



THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



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The Airborne Engineer

December 2003, Issue No. 11



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Publication Deadline - April 2004 Edition

Members submitting material for publication in the April 2004 edition of the Journal, are advised that the closing date will be Wednesday 10th March. Articles received after this date will not be published until the August edition.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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Postal Vote Result

The result of the postal vote on the subject concerning the Airborne Engineers Association joining the Royal Engineers Association, is as follows:

Number of voting forms distributed : 1,031

Number of votes returned : 579

In favour of the motion for joining the Royal Engineers Association : 173

Number against joining the Royal Engineers Association : 406

The motion for joining the Royal Engineers Association is not carried

Brigadier Ian McGill CBE

Ex President

The result of the recent postal vote convincingly demonstrates that the membership does not want the Airborne Engineers Association to join the Royal Engineers Association.

I am saddened by the outcome as I have always regarded airborne engineers as an integral part of the Royal Engineers and am intensely proud of the Sappers' inestimable contribution to Airborne Forces, starting with John Rock as the original founder. I consider myself privileged (and very lucky) to have had the chance to serve with 9 Parachute Squadron for two exhilarating tours and it has been a great honour to be closely associated with the Squadron and other airborne engineers (past and present, serving and retired) in subsequent appointments with 36 Engineer Regiment, at Land Command, as Engineer-in-Chief and also while a member of this Association. I have long admired the breadth of expertise, commitment and professionalism that sappers from all regiments and squadrons so ably demonstrate on operations all over the world. Royal Engineers are truly ubiquitous, with our airborne engineers being a key component of the Corps and invariably playing a leading role.

The close bonds between the Corps and its serving airborne soldiers should ideally be reflected in the relationship between retired Royal Engineers and the Airborne Engineers Association; 'Once a Sapper, always a Sapper' is my view. The REA has an impressive record of providing benevolence to serving and retired Royal Engineers in need, of all types including airborne engineers, and I am confident that it will invariably continue to support all its members. The Corps, understandably, will be puzzled and disappointed by your choice. The resulting perception of the AEA may subtly damage the image of airborne engineers - including 9 Parachute Squadron - because it sends a message (however unintentional) that the AEA and its members do not wish to belong to the wider Corps family which includes the serving Corps and the REA.

When 44 Independent Parachute Brigade and 16 Independent Parachute Brigade were disbanded in the 1970s it was the Corps along with General John Cowtan, not the Parachute Regiment, who fought hardest to find a role for 131 Independent Parachute Squadron as commando engineers with 3 Commando Brigade - and it was the Corps who ensured that 9 Independent Parachute Squadron retained a credible parachute capability on which it could rebuild in the future. 9 Squadron now has the distinction of serving longer than any other parachute unit in a continuous airborne role. One man who perhaps did more than anyone to secure 9 Squadron's future was General Bill Jackson, a Gurkha Engineer, who persuaded the Army Board when he was Quartermaster General that the Army had to retain parachute engineers. Almost 30 years later it is again the Corps that has pressed for an airborne engineer regiment in support of 16 Airmobile Brigade and all of us can only be delighted in the re-forming of 23 Engineer Regiment in an airborne role, with a very flexible capability encompassing parachute, airmobile and field engineering.

After this vote, I do not believe that I should continue as your President because you need someone who has full confidence in the course you have chosen. It is with great regret that I have resigned from the Airborne Engineers Association - although I will forever remain an Airborne Engineer!

I thank the Association for selecting me as President last year - and the members for your friendship and humour, which has always been very special.

AIRBORNE & UBIQUE!

Bunny Brown

Association Chairman

Gentlemen, the above letter of resignation from our President, Brig Ian McGill CBE, is a sad occasion for our Association. Members of Committee tried desperately hard to dissuade him, but, as a staunch airborne warrior he stuck with his decision. He will be greatly missed by myself, the Committee, colleagues, friends and members. On the behalf of the entire membership, I thank him for all that he has done for us, and wish him well in the future, and sincerely hope that he will attend our future re-unions. Saturday evening ended on an even sadder note, when Brig McGill's wife Mary, tripped over the end of the dance floor and broke her shoulder in two places. On the behalf of you all, I extend sincere good wishes for Mary's full and speedy recovery.

I extend the Committee's thanks to Mike & Sue Holdsworth, who worked their socks off to provide a splendid weekend for our annual reunion at Coventry. The 2003 reunion must go down as one of the best so far! A vote of gratitude also to Smokey Gibson for being a general dogsbody again and a very big thank you to Mick Humphries for making the raffle and auction such a huge success. I believe the selection of photographs below bear proof of an enjoyable function.



