I was going to write to you personally but I wanted Jock MacLellan to know that I am definitely on his side in your present dispute.

As you requested this is a totally unbiased-hic- and sober-hic- ruling on this issue.

How to know when you are getting old.

Everything hurts - what doesn't hurt doesn't work.
The gleam in your eye is the sun shining on your bifocals.
You feel like the morning after, but you haven't been anywhere.
Your black book contains only names ending in MO.
You get winded playing cards.
Your children begin to look middle aged.
You join a health club, but don't go.
A dripping tap causes an uncontrollable urge.
You have all the answers but no one asks you the questions.
You look forward to a dull evening.
You need glasses to find your glasses.
You turn out the light for economy instead of romance.
You sit in a rocking chair and can't make it go.
Your knees buckle but your belt won't.
Your back goes out more than you do.
Your house is too big and your medicine cupboard is not big enough.
You sink your teeth into P steak and they stay there.
Your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles.
I just want to live long enough to be a problem to my children.

131 Indep Cdo Sqn RE (V) – Appeal

131 Indep Cdo Sqn RE (V) are currently “trying” to put together a brief pictorial history of the Sqn. A fair amount of work on the later years (60's/70's onwards) has been carried out by an ex member of the Sqn, Mr J Brooks, who is currently the civilian storeman with 299 Tp based in Hull. We are hoping that through the Journal some of the older (no offence meant) ex members of 131 Independent Parachute Regiment RE or 131 Independent Parachute Squadron RE (V) who as part of 44 Independent Parachute Brigade, may be able to help.

Any photograph, document, order or piece of memorabilia that they would allow to be photocopied or wish to donate to the task in hand will be welcomed.

If items are sent to me, where necessary I will have them copied and have the originals returned. Alternatively members could take photocopies themselves and send these on to me. Any items that ex members wish to donate on a permanent basis will be most gratefully received and will be displayed at SHQ with the pictorial folders when the task is complete.

Kindly forward any items or articles to the following addressee:

Capt P. Denning

131 Independent Commando Squadron RE (V)

TA Centre, Barrows Lane, Sheldon, Birmingham. B26 3BE

Your assistance in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Diary Date

Annual International Military & Veterans Festival Saturday/Sunday 15th & 16th June - Weymouth

On Saturday there will be a static display of over seventy WWII historic military vehicles, including jeeps, motorcycles, half-tracks, self-propelled guns and trucks. To start the afternoon off with a bang, the REs will be demonstrating their beach landing and bridge construction skills in a competitive environment to provide plenty of fun and noise for everyone.

At 1100 hrs on Sunday a Service of Remembrance will be held at the British Cenotaph on Weymouth Seafront with representatives of the British and Allied Military Services. On the conclusion of the Service a Military and Veterans Parade will take place along Weymouth Seafront with marching military bands and ex-service members and standards from the Army, Royal Navy, Wrens, Merchant Navy, Royal Air Force and ex-service members from campaigns since World War II with representation from the United States Military.

For more detailed information contact the Weymouth & Portland Tourist & Leisure Dept on 01305 206 441

Cycling Down Under

Martin Walker

The origins of my travelling began in September 2000, when my 71 year old friend and I thought, instead of a normal “two week sojourn” to a sunshine drenched beach, why not go on an 18 month trip?

Armed with our bicycles, and determined to conquer the world we left Manchester airport bound for Kathmandu on the 26th September. Our intention was to do the trek to Everest Base Camp. After two days of preparations we boarded a local bus, and ten rally driving hours we arrived at the road head at a place called Jiri.

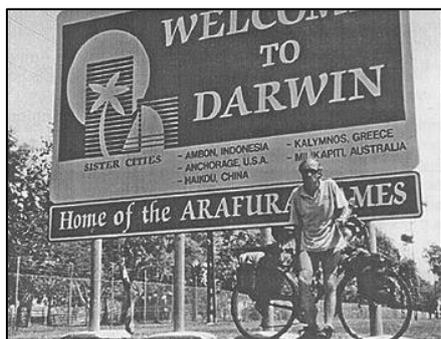
Unfortunately, about one week into the trek my companion was in a state of serious physical and mental exhaustion. Due to the fact that I wanted him to live longer, we flew back to Kathmandu from an airstrip at Lukla. His condition rendered him in need of more help than would have been available in Nepal, so we arrived back in the UK on the 17th October, with our aspirations blown to smithereens.



Time to regroup and rethink my strategy. Eventually on the 13th March 2001 I decided to leave for Australia, (minus friend) and cycle from Perth to Darwin. I spent an acclimatisation period of seven weeks in the Perth area, and enjoyed a weekend of airborne hospitality with Jim and Rosie Crozier.

(Note the ‘Airborne’ sweatshirt)

I surgically removed myself from Aussie hospitality, and along with a friend called “determination” left Perth on the 1st May on my two-wheeled non-powered ‘taxi’. I travelled on some of the quietest roads that I had ever been on, and with food, lightweight tent and up to ten litres of water camped in some very remote places. Nature provided such an abundance of dry wood that I rarely needed to use my stove for cooking. Along the way I stopped at many national parks (Kalbarri Pinnacles, Karijini, Bungle and Katherine gorge) and did some guided tours or my own; discovered along well marked walking trails. The Bungle Range is a spectacular array of beehive shaped orange and black-banded rocks. This National Park was only discovered in 1983 and opened to the public in 1987. I certainly think it’s Australia’s hidden gem, and was certainly well worth the effort to get there.



I spent some beach time in Broome and stayed in a hostel, as it was good to meet fellow travellers after being on my own for days on end. Along the way people were kind and offered me water and in some cases food. The remarks made to me varied from “Good on yer mate,” or “You must be mad,” so I was (and still am) more than happy to be the latter.

I arrived to a tumultuous welcome (in my mind) at Darwin on August 7th having cycled more than 3700 adventure filled miles. I met twenty-seven cyclists en route, suffered four punctures, two worn tyres and snapped the rear axle. The last problem rendered the bike unrideable, but I managed to get a lift to a garage seventy miles away. The average temperatures on the ride were in the low to mid-eighties.

After some rest and recuperation I flew to Canada and spent a month on Vancouver Island and returned to Blighty on the 30th September with lots of memories and new friends to keep in contact with.

Anyone fancy a quick cycle ride across America?

Airborne Engineers Weekend Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington, York

Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th June 2002



Join us at Elvington as we mark the 60th Anniversary of the formation of the Airborne Forces Experimental Establishment at the nearby Sherburn Airfield and the Official Opening of the Royal Engineers Airborne Exhibition. The Airborne Engineers Association Will also be celebrating the Queens Jubilee with an Evening Dinner on Saturday 29th June.



Programme

Saturday 29th June

Gates Open 1000

1100:

Opening of the Royal Engineers' Airborne Exhibition which will include a unique display by courtesy of the Hartenstein Museum, Oosterbeek, Holland. This display features material never before seen in the U.K.

1430:

Service in the Allied Memorial Chapel to Dedicate a Bronze Plaque and Kneelers to the Airborne Engineers and Dedicate a Tree to Charley Dunk.

1900:

5 Course Dinner to include Wine & Port in Celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (For details contact Roy King: 01904 795733).

Sunday 30th June

Airborne Show. Gates Open 0900

A full day of activity including:

Veterans Parade and March Past.

Flying Displays - Featuring the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (Hurricane, Spitfire and Dakota) and a full display by the Red Arrows Acrobatic Display Team and more.

Free Fall Parachute Display

Sideshows and Regimental displays including:

9 Squadron Royal Engineers Static Display, 21 Field Squadron EOD Royal Engineers (Bomb Disposal), Normandy Arnhem Society, Bands, Birds of Prey Exhibition, historic military vehicles, re-enactments and much more.

Weekend Admission: £7 Adults, £5 Senior Citizens, & £3 Children. (Under 5's Free).

Folding Wheel Chair- Donation

Ron Burgess, a member of the Aldershot Branch, has kindly donated a folding wheel chair to the Association. This is for the use of any Association Member or family member. It is in very good condition and will fit into the boot of an average family car. Anyone wishing to use this facility should contact Ron on: 020 8654 1171 to arrange collection from his home in Croydon.

The Royal Engineers and the National Service Years 1939- 1963

Mr Eric Pegg, a former Royal Engineer National Serviceman who served at Suez amongst other places, has now prepared a new book, with the above title. The book is A4 size, 440 pages long, soft back, black lettering on a red background, and with some two hundred photographs. About 170 former National Servicemen contributed to the book.

Cost is approx. £18-00 plus p&p. For confirmation of the final cost, please contact Mr Eric Pegg at: 1, Rochbury Close, Bamford, Rochdale, Lancs OL11 5JF (tel: 01706 639701)

Hardwick Hall- The Cradle of Airborne Forces

In June 1940 Britain was in a bad way. The German army had swept across Europe, and was standing on France's Channel cliffs wondering if it would have time to do a bit of looting and pillaging on a weekend break in Paris before it set off westwards to sort us out once and for all.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill, though, had other ideas, one of which was that attack is usually the best form of defence, and one of the memos he fired off to his defence chiefs on 22 June directed that they should investigate the possibility of forming a corps of, possibly, 5,000 parachute troops. This date is regarded as the birthday of the British Airborne Forces, and set in motion the events that would bring these forces to the grounds of Hardwick Hall for the next six years.

The basic concept of paratroops is that they are delivered by an aircraft, and it was deemed that Ringway (now Manchester Airport) would be a good place from which to fly their planes. Some desk-bound genius in Whitehall looked at a map and decided from it that Hardwick would be a good place near to Ringway to train the troops, so this hilly, completely unsuitable spot was chosen as the base from which all our paratroops were trained for the next six years - all twenty-five thousands of them.

So a camp was built down near the lakes east of the Hall, and No.2 Commando regiment, already billeted at Ringway, became the 1st Parachute Regiment, and moved to Hardwick. The camp became a huge military complex, with brick-built barracks and a formidable perimeter fence. For the first months, training was a hit-and-miss affair. Life for the soldiers was dominated by the need to get them really fit, and physical-training instructors from the Army moved in. There were two sessions a day of PT, the rest of their crowded schedule was spent in jumping from scaffolding towers, and a basket suspended from a static balloon which could be winched, with its nervous contents, to 600 feet. When they were considered capable of landing in one reasonable piece, the troops were taken to Ringway to do it for real - out of an aeroplane.