Mike & Bridget Robertson



Scottie, Mick Humphries, Billy Morris & Mick Mathis



Kim Panton, Ronnie Drummond, Charlie Imrie, Stan Jones & Jim Farrier (sorry I missed capturing John Donaldson)



Joe Cook, Charlie Barker, Eric Blenkinsop, Sid Warrilow & Bill Perry



Brian Truran Jimmy Simpson



Paddy Boyce, Glyn Davies, Poncho O'Donovan, Bill Rudd & Pete Bates



Tom Thornton & Jack Hobbs



Dave Rance & Stuart (Willy) Wiltshire



Arthur Hendry, Jack Hobbs, Harry Padfield, Eric Booth, John Humphries, John Parker (standard bearer) & Charlie Papworth (sitting)



Bob Wardle, Dave Norminton & John Barrie



Terri Philipson, Jeannette Rutter & Jenny Davies



Billy Morris, Joanne, Maj Paul Fountaine & Scottie



Mick & Rosemary Blackmore with Glyn & Brenda Davies



Mary McGill & Lt Col Chris Tickell OBE



Paddy Denning with Brig Ian McGill CBE



Marion & 'Bing' Crosby with Alex (Froth) Beer

Rogues Gallery



Joe Macintosh, Syd Hoyle, Bof Harrop, Fennimore Fleck & Dave Grimbley - Wales 2003



John Smith with members of 131 Para Engr Regt (TA) and 7th from the left is the smiling face of Paddy Denning



Presentation of French Wings to members of 131 at Bricy -Olean 1975 - Mike Holdsworth 2nd from the right



Stan Pepper & colleagues do the 'Full Monty' Manama (Bahrain)



Bob Ferguson, George Gibson, Harry Huggins, Ken Beard, Syd Hoyle, Frank Brady, Scouse Barber & Paddy Patterson Handa Island 1967



Alfie McLean having difficulty with his reserve

Congratulations

Recipients of honours and awards recently announced; include the following airborne personnel:

- Lt Col C. Tickell (Commanding Officer 23 Engr Regt (Air Assault): OBE
 - Captain Matt Wilkinson : QCBS
 - Lt Toby Rider (former Troop Commander 9 Para Sqn RE) : MC
 - SSgt Mark Healey: (patrol commander of 12A) : MC (and additionally) on his recent promotion and subsequent posting to 9 Para Sqn RE
 - SSgt Russ Powers : MID
-

The Para Barrow

John 'Tommy' Tucker

It was in the late spring of 1959 that 2 troop departed Malplaquet Barracks heading for the Cairngorm mountains in Scotland. The aim of the exercise was to brush up on our navigational skills and at the same time conduct a feasibility trial on the latest piece of equipment, the Para Barrow. At this point I must apologise for not having a photograph of this item. No transport was provided and we had to make our own way up to Scotland by whatever means and using our ABI (Airborne Initiative).

I teamed up with Anson Westbrook, who came from Stonehaven on the East Coast of Scotland and who apparently had been to the campsite previously, which was located on the shores of Loch Morlich in Aviemore. From what I can recall, we departed on the Saturday and were instructed to be at the camp site by 1500 hours on the Sunday.



Anson and I made our way by hitch hiking around London and finally onto the A1 where we got a lift in a pickup truck as far as Scotch Corner. From there, a series of lifts finally deposited us in Stonehaven on the Saturday evening where we spent the night with Anson's parents. With time on our hands, Anson decided that the Sunday morning should be spent visiting relations in the area. The young son of a relation informed us that he was being bullied at school, so Anson, a martial arts in Judo and me as a boxer, gave him a few lessons. We explained that he should only put these lessons into practice as a last resort. We later heard from the boy's

father that the bullying had stopped!

The visit to Anson's relations made us late arriving in Aviemore, but we managed to make up time with a series of good lifts and arrived at the shores of Loch Morlich. Decision time; do we walk on the north side of the loch or the south side? Anson's decision, walk south - big mistake! The consequence? Carrying out guard duty that night.



The following day we are off up the mountains ascending to 4,000 ft in a series of stiff climbs and descending down screed slopes. Views from the top were absolutely fantastic and apart from passing a herd of red deer the day went without mishap. Back in camp we had a quick clean up and then off to a nearby public campsite for an enjoyable night out! I believe Joe Brine had use of the Sqn transport that night.

Joe Brine aboard the Sqn transport

After first parade the following morning we were introduced to the Para Barrow. It consisted (in basic terms) of a large wire basket mounted on two wheels and was (supposedly) designed to hold a full sections kit and capable of being manhandled over varying terrain. The Barrow was loaded up with the sections kit and we were now ready for its proving trail. We started to ascend one of the mountain slopes with lots of huffing, puffing, pulling, pushing and swearing. This piece of kit was one big problem - depressions and small rocks obstructed the wheels and we were being thrown about by the weight of the Barrow as it spun, tipped and capsized. Members of the section returned battered and bruised and in general agreement stated that the item of kit was dangerous.



Members of 2 troop (Tommy Tucker 4th from right)

I cannot remember whether we returned the Para Barrow to Aldershot or left it on the mountains as a navigational aid!

A Day at the Beach

Stuart Robson

I have never much liked riding in helicopters, the main reason being they are too noisy. But I can tell you that when you are a couple of thousand feet above the ground and that noise suddenly stops, you kinda miss it! It happened in Indonesia in 1994 while on the first of many legs to get back to the UK. As all of you are aware, a helicopter can land safely without an engine, but it does become earthbound at a fairly rapid rate. This being the



case the pilot did the right thing and headed for the sea. The passengers in the back meantime were taking up any slack in their seat belts and stowing any loose bags etc. that were on the deck. We were close to settling down in the sea when for some reason the pilot decided to go for the beach. I don't know if he was scared of sharks or just didn't want to get his feet wet, whatever the reason he used what little manoeuvrability he had to try for the beach. The pictures/picture shows the result.