The aircraft used was a Whitley bomber with a square hole cut into the floor. This lumbering aerial dinosaur, whose top speed downhill and with a following wind was 150 mph. could accommodate only ten men. They sat, legs apart, five with their backs to the engine and the other five facing them, all as close to the man behind them as they could get. Between the two groups yawned the hole in the floor and the two unfortunates at the front of the lines hung on grimly just above the roaring slipstream - with nothing to separate them from the earth six hundred feet below. Tucked somewhere in the packed group were their parachutes. No, they didn't have back packs: the chutes and lines were loose, and as each man was urged out into the abyss, he fervently hoped his chute would follow him without getting tangled or snagging on part of the plane. Inevitably there were casualties. Then two heroes named Raymond Quilter and James Gregory designed the first parachute to be carried in a backpack. It was attached to the aircraft by a static line, which delayed the opening until the parachute was well clear of the plane. After a hectic period of adjustment the GQ X-type Statichute emerged and this remained in service till well after the war. The other significant improvement came with the introduction of the American Dakota to carry the paras and their equipment. This workhorse of the skies, which could also tow two gliders, remained in active service for years after the war.

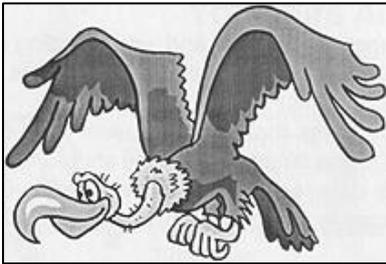
By the end of 1941 Hardwick Camp was described as, "A sad collection of red-brick huts surrounded by a high wire fence set in sloping parkland." There were many complaints from senior officers that the PT was done so vigorously, and was so unsuited to parachuting that people got muscle-bound. Besides the endless physical training, the troops had mock-up fuselages to jump from, as well as airsickness tests in a swing boat, and swinging from trapezes, but it was agreed that the end product was a toughened athlete, physically and mentally alert. They now did pistol firing in the quarry, field firing on Midhope Moor in the snow, street fighting in Sheffield, and tactical exercises among the coal-heaps at Heath.

For the remainder of the war Hardwick was depot and school for all airborne forces - paratroops and gliders. An overflow camp of wooden huts was built at Clay Cross, and it was here that the paratroopers did their final battle training and awaited transfer to their units throughout the UK.

The Government had always promised that all traces of the camp would be cleared away after hostilities ceased and, true to their word, the whole lot was bulldozed. To finish the clean-up the contractors offered to dredge the lakes, an operation which cleared up yet another wartime mystery. The troops, ready every weekend for a night out with the lads, would end up in the pubs of the surrounding villages; many of them found the prospect of walking back to camp a bit daunting, but they found bicycles on which they made their unsteady way back to camp. Realising that the presence of the bikes the following day would be a little incriminating, the borrowers threw them in the lakes. The dredgers found 633 bikes and four motor-bikes when they cleared up.

All that remains now of six years' frenzied activity is a swathe of parkland and a simple memorial plaque to the thousands of airborne troops who wore the Red Beret with pride, and were killed in action.

AEA Golf Day



Now don't get in a flap you haven't missed the AEA Golf Day! But you will if you don't contact Bob Ferguson soonest!

At present only 7 members have put their names forward and we need a lot more if we are to make this a viable proposition. Remember the idea behind this is to have a fun day out on the golf course with colleagues and friends.

The aim is to play a 9 hole fun competition in the morning and an 18 hole Stableford competition in the afternoon, followed by evening dinner and prize giving. The venue will be somewhere in the Midlands (central for most members).

The cost will be approx. £60, but this will not include any accommodation requirements before or after the event. We need your names now, so please, if you're a novice, semi pro or just a fun golfer, register your name with Bob. You may even go on record as being the first AEA Golf Champion! Come on guys, it's a day out - get on the phone to Fergie now!

Contact Bob Ferguson: 023 8077 6866 or e-mail: bobferg@regent-safe.co.uk

The Journal

You read us three times a year
We need a little more
To keep this Journal's pages filled
It's image to the fore.

We know full well that in your ranks
Great expertise resides
Of interest to all of us
And others too beside.

Before that hard won knowledge goes
As go it may with you
Please set it down for other folk
And share it with us too.

For written style we do not seek
By cover we don't choose
The books that we your comrades read
And even less our news.

We only seek to know the facts
Of our arcane pursuit
Grammarians bad and spellers worse
We're never known to shoot.

We do however like to learn
Of all and sundry things
Pertaining to the airborne
Afloat, on foot, on wings.

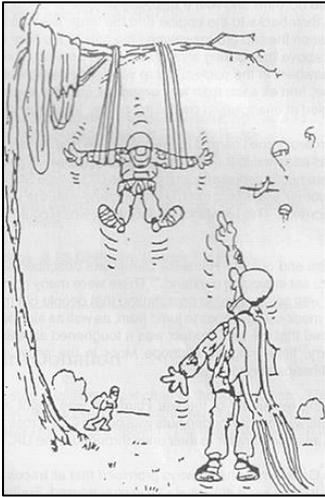
So write it down and send it in
That knowledge may not flee
Eluding future addicts of
Our martial history.

ANON

Ed: I have recently received many photographs for inclusion in future publications - which is great, but I do need more written articles of events or personal experiences of your time with Airborne Forces. And let's not get too serious in everything submitted for publication. There must be thousands of humorous happenings that others would like to share.

If you do have an article for publication, kindly forward it direct to me (the editor), my address and e-mail contact is listed on page one of this magazine. It's only with your contribution that we can continue to provide the membership with good "bedtime reading."

Name That Tune



“A song ...
a sixties song! ...
I’ve got it,
Puppet on a String”

News from the QM 9 Para Sqn

(Alias the Association Treasurer - Dick Brown)

Well here we go again, having got back from Macedonia last October thinking that the squadron would have a nice Christmas break prior to starting some low level training in the New Year. News came through that America was taking on the Taliban in Afghanistan. Sitting at home with Mary having a nice cup of tea in early December, Mary asked, "You won't have to go to Afghanistan will you?" "Of course not," I replied. Well, as I write this letter I am sitting in an old derelict Russian Barracks with no windows, all that it has going for it is a roof rather like Montgomery lines. Home sweet home! Apparently the lads will be charged for food and accommodation! Only joking.

The journey for me started on the 25 January. Although during Christmas 2 Troop and most of the management were recalled to carry out preliminary planning. This resulted in 2 Troop, OC Maj Rob Rider, Ops Officer Capt Mat Wilkinson and Recce Officer (Families Officer) Capt Mick Coles, parading at 2300 hrs 31 December. New Year was spent driving to the Air Mounting centre at South Cerney - Happy New Year.

Back to my journey. January saw the QM's department making frantic attempts to get as many heaters, candles, in fact anything of use, to deploy with. By now the number of vehicles had been decided. As you can imagine because everything was to be flown in, there was great pressure to reduce the amount of vehicles deploying. We ended up with a 4-Ton Daf, a Landrover per Troop; a couple of CVs and some plant equipment. Not a great start to an Operation! Vehicles were loaded with everything, which I think included the kitchen sink. The vehicles are flown in by Ukrainian Antonovs by way of east Europe. The remainder of the Squadron flew by VC10 by way of Cyprus then on to Thumrait in the Oman for an overnight stop, which was extremely hot, in fact I managed to burn my baldhead while we load up with ammo, food and water.



Home Sweet Home

The evening of the 27 January saw us boarding a C130 for the final journey to Kabul. This took 7 hours, which included a stopover in Muscat to refuel. This was to insure that the C130 had enough fuel to make the return journey from Kabul, (no fuel at Kabul). The final hour of the flight was spent in darkness; the loadmaster had his night vision goggles on and was looking out for any incoming fire — getting serious now! We landed at Kabul at 0230 hrs and it was bloody cold, somewhere around minus 15 degrees. We were then herded on to the back of a 4 Ton Daf. The brief was that it would be only a 20 minute drive - 50 minutes later, and blue from the cold, we arrived at our destination which was to be our home for the next few months. More good news followed. The vehicles would not arrive for another two weeks due to problems with the in load of stores.

The first few days saw us settling in, putting plastic up at the windows, in fact I have double-glazing, two sheets of plastic. Heating for the rooms is provided by locally produced wood burning stoves, or if you're lucky, the deluxe model is a diesel heater. Kerosene lamps provide our lighting. Washing and shaving is done outside, which can be very challenging, and as for a shower, we have been given solar shower bags, which at present are not used too often. A huge boiling pot produces hot water over an open fire — this is the British army at its best. More like gypsies than soldiers! The foreign forces have integral showers, hot water and electricity, still they are not as hard as us 'AIRBORNE.'



Well what has been happening since we arrived? 2 Troop have remained with 2 Para and have been providing Engr support for them and more recently they have been rebuilding a local school. 1 Troop managed to scrounge a couple of vehicles and have been at ISAF HQ providing Engr Support. 3 Troop, which at present provides Engr Recce, have been doing their own thing all hush hush, well they think it's all Hush Hush. They have been looking at routes from Kabul to Bagram.

Finally plant troop — with no plant, but they have managed to scrounge some bits from the HALO trust a civilian de-mining charity. It did help that our Fitter Sgt joined up with one of the men that is running the trust here in Kabul.



In the photo opposite, note the individual lights strapped to the guys heads in preparation for an 'O' Group.

As most of the readers will recall, the Squadron is at its best when they have nothing but still manage to provide everything. I will finish off now, but articles from the troops, describing what they have been up to, will be published in the next edition.

We have our fingers crossed in hope that by the time you read this 9 Para Sqn update, we will all be safely back in dear old Aldershot. (At least for a couple of weeks!)