This happened at around eight am and it was not until nine p.m. that a rescue helicopter arrived. The reason for this was the fact that the emergency beacon did not work! Meanwhile we had made the kilometre or so trek into the jungle to a village and proceeded to weed out any illegal alcohol that was available. We had quite a pleasant day!



It must be said that there were times that I cursed the RAF for what appeared to me as being over safety conscious, after the many bad experiences I have had in both fixed wing and helicopters since then, I take it all back!

Incidentally, the reason the engine failed, run out of gas!

Memories of Eric O'Callaghan

Tom Sherwood

Never having been a Stirling Moss and as Harold Padfield was not well enough to travel anyway I chickened out of chancing my driving shortcomings on the dreaded A34 /M3 and M27 and thus did not attend Eric O'Callaghan's funeral -one that perhaps I should have in view of the fact that he, together with George Harris (2ic) and David Docherty [SSM] introduced me into what being an Airborne Sapper in 1st Para Sqn 6 AB Div was all about. Those three, (ably supported by Troop Sgts of Harold Padfield's ilk) were charismatic leaders of men and instilled in one a feeling of total loyalty and pride in oneself and the Squadron.

I have many memories that illustrate that but the one I recall most clearly occurred towards the end of the mandate when Para Regt's and supporting arms were gone and we were seconded to the Guards Brigade and the only active service Engineers in Palestine. Also the Div. was of course shrinking to become 16 Para Bde this meant that the Regular Sappers in 9 Sqn [Hadera] and 147 AB Park Sqn (St. Jean's Camp at Nayharia) were drafted into (our) 1st Sqn. I had reached the dizzy heights of LCpl having survived a Cadre Course under the redoubtable Mo Lambert, but with the aforesaid amalgamation was not senior enough to hold on to that stripe!

I was on Sqn orders then to be told by Major O'Callaghan that regretfully I was a Sapper again! However, before this could occur, into camp 141 drove the Guards Bde Brigadier. Down the steps to our sunken Nissen Hut Sqn Office he came, we on orders brought to attention as the Brig swept into the Office of our OC. He had come to discuss the demolition of rail trucks loaded with explosives and Ammo which had been deliberately derailed by the Haganah the nucleus of today's Israeli Army. He - the Brigadier that is - wanted the lot blown up in one hit. This Eric O'Callaghan was strongly opposed to as he felt it could endanger the lives of his Sappers [unnecessarily]

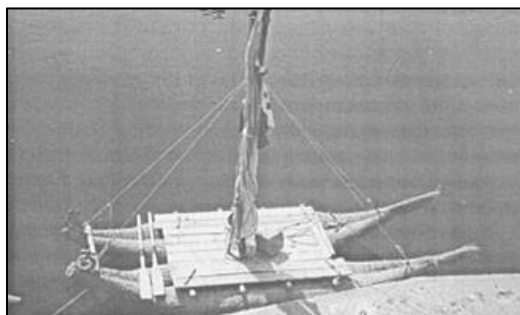
The discussion became quite heated [by the way, I could of course overhear all of this as I was directly outside the open window!] The master stroke came when our dear OC said, "I am afraid Brigadier that I have to remind you that I am in fact the Chief Engineer of Palestine and as such the disposal of the items we have been discussing is at my discretion alone." The Brig went off in what I supposed at the time to be a "Huff" but was assured many years later when talking about it to Eric O'Callaghan that they actually parted on good terms, the Brig having recognised the sense of the Engineer case.

The Kota Mama Severn Bores (KMSB)

Jim Masters

My brother, Gerry and I have just finished yet another river trip but the difference is that we make our own boats! Incidentally he was a Sapper during his National Service.

I am still incredibly busy tackling a variety of projects which include a recce in Ethiopia to look at the Beschillo and Blue Nile Rivers with a view of getting a team down them both late in 2004. The Blue Nile was the first big river I travelled down in the '60s. This next trip will include some caving around Mount Tulu Wallel but I will leave that to the other member of my team. His shape better suits grovelling in holes in the ground. My other big job, next year too, is to fill in as project officer for an archaeological dig on a massive site at Caral in Peru. So life is full of fun.



Having become totally enamoured with river travel by reed boat in South America and, now, here at home, it could not be long before my kid brother and I were at it again. This time we decided to tackle the mighty Severn in a twin hulled beauty built entirely of reeds gathered from the Somerset Levels. She was about 15ft in length with a wooden deck, be-masted, and fitted to take a small outboard engine to save us the embarrassment of hoisting the ragged and very inadequate sail. Incidentally my niece who reckons that Gerry

and I are a couple of "boring old tarts" gave the name.

We set out from the Bewdley Rowing Club somewhere in Worcestershire having camped overnight in an adjoining field. The first few hours were interesting as water levels were so low that walking and pushing 'KMSB' became the only way to make any progress.

Eventually we got into deeper water and began to travel briskly downstream often passing other river travellers with their flash cruisers and narrow boats. It was then that the funny sideways glances began. You could read their minds, "These guys are two cells short of a brain!" Of course being British they were terribly kind and smiled at the same time. Our first night stop was in someone's garden. A redoubtable lady who lived next door gave permission, obviously it kept us out of her place.