News from Around the Branches

Aldershot

Mrs Betty Gray - Branch Secretary

At last Christmas is over for another year. Everyone can now relax and get on with our normal lives. Our Christmas Dinner was held in late January which is proving to be a popular time as it gives everyone a breathing space after the ravages of too much eating and drinking over the festive period. Thirty-seven members and families attended which is slightly down on previous years but a number of our regular attendee's had gone off to warmer climes to recharge their batteries for the coming year. After the dinner the acting chairman was able to thank Tony and Jill Manley for their continued high standard of culinary support to the branch throughout the year and in appreciation asked them to dine out, at our expense. We were also able to wish the Squadron, through Captain Dick Brown, our very best wishes for their forthcoming tour to Afghanistan and a safe return in the spring. Mary Brown was reminded that she must not look upon the next four months as losing her husband but gaining control of the TV remote unit whilst Dick is away.

The January branch meeting was a little hectic when the discussion for the proposal of the AEA joining the REA came up on the agenda. As a result of the proposal, two of our most stalwart and founder members, Derek Taylor and John Thompson, tendered their resignations from the branch. We hope that we shall see their return in the not too distant future.

In common with the other branches of the Association, we have a busy year ahead. In March there is the normal semi-monthly branch meeting and then we host the Ordinary meeting of the AEA the following week. May is the month of our AGM and then into the summer months and the BBQs and ABF Weekend at Elvington. On an individual basis some members are revisiting Hameln in Germany and later a group are taking the coach to Edinburgh for the Military Tattoo.

The Aldershot Branch welcomes any serving soldiers and former members of Airborne Engineers, living within a reasonable distance of Aldershot, to join us at our meetings held every two months (March, May, July, Sept etc) where you would be made most welcome. The meetings are held in the John Rock Room, Rhine Barracks, 1130hrs for 1200hrs. My telephone number is 01252 668339 or 681299

Edinburgh

Mick Walker - Branch Secretary

Our delayed AGM in December was well attended and we were particularly pleased to see Eoghann MacLachlainn who had travelled down from Uist in the Outer Hebrides and Peter Watt who was making his first appearance amongst us. Ross Stevenson took a bit of a slagging for his late attendance until he explained that he had spent the previous 7 hours driving up from London to be with us. It makes you remember that the Airborne RE spirit lives on in us.

Brian McKean, Dougie Archibald and Mick Walker were re-elected as Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer respectively and Jimmy Simpson agreed to assume the role of Auditor.

The major topic of discussion was the assimilation of the Association into the REA. Some were unhappy about the process of this and it being presented as a "done deal" at Bristol. However we decided to suck it and see and we look forward to a lively debate at Blackpool.

One interesting point to come out of this is that we all thought there was no REA Branch in Edinburgh. There used to be a REA Club in Edinburgh's New Town and we all thought the Branch had folded with the Club's demise. Our thanks are due to eagle eyed Frank Murray who advised that the Branch is still active. Dougie Archibald has contacted their Secretary with a view to having a joint meeting.

Ten or a dozen of us, accompanied by wives, joined our friends in the PRA at their annual Xmas dance where a good time was had by all. We now do it out of habit but we still have queries about the raffle!

The by now annual New Year soiree at Mick Walker's house was held and copious amounts of food and, thanks to the generosity of the guests, drink were consumed. At one stage Charlie Imrie and Ian Thomson, both building tradesmen, were seen with their heads up the living room chimney giving Mick advice on its repair. Others, not building tradesmen, who did not put their head up were more vociferous in their advice.

Mick lives about 20 miles from Edinburgh and some people arranged a mini bus for their travel but this did not work out as planned and two couples ended up staying for breakfast

South West

Mike Newton



A suitable 'watering hole' with a fine selection of food graced the occasion of Alan & Chris Mayfield's golden wedding.

Members present, and accompanied by their good ladies were John Hooper, Mike Newton, Tom Brinkman, Ray (Dick) Richards, Bert Gregory, Terry Maxwell and Mervyn Potter

Yorkshire

Bill Rudd - Branch Chairman

Since our last article it has been quite a busy period and a very sad one. Ken Teeley's spouse Barbara died suddenly after an operation. Tom Thornton's Bobby died suddenly. John Dickson's Pam died after being poorly over a long period and our mate Charlie Dunk left our midst after suffering a fateful thrombosis. The Branch, together with the rest of our Association members will miss them all very deeply and we send our deepest sympathy to their loved ones.

As you can well imagine, our Christmas did not start too well; but was cheered up a little by our Christmas Dinner held at the Viking Hotel in Goole during mid-December. It proved a resounding success and was enjoyed by all; especially those who won raffle prizes! Our Christmas was shortly followed by our annual dinner, which was held in the WO's/Sgt's Mess 38 Engr Regt, by kind permission of RSM Paul Eldred. 120 members, wives, and friends sat down to a superb 4-course meal, wines and loyal toast. Our Chairman Bill Rudd welcomed the guests and Col Chris Davies responded on behalf of the guests. Dancing followed until the early hours of the morning. Fennymore, affectionately known as Richard, was seen dancing at 0630 hrs. Oh to be young again!

Our next main event will be our AIRBORNE FORCES DAY sponsored by the Association with the help of the Yorkshire Branch, this will be held at Elvington on 29th June. Details are contained on page 20 of this publication. As on previous occasions, accommodation is available in Strensall Barracks, bookings to Bill Rudd on 01423—191536 or e-mail BIRudd@aol.com

Lastly, it is intended to plant a tree in the garden of remembrance at Elvington on the above weekend in memory of Charlie Dunk. There will be a short service and Lorraine together with her family have been invited to attend. It is hoped that many of Charlie's friends will support this service to pay their last respects.

We welcome to the Branch the following; Major Chris Gosling and RSM Paul Eldred who have pledged their support, Chris even volunteered for committee duties! That is above and beyond the call of duty. We also welcome, George McConnell, Alan Robinson, and Mal Joinson.

Birmingham

Bunny Brown - Branch Secretary

Greetings from the Birmingham Branch.

Since the last Journal we have held our Branch AGM, with some movement at the top but otherwise all is as was, Brian Care is now our Chairman taking over from Steve Brown, Gordon Page is now Vice Chair, everyone else held their position.

Our Annual Christmas Dinner Dance, held at the Holiday Inn, Elmdon, was a great success with 120 attending, thanks must go to Roger Howies who worked tirelessly on arranging the function, also to Mike Holdsworth for the loan of candelabra, and of course Wendy Clarke who, with the help of her team, made a very successful profit on the raffle.

A number of the Branch attended the Yorkshire Branch Dinner at Ripon, including our new Chairman Brian Care, Mike Holdsworth, Barrie Aitken, Dave, Wendy and Pete Clarke, and our Arnhem Vets, at the end of January. All who attended have asked me to thank Bill Rudd and his committee for allowing us to attend such a well-organized function. We all wish to attend next year to apologise.

Nev Collins who has written the "Bit for the Journal" for the last couple of issues is at the moment "wintering in Cyprus" we look forward to his return.

Branch Diary. We have been challenged to a shooting competition with our old Rivals from 131 Para Sqn days, The Royal Warwick's Association. To be held at Swynerton Training Camp, near Stoke on Trent, on the 26 May 2002. Results will be in the next issue. We will be celebrating Her Majesties Golden Jubilee, with a lunch at the Britannia Hotel, on the 8th June 2002. Accommodation is available at £50 per room per night. If anyone would like to attend please contact Brian Care on 0121 553 2492. The Branch will be holding our Annual Clay Shoot and BBQ in June date still to be confirmed.

That's about all for this issue; look forward to meeting old friends and new at Elvington on the 29th June, and at the AGM. Regards from all in Birmingham.

South Africa- 50's Style

Dave Rutter

You may recall in the last publication that an invitation was extended to any member visiting South Africa to contact in infamous Taff (aka Alan) Brice. Taff and his wife Lin with their two sons live in Pietermaritzburg (approx 65 miles west of Durban).

Accompanied by my wife Jeannette and a former RE colleague (Tom Larcombe) and his wife Doreen, we were returning for our second holiday in South Africa. The previous year we had flown into Cape Town collected a self-drive car and did the "Garden Route" with the holiday culminating back in Cape Town for our last 3 nights. For our most recent visit in November (last) we flew into Johannesburg collected our self-drive vehicle and set off to sample the sites and delights of the Mpumalanga and Kwa Zulu Natal provinces and Swaziland. Driving in South Africa is a real pleasure compared to the UK, they have an excellent road network, drive on the left, and at times you can drive for miles along dead straight highways. Petrol is approx £1.40 a gal on and apart from the larger city centres, devoid of the traffic density that we have to endure back home. With the exception to booking our flight, everything else was done using the Internet.

Our accommodation was all booked in advance with the aid of the "Bed & Breakfast Portfolio." This booklet gives an excellent guide to some of the most superb bed and breakfast accommodation you can imagine. The average cost varied between £11 and £20 per person per night. The welcome received from our hosts at all of our stopovers was without exaggeration, like that of a long lost friend.

Our first two nights were spent in Sabie (approx 4 hours' drive east of J'burg). While there we visited Blyde Canyon (3rd largest canyon in the world) where some of the views rivalled those of the Grand Canyon. With a viewing point called 'God's Window' you can imagine the scenery.

From Sabie we moved into the Kruger National Park for a four-night stay split between three different campsites. Covering an area the size of Wales the Kruger offers the advantage of seeing the animals in their natural habitat. It certainly lived up to everything we had imagined and considered ourselves lucky to see the 'big 5' (elephant, lion, buffalo, leopard and rhino).

Leaving the Kruger our next point of call was into the kingdom of Swaziland. This kingdom is referred to as Little Switzerland and we were not disappointed.

Moving on and back into South Africa our next location was Dundee. Our host at this location was a former Springbok rugby player (Dirk Froneman) The main purpose of this stopover was to visit the battlefields of Isandlwana, Rorke's Drift and Blood River. Visiting these locations is pointless without a competent guide, and for a reasonable fee spent a full day reliving the battles at each of these locations (highly recommended).

Two days later we were on the move again, driving through the Kwa National Park and Golden Gate Pass and eventually, following a further night stopover reached Pietermaritzburg.