Next day we headed for Gloucester docks but stopped short in a paddock attached to a pub. There we were to meet a miniature horse that was people orientated. I made the drastic mistake of giving him a peppermint and from that moment on I could not get rid of him. He even tried to move into my tent and insisted on giving me an early call at 3 a.m. the following morning.

The final night was spent near Sharpness waiting to be released onto the outgoing tide as we were hoping to get to the mouth of the Avon. From there we were going upriver to Bristol for a grandstand finish. The weather was our main problem. Hot, hot, hot, except for the early hours out in the Estuary when we were beset with thick mist that made our, breakneck progress quite exciting. It actually took 15 hours to arrive at the entrance to the Cumberland Dock but that was all due to waiting for tide changes and lock timing.

It was fun, and we raised some money for medical charities, so will we do it again? How about the Caledonia Canal from Fort William to Inverness? The scenery would be great and what about the distilleries on the way?

Editor's Error- Suez Medal Address

Apologies gentlemen, I'm afraid I made an error in the address for your claim for the Suez Medal. It should have read, The Medal Record Office - not the Medical Record Office.

Veterans minister Ivor Caplin, announced on the 23 October 03 that the Canal Zone Medal would be issued from Monday 27/10/03. A media presentation was held at Wellington Barracks when the first 5 Medals were presented to veterans. [Press Release] 23/10/03 MOD Website.

D-Day Ferry Deal- 2004

D-Day veterans are to be given half-price fares on P&O Ferries to assist them to travel to Normandy in June 2004 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1944 landings. Free passports will also be available to veterans who want to attend the anniversary. The discount will apply to group passenger and coach fares on all Dover-Calais, Portsmouth-Le Havre and Portsmouth-Cherbourg services from 1st-15th June 2004. The offer does not apply to on-board accommodation on overnight crossings. Applications should be made on the appropriate veterans' association headed stationery to: Terry Weller, Coach & Contract Services Manager, P&O Ferries Ltd, Channel House, Channel View Road, Dover, Kent CT17 9TJ or by e-mail to: terry.weller@poferries.com Details are also available on www.POferries.com

Reunion 2003



“A Brown Envelope” Operation TELIC

Captain Paddy Denning

I am not sure how many members of the association realise that members of 131 Indep Cdo Sqn FIE (V) were compulsory mobilised for war fighting operations in Iraq. Many of the older members have served in 131 when it was the TA Para Sqn back in the mid-seventies and were part of 44 Indep Para Bde. and 9 Para Sqn was our regular sister Sqn.

What a white Christmas I had, enjoying skiing in France, not knowing that on my return there would be a ‘brown envelope,’ in the post at the beginning of January. No matter I thought, just another bill that requires payment. Oh no it wasn’t! It was my compulsory mobilization papers that I had received together with 73 other TA personnel serving with 131 Indep Cdo Sqn RE (V).

Great I thought (I really did) the first TA unit to be mobilized for Op TELIC and to be deployed on operations. We would be going with our regular sister Sqn 59 Indep Cdo Sqn RE based down at Chivenor in support of 3 Cdo Bde RM. 14 days, that was what we were given to sort out our lives, wives, families, the, car, the cat, the dog and where necessary, our wills.

All 131 personnel reported as a Sqn to the Reserves Training and Mobilization Centre at Chilwell, Nottingham on the 29 January 2003. Thankfully as a unit we were always held at a higher level of readiness than normal TA units. Having been poked, prodded, jabbed, looked into, NOK sorted and paid, we were on our way to Chivenor within 24 hours. This mobilization procedure for general TA troops normally takes up to 10 days.

We spent 6 days at Chivenor starting an intensive work up period that would continue when we moved out into theatre. In the first week of February we boarded a 747 for the flight to Kuwait.

Arrival at midnight at the Apod and stumbling around in the dark who should I literally bump into but Lt Col Colin Walker, (Ex SSM/QM 9 Para Sqn) who on seeing me wanted to know if I should not be at home? Anyway after a quick cup of tea of I went with the promise that we would meet again during the deployment, and we did.

Work up training at Camp Coyote and Camp Commando was at a fast and furious pace, like other units deployed, the necessary skills were being honed. Live firing, infantry skills, combat engineering, mine clearance using the POMINS explosive clearance system took the brunt of the training. Just as important though were navigation, driving skills, being able to maintain communications, EPW handling and NBC with great attention being paid to these particular lectures as the threat really concentrates the mind! The adrenaline that comes with war fighting operations, the threat of chemical attacks, scud and seersucker missile attack certainly keeps the senses honed and brought to the forefront what is best about the British soldier - the fear of dying!

By the end of February and the beginning of March thoughts were about what was going to happen and when. A tactical night move to TAA Viking just south of the Iraqi border concentrated the senses even more and indicated that something would happen soon. 59 Indep Cdo Sqn RE would be providing the close support to 40 and 42 Cdo RM, whose objectives were the AL Faw Peninsula, which included the oil infrastructure and the oil pipeline. 131 would be providing the general engineer support to 3 Cdo Bde RM; both units would form the Brigade Engineer Group (BEG) along with elements from within the corps of EOD, Armour, Amphibious and STRE. A troop from 131 would, if required, clear Red Beach of mines after landing from the Helcat heavy hovercraft of



The ‘fly forward’ of 8 bay Medium Girder Bridge to crossing Bud

the USMC’s 1 MEF, this would then allow the assault craft from 3 Cdo Bde RM to land troops if there was a ‘No Fly’ situation. The other troop from 131 would carry out the ‘fly forward’ of an 8 Bay DS MGB that might be required further north to establish a crossing. It was, and the bridge was flown by a Chinook helicopter to ‘X’ing Bud - a first for a live operation.



The author (centre) aboard the M3 rigs

On the first night of the war fighting it was a sad message that came over the CP net that a Sea Knight helicopter had crashed with the loss of both British and American personnel. As is the true professionalism of the British forces; the war had to go on and maintain its momentum. The first objectives on the Al Faw were secured intact within the first 48 hours, 40 Cdo and 42 Cdo

having routed what resistance there was. 3 Cdo Bde RM continued to secure its AOR on the Al Faw peninsula and carried out a Relief in Place with 15 MEU at Urn Qsar. Elements from 40 Cdo RM, clearing the last resistance that the US forces had difficulty in dislodging.



Allied armour on the outskirts of Basra

With the American forces moving north to Baghdad, 16 Air Asslt Bde, and 7 Armd Bde securing their objectives to the West and North. HQ 3 Cdo Bde RM together with other Bde elements and the BEG moved into the port area of Azu Buya between Um Qsar and Basra. War fighting operations were still

going on. A future 'X'ing was required so 'Anna' was opened using M3 rigs as a ferry - another operational first. This allowed Challenger tanks and other armour to cross and prevent Iraqi tanks and armour moving south on the Al Faw. A troop from 131 and force protection from 40 Cdo RM kept the approaches on both banks opened at this critically important crossing.

The CRE 1 (UK) Div, Col Ian James (Ex OC 9 Para Sqn) visited 59 and 131 on a couple of occasions. It was good to speak to him, as he had been young troop commander when I was SSM in 9 Para Sqn. He said there were 4 ex OC's, 5 ex SSM's and the present OC and SSM from 9 Para Sqn serving in the war fighting theatre. I do not think any other unit could have come up with the similar figures. Oh! if only it could have been possible to get a photograph of all those together, alas it was not to be.



With the US calling an end to the war fighting in mid-April, 131 carried out some 'hearts and minds' tasks for the local population. This included the refurbishment of a local primary school in Romala, assisting in EOD tasks, water supply and infrastructure works.

Romala school project

There were all sorts of rumours as to when 131 would get back to the UK. That came towards the end of May when we returned with 3 Cdo Bde RM. We had a few days to reorganise and then were discharged on the 6 June 2003 and given 5 weeks leave before returning to our civilian jobs.

After a nice holiday it was back to my civilian work. Not everyone knew that I was in the TA (they do now). It was something I had been able to keep under wraps all this time but not anymore! However, the response was very positive and I was soon sorting out safety on construction sites - which can be as dangerous as being in Iraq! Was it worth doing? "Yes it was." Would I do it again? "Yes I would." Am I now very wary about opening 'brown envelopes'? "Yes I am."

Operation Biting

Baz Henderson

It was As a sapper I was one of eight, privileged to be chosen to jump with SSM Reg Horton to commemorate OPERATION BITING (The Bruneval Raid). Reg was one of the original nine sappers in support of this operation. Ned Parker was another member of our chalk, but the rest of the names escape me.

With nine sappers and a company of the 2nd Bn Para Regt we took off in bad weather in 3 Blackburn Beverley's. We travelled in the boom and were due to make a floor aperture exit. Reg was No.1 in the stick.

On reaching the French coast about mid-morning, we were to make the decent, meet the local dignitaries, then go for a knees-up and a liquid lunch. This unfortunately did not happen. The weather was atrocious with 2ft of snow on the DZ and a blizzard blowing snow into the aircraft. After three unsuccessful circuits of the DZ in a vain search for a clear patch in the weather the DZ safety team finally signalled us off.

A decision was made that we could land at a French airbase near Rouen and we would be bussed back to Bruneval for the civic reception. This plan also failed. The roads were totally blocked by snowdrifts, which resulted in 100 plus paratroopers in the town of Rouen having a snowball fight with office girls taking their lunch break. The setting was good though; it was conducted in the shadow of the burial place of Richard the Lionheart!



Baz Henderson in the Brecon Beacons a 'few' years ago!

Tribute to the Royal Canadian Engineers

2039260 L/Sgt Mervyn Potter (at that time)
261 Airborne Park Sqn RE 1st Airborne Division

This is an account of my personal experience and escape from the Oosterbeek area at the battle of Arnhem. It is the result of a telephone call from de Heer Ernst Prak in the early part of August this year. Ernst is part of a group who collect army vehicles of WW2, which they lovingly restore to pristine condition, frequently hold rallies and drive around the countryside showing them off. He asked me if I would do them a special favour.

He explained that Rob von Zon and some friends from this group had erected a small monument on the bank of the Neder Rhine at the exact place where we made our escape crossing. They wanted me to unveil this monument sometime during our stay in Oosterbeek during our annual pilgrimage to Arnhem. Of course, it was an honour for me and I could not refuse.

It was agreed that the ceremony would take place as early as possible after the cemetery service on the Sunday and only a few people from this group and their friends would be attending. As it happened, word had spread around and there must have been over 200 there eventually. However, being a good "sapper," I rose to the occasion and made an impromptu speech, based upon the heroism and dedication to duty of the Canadian Engineers who brought their boats across the river from the south side and evacuated so many of our men. This had to cease soon after dawn on the 26th September as the remaining troops were surrounded and forced to surrender by the Germans closing in.

The evacuation started during the afternoon of Monday 25th September, when we were informed that we would be breaking out shortly after dusk. In the meantime, we were instructed to do as much damage as possible to vehicles and equipment, but not to make unnecessary noise in doing so, which would alert the Germans who were quite close.

At the appointed time we left our slit trenches, crossed the road and proceeded in the direction of the little church and the river, where we were informed that the Canadian sappers would assist us in the river crossing. The weather was poor. It was raining and the riverbank was very slippery and muddy. As instructed, I found a Canadian officer and told him that I was a sapper Sergeant and that I would assist in any way with the evacuation. He told me that I had already done enough and to **** off. Together with hundreds of others, I lay down waiting my turn for a boat. During this time a German mortar bomb exploded a few feet away killing men nearby and injuring others. Amazingly I was still untouched!! Eventually, I crossed, and with other stragglers proceeded along the road in the direction of Nijmegen. After about a kilometre, we came across a mobile soup kitchen and were each greeted with a mug of hot soup and told to wait our turn for transport to the military barracks in Nijmegen. We arrived at these barracks at about 1400 hrs, and were issued with large rum, a hot meal, and then slept for about 36 hours. We remained in Nijmegen for approximately 2 days then were transported to Louvain for a similar period, then finally to Brussels and back to England by air.

As a sapper sergeant myself, I had to admire the hard work and dedication to duty shown by those Canadian engineers and I never heard a grumble. They toiled long hard hours, very efficiently and were a credit to their Corps and Country.

"Gentlemen, I salute you."

Finally, you may be interested to know that the Weston-Super-Mare branch of the Parachute Regiment Association (of which I am President) held their annual Arnhem dinner on the Saturday a few days after we returned from our yearly Arnhem pilgrimage. I made a point of speaking about the Canadian Royal Engineers and their dedication to duty in getting so many of us safely across the river. I then proposed a toast to, "**The Canadian Royal Engineers.**" Everyone rose and drank a toast to those outstanding men.

Reunion 2003



Remembering Paddy Smythe (SNCO)

Geordie Ridgway

I enjoyed Fred Gray's article on security as practiced by our former employers. It's nice to know that I wasn't the only one to cause a lot of red faces and a huge laundry bill in the 'Big House.'

I also enjoyed 'The way I see it,' by the infamous X9. Strange, isn't it, that in the same edition that I aired my thoughts on the identity of X9, (NCO 1 Tp) there he is purporting to have been in 3 Tp. Coincidence Dave? He says Quote:- "When I was with 3 Tp I often drank with Louis and Biddy". He says he couldn't understand a word they said, so X9 is obviously not from north of the border. A few paragraphs later he alleged all of 3 Tp were Quote: - Bum kissers. Where does this man's loyalty lie? If he was in 3 Tp then all the other bum kissers must have been pale in comparison.

So I will stick with my original conclusion that he is an ex NCO 1 Tp. But who knows what dizzy heights he attained after I left the Sqn, given his particular talent. By the way X9, I do have a prime No. 1 suspect, but before I air my views or ring you up to confront you, I will await further confirmation. (I do hope I haven't offended/excited you (delete as necessary) by using the word ring, given your inclination toward bum licking). Knowing your addiction to taking the mickey out of everyone and especially 2 Tp (did you have any real mates in the Sqn, excluding the recipients of the aforementioned 3 Tp pastime) I reckon if I give you enough rope you will eventually hang yourself. Come to think of it, I can't think of anything more useful that 1 Tp could do with a piece of rope. So X9, here is another bit of trivia to be getting on with.

About 1967/68 period, Paddy Smythe took over as 2 Tp Sgt. Now Paddy was/is, a great guy, but he had many quirks as anyone who knew him will testify. Not least was his weird sense of humour? (sadism would be a better word). A few weeks after taking over, he came into the spider one Friday afternoon and announced, "I have organised a trip round Reading Brewery tomorrow." Silence and consternation! Tomorrow was Saturday, Saturday was the start of our weekend booze-up. But what the Hell, having once worked in the Scottish and Newcastle brewery (with Geordie Wilkinson) I knew that at the end of a conducted tour, it culminated in the cellar bar, where you could drink as much free beer as you could get down in the allotted time (usually about an hour). So a skinful of free booze at lunchtime would get us well started for the weekend session down the Aldershot NAAFI Club. So having agreed (not that we had any choice) Paddy said, "Right, parade 0900 hours in smocks and denims.

At the allotted time on Saturday morning Paddy arrives and says, "Where are your bergens"? What the hell is he on about? "What bergens Sarge?" "Didn't I tell you," he says, "I couldn't get any transport to take us to the brewery, so we might as well make an exercise of it. O.K. full packs and parade again in 10 minutes, we'll take a nice stroll to Reading (from Crookham) and when we get there we can all enjoy the hospitality of the brewery".

In true airborne spirit we started off on a forced march, determined to get to Reading as quickly as possible, rush around the brewery, get our freebies, and off to the NAAFI club. (The mental clocks were ticking). We arrived in Reading, sweating like pigs and with a raging thirst. We followed Paddy despite seeing signs pointing to the brewery. Shouts were going up, "Hey, Sarge, the brewery is that way." "Don't worry, this is a short cut," was the reply. Eventually we stopped outside the gates of the bloody GASWORKS. "Sorry lads" said Paddy, "The brewery cancelled at the last minute, but I managed to arrange us a tour of the gasworks instead." Christ, he even said this with a straight face!

So we all glumly followed him into the gasworks. We couldn't bunk off with all our kit, little money and the prospect of another twenty odd mile hike back to camp. We did have a conducted tour by some minion in a suit and hard-hat, but predictably it was boring as hell until we got to the top of a gasometer. I think even Paddy was bored stiff by then, and in his own inimitable fashion, decided to liven things up. We were on the top gangway of a gasometer, when Paddy leapt on to the top of the guardrail, (about 1-2" wide) 3 ft drop on the inside, 100ft drop on the outside. He then proceeded to do a tightrope act along the top of the rail. The poor guide was having hysterics, pleading with him to come down, but he didn't dare approach him in case he lost his balance. After

about 5 minutes cavorting on the rail, Paddy jumped down (on the inside, but I would not have put it past him to try his luck on the other side).

We all got back to ground level, where at least Paddy had arranged transport back to camp.

But I bet that Reading Gasworks never again accepted any conducted tours for 9 Para Sqn, not that I could ever imagine the Sqn asking for one unless there are any Paddy Smythe clones around. But I don't think so. He was a one off!

Further on Harry Dunstan

Charlie Willbourne

In reply to Harry (Brummie) Howell's request re Harry Dunstan, I remember Harry Dunstan very well. Although I was in 1 Troop, 3 Para Sqn and Harry Dunstan was a Cpl in 3 Troop we did socialise occasionally and I recall that his party pieces were "Drake's Drum" and "Glorious Devon" rendered in a fine baritone in addition to the "Raspberry".

Did You Know Spr Leslie T.C. Elliott

Charlie Willbourne

The sister of Leslie Elliott would be delighted to hear from any former colleague of her brother who served with 9 Para Sqn sometime in the '50s. Leslie died in 1966 and his sister is very keen to speak with any former comrade of his. Details are as follows:

Mrs. Valerie Jones 12, Oakfield Road, Cwmbran, Monmouthshire, NP44 3EX

Memories of Wyke Regis

Charlie Willbourne

We all have stories to tell of Wyke Regis many of which have already been published in our journal and I have two further tales to tell both of which occurred in 1943 when 3 Para Sqn was there training on 'Wet' Bailey. There was little or nothing at the bridging camp in those days (summer 1943 I think) and the first story concerns myself, Sam Peachey and Tommy Prince. We weren't keen on roughing it under canvas so we started sleeping in the Salvation Army hostel in Weymouth at fourpence a night (4d not 4p). We had been sleeping there for about a week and returning to Wyke before morning parade until one morning the guard commander was waiting for us and we were put under close arrest. The guard commander was not a 1 Troop NCO and refused to tell us what all the fuss was about. Very shortly we all appeared before the OC (Maj. JCA Roseveare) who wanted to know where we had been all night. Not being very inventive we all told the same story that we had seen girls home and had lost our way back. We were then marched out and returned to the guard tent and by now the truth had leaked out - the OC's staff car had been stolen the night before and a sailor had been knocked down by it in Weymouth.

Once we had the full SP we decided to come clean and were marched before the OC again and told him where we had been the previous night and also the 4 or 5 previous nights. The old chap at the Sally Ann Hostel confirmed that we were three of his regular customers and we were off the hook, but for the rest of the stay in Wyke Regis we were very definitely under canvas.

The second incident took place at the same venue sometime after the first. It was a sunny day and three or four of us were lying in a folding boat, having eaten our haversack lunch, when the boat started moving (some joker had removed the mooring rope). The tide had changed and we were heading towards Weymouth Bridge at some speed with nothing but a boat hook.

I can't remember who was in the boat altogether but I know that as we tore along between the bridge piers Ted Banbury was fending off with the boat hook.

The final indignity was being rescued by the Royal Navy.

Cpl Ken Leach's Diary

(Chief Clerk) 9 Field Company (Airborne)

Baz Henderson

Some years ago I loaned my copy of the book, 'The '9th' written by the late Tom Purves; to a friend, George Stubbs who had been at the Arnhem Bridge in Johnny Frost's Battalion. After reading the book, George mentioned that he had known Ken Leach (featured in the Arnhem chapter, page 5) explaining that they both came from Bridlington, both had jumped into Arnhem and both had been taken POW. However, they did not meet until their R&R leave after being released.

George informed me that Ken was a Scotsman who had been a reporter on the Bridlington Free Press before the war, and returned to continue working for the paper, but due to his POW experiences which had affected him greatly, decided to return to his home town in Scotland. After hearing this, I phoned Tom Purves to ask about the diary that Ken had kept in which he recorded the long march while a POW during the depth of winter. (As mentioned in Tom's book). Tom explained that he had taken extracts from Ken's diary, but had returned it to Ken's daughter (Ken having passed to a higher fellowship by this time).

Unfortunately, Tom Purves, on completion of his book, wiped his computer records and with it the contact address of Ken's daughter.

The diary, or a copy of it would be a great addition to our Airborne Engineers archives.

If any of the contributors to Tom's book can throw any light on the whereabouts of this diary or of Ken's daughters location, would they please contact our Archivist Member Fred Gray (Tel: 01252 668339)

East Yorkshire County Council Responds

Baz Henderson



With the high rate of attacks on women in secluded car parks especially during the evening hours the Bridlington Council has established a 'Women Only' car park. The car park attendants and security staff are exclusively female so that a very safe environment is created for the ladies. This photograph was taken four hours after the car park officially opened!

Frau Muller's Cat

Bob Jones & Tom Carpenter

Two ex-Kriegies, Bob Jones (1st Para Sqn) and Tom Carpenter (9 Field Coy AB) were both captured at Arnhem, Holland in September 1944. Tom was taken to Stalag XIB Fallingbostenel via a hospital at Kassel, while Bob was sent to Stalag IVB Muhlberg and then moved quickly out to an Arbeit Kommando unit IVD Merseberg.

Some one hundred men were housed in the concert hall at the rear of a beer parlour in the village of Meuscham on the river Saale very close to Meerseberg, to make up working parties at the local chemical works. Bob was with a team working at some surface mines preparing them as air raid bunkers for the use of the local civilians as the allied air assault was stepped up.

Bob has often related the story of Frau Muller and her cat, which was very plump and was always draped around her neck. This lady was responsible for the cooking and supply of the meagre rations for the prisoners and also the guards. Many a man's eyes followed her movements, each very hungry that fancied her bit of 'Pussy.' Eventually the cat disappeared and when its head and skin turned up, Frau Muller demanded to know the identity of the vile perpetrators that had eaten her cat. As a consequence, she refused to feed the prisoners until the culprits confessed their sins. So to survive, the men had to scavenge in the fields for eleven days. Bob still doesn't know how the cat got cooked on the small heating stoves that were available and how did they mask the smell of cooking? But the burning question remains, "Who did eat the cat?"

To sum up this story Bob and Tom decided to join a coach tour, which would be visiting such places as Arnhem, Leipzig, Colditz Castle, Dresden and Berlin, (but opted out of the Berlin visit).

We had earlier been talking to our friendly bar man who volunteered his services to drive us in search of Bob's last base before the enforced long march towards the west. Herr Stefen Richter, who is studying law at Leipzig University picked us up from our hotel at noon and headed towards the city of Merseberg. Bob could not remember the name of the village we were heading for, but his description of the landscape he remembered was pointing us in the right direction into a cobblestone village called Meuslham on the river Saale. When we entered the village we came upon a nicely appointed cafe restaurant which Bob said could be our destination. It looked like the place he remembered. If not, at least, we could get a cold beer and information. On talking to the hostess of the cafe, she indicated a house of a family who had lived there during the war. On our arrival at this house we were invited immediately into the rear garden and presented with a large iced beer. Bob then inquired if anyone knew of a Frau Muller who had lived there during the war and the lady replied, "Yes, she was the lady who always walked around with a stuffed cat around her neck."

The lady relating this story was seven years of age in 1945. She then gave us a conducted tour of the village pointing out the bunkers, which are now sealed, and also the cemetery, which contains the graves of prisoners, killed in the heavy bombing raids. She also knew of the family who Bob had dug out of the Luft bunker who were all killed.

The visit over, we said our farewells and thanks to the lady, Gertrande Kopka (nee Pohle), and the village of Meuscham, our guide told us that this lady was compiling a history of events of 58 years ago.

Sadly the story cannot be concluded until we find the culprits who enjoyed the little bit of 'Pussy.'

Our thanks to Herr Richter and Gertrande Kopka (nee Pohle).

Somebody must recognise this airborne soldier



Scobie Davis & Colin Bond
(don't get too sunburnt Scobie, we know where you are!)



Who's this?

23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault)

23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) was implemented in September 2002 and officially formed on 7 January 2003 to provide engineer support to 16 Air Assault Brigade. The Regiment is born from the old 5 Airborne Brigade and 24 Airmobile Brigade, as part of SDR the need for an increased engineer support to the newly formed 16 Air Assault Brigade.

The Regiment's sub units are currently dispersed around the UK, but will collocate in Woodbridge (Essex) once a new barracks has been completed in 2006. The sub-units are:

- 12 (Nova Scotia) Headquarters Squadron (Air Assault) - Waterbeach
- 9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers – Aldershot
- 51 Field Squadron (Air Assault) - Ripon
- 61 Field Support Squadron (Air Assault) - Maidstone
- 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) Workshop, REME- Waterbeach

The Airborne capability is being increased with the conversion of 51 Field Squadron (Air Assault) to the parachute role to complement the capability already provided by 9 Parachute Squadron, and a Reconnaissance Troop has been developed to operate alongside the Pathfinder Platoon and other advance force elements of the Brigade.

16 Brigade is the UK's air manoeuvre formation; it is a high readiness, light brigade that is capable of operating in support of ARRC, either 1 or 3 Divisions, or in the multinational context. It has recently been heavily involved in operations in Sierra Leone, Macedonia, Afghanistan and most recently Iraq. It continues to exercise and develop the role of air assault operations and 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) will be exceptionally busy providing the engineer capability required for the unique challenges set by the air assault environment.

Within weeks of forming, the Regiment deployed on