We had hardly time to catch our breath before with a screech of brakes and a toot on the horn Taff Brice arrived. A couple of quick beers in our host (Dave Short's) bar, (everyone seems to have a bar as part of their house) and we were guided to the local rugby club to meet Taff's friends and to consume more beer.

Lin provided the evening meal back at the family home but not before we had consumed a few more beers in Taff's own bar. Now most people tend to decorate the walls of their bars with bar mats, towels or flags - but not Taff, he had a fine collection of bayonets, swords and a Kalashnikov rifle adorning his walls.



The following morning, (Saturday) we were to be picked up by Taff and Lin and the six of us were going to visit the Art and Craft shops in the Midlands Meander. What all six of us in one car? Not a problem explained Taff, and when he arrived we understood why. He was driving a 1958 6-litre Buick! It was like something straight out of an Elvis Presley film. To compliment this classic vehicle the stereo was pumping out typical 50's and 60's music hits. With bench seats in front and back meant that

every time we went round a sharpish corner we would all slide across the seats (no seat belts required in this vehicle).

As we drove from place to place it was really amusing to see the kids at the side of the road nudge each other and stare at this classic car. The local 'Biltong' shop (dry cured meat) owner requested to have his photo taken at the wheel of the Buick, and Taff willingly obliged.

With noon fast approaching and our shopping completed we stopped for a quick beer - and then it was off to the rugby club. Today was the occasion of the rugby international match between the Springboks and England. Walking into the club Tom and myself, being the only Englishmen present, was like walking into the lion's den. We were informed in no uncertain terms that England was in for a resounding defeat.

But the kick off was not for a couple of hours -the South Africans know how to enjoy themselves and were preparing their braais (BBQs) just outside the clubhouse. They'd parked their cars on the side of the rugby pitch and were busy cooking succulent steaks, sausages and chops plus quenching their thirst on even more beers.



Tom, Doreen , Dave & Taff at the Braai

Kick off approached and we moved back into the clubhouse - Jeannette and Doreen had decided to escape back to the accommodation for a peaceful afternoon by the pool. The National Anthem was played and Tom and I dutifully stood up - the response from the hundred or so club members was immediate - fortunately it was friendly banter. Well the rest is history - England won the match quite convincingly - but how were the guys in the club going to take this defeat? Quite unlike football supporters, we were congratulated with "Well done Pomms."

Following more celebratory drinks, at least for us Brits, it was time to say our farewells to Lin, Taff and the guys at the rugby club. This had been a hectic but most enjoyable part of our holiday and I would recommend to anyone visiting this area of South Africa to contact Taff Brice.

Although we still had other locations to move on to, we all agreed that it would have been nice to stay a little longer in Pietermaritzburg.

For those who are not aware, Taff is an ardent rugby man and follows the Springboks when they are on tour. The most recent of these was when he travelled to Australia and New Zealand taking time out to visit former colleagues and friends.



In Australia with Percy Waddell & Don Newman



In New Zealand with Cliff Joy

If you're considering a holiday to South Africa my advice is GO. The people are amongst the most hospitable in the world, the food is superb, the beer is great and the pound goes a long, long way. An evening meal in a really good restaurant with excellent food, wine and beer for 4 people, less than £40. Security, we didn't walk the back streets of the towns at night, but at no time in either of our two holidays in South Africa have we felt threatened. And we're going back again in October!

Blackpool 2002

Norbreck Castle Hotel Friday 11th - Monday 14th October 2002 News & Update

Four Day Programme

Friday 11th October

Committee- Reception Duties

Arrivals from 1500 hrs

1800-1900	Happy Hour	Ballroom
1930-2130	Dinner- 3 course carvery	Main Dining Room
	Social Evening	Ballroom
	In House Entertainment	Conservatory

Saturday 12th October

Committee - Reception Duties

Arrivals from 0900 hrs for room reception

0730-0930	Breakfast	Main Dining Room
0800-1800	Memorabilia Room	Conway Suite
1000-1300	AGM Meeting	Ballroom
1100-1115	Comfort Break	
1000-1300	Tea & Coffee at £1-00	Throughout AGM
1000-1300	Pre order Wine Point	Inside Main Room
1900-0100	Gala Dinner - 5 Course	Ballroom
2100-0100	Entertainment	Ballroom
	Palladium Style Cabaret	

Sunday 13th October

Committee - Reception/Departure Duties

0730-0930

1030

0800-1800

1000-1830

1830-2030

2030-2130

2130-2359

Breakfast

For those leaving early, please vacate rooms by 1030

Denominational Services at local Churches. See info board For details.

Memorabilia room

Conway suite

Day at Leisure

Tram Ride

Transport to be confirmed **

Dinner

Ballroom

Nostalgic Forties theme Buffet

Entertainment

Ballroom

"Minting Sisters" if possible **

Monday 14th October

Committee- Farewell Duties

0730-0930	Breakfast	Ballroom
	Pack	

1030-1100 Vacate rooms, settle accounts, hand in keys

Clear & Pack items from the Centre Alcove & Conway Suite

SAFE JOURNEY HOME

PLEASE NOTE:

The booking form, for those who have not yet submitted their reservation, has been amended, and all further bookings must be made using this new form. A copy of the amended 'booking form' is enclosed with this publication. Vacant accommodation at the Norbreck Hotel is going fast, so to avoid disappointment, we strongly suggest that you submit your bookings soonest.

9 Para Squadron are Leaving Aldershot

Just prior to the draft of this edition being forwarded to the printers, the Aldershot News reported that 9 Para Sqn together with 7 RHA will be leaving Aldershot in May 2003. In addition to this it has also been announced that the Airborne Forces Museum will also be moving. The report states that both 9 Sqn and 7 RHA will be relocating in Colchester - however, regarding the Sqn, that has not officially been confirmed (at the time of typing this information.) Regarding the museum, it is yet to be confirmed as to where it will be established. Options being considered include Colchester and Duxford. The future of the famous Dakota which is currently situated outside of the museum is still to be decided.

Sadly, the departure of 9 Sqn together with 7 RHA will mean the departure of the town's remaining maroon (red) berets! News of this magnitude would normally take first priority on the front page of our Journal, but as this news came in at such late notice, I have had to delete other items from the latter pages to enable the inclusion of the Sqn's future.

The Association Directory

With the strength of the AEA now well more than 1,000 members, there is almost certainly many former friends and colleagues that the reader is unaware of. To overcome this situation we have produced an Association Directory, not only for you to track down long lost friends, but also to assist you with your Christmas Card mailing list! By buying the most recent updated copy of the AEA Directory you will not only be providing yourself with a full listing of our membership (which includes full postal addresses and telephone numbers) but you'll be putting a little into the Association general fund account. To obtain your copy please contact Bob Ferguson on : 023 8077 6866 or drop him a line together with your cheque to: 143. King Georges Avenue, Regents Park, Southampton SO15 4LE

Purchase Price: £5-50 for a hard copy or £4-50 for an E-mail copy

Association Shop Update

Jan Chambers

Many thanks to you all for your kind "get well" messages following my recent ear operation. Progress is a wee bit slow but I will get there in the end. It is to be hoped that one more operation should put it right! (ear! ear!) Kindly note that I shall be away on holiday for the first two weeks in July. Any orders submitted during that time will be dealt with on my return.

Expression of Thanks- AEA Honorary Membership

Patrick Pronk

May I thank the Airborne Engineers Association for honouring me in this way. As the author of the "Shiny Ninth," it gave me great pleasure to meet some of the heroes from the Second World War. Thank you also for the hospitality that I received at Bristol. I thoroughly enjoyed the weekend.

Now that my project about the 9th Field Company has ended, I have become very interested in the history of the 1st Parachute Squadron from the beginning of 1941 until they disbanded. I would be delighted to speak with any former members of 1st Parachute Squadron to assist me in starting a new project about this unit. My home address is as follows: Doornstraat 27G, 258Y Scheveningen, Holland



Weston Super Mare - October 2001
Jack Hobbs, Paddy Padfield, Bob Jones & George Barrett



Kenya 1971
Derek Arnold, Steve Olive, Yossel Brain & John Leach

Falkland Islands Campaign 20th Anniversary Reunion

Saturday 8th June 2002

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Falkland Islands Campaign a reunion (stag) will be held at the Tower of London on the evening of Saturday 8th June 2002. The reunion is open to all Royal Engineer personnel who took part in the Campaign.

The format of the evening will be:

1900 Short service in the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula

OR Yeomen Warder Guided Tour

1930 - 2200 Reception in the New Armouries

(NB. Ceremony of the Keys 2130 - 2200: guests may only leave before or after this ceremony)

The cost of the evening will be £15. This includes a commemorative tankard (full of beer!) and a Gurkha curry. A cash bar will operate after the first drink.

Payment must be made in advance using the proforma below. Entry by ticket only.

Car parking available only for those with registered disability (prior warning required)

Dress Code: Jacket and tie: no jeans

Any funds left from ticket sales when expenses have been covered will be donated to charity

FALKLAND ISLANDS CAMPAIGN 20th ANNIVERSARY REUNION

Saturday 8th June 2002

I would like to attend the reunion at the Tower of London and would like to begin the evening with:

Chapel Service ? OR Yeoman Guided Tour ??

(Please indicate which)

I enclose a cheque for £15 made payable to: PRI 36 Engineer Regiment

Name:

Address:

.....

Telephone Number:

Please send to: Quartermaster (Falklands Campaign Reunion) 36 Engineer Regiment

Invicta Park

Maidstone Kent ME14 2NA

Waiting for Tomorrow

This poem was found in H. Over's house, situated on the edge of the perimeter at Oosterbeek, after the battle of Arnhem. He had taken wounded into his house, where he had given aid, food and entertained them on his violin until the withdrawal was ordered. The poet remains anonymous

Waiting for tomorrow, keeping tears at bay,
Working for the future and the happy day,
When faith will be rewarded and dreams at length come true,
The long, long journey ended the Promised Land in view.

Waiting for tomorrow with confidence and hope,
Struggling with my burden upon this last steep slope,
Fighting daily battles, my doubts and fears to quell,
Waiting and believing that all will soon be well.
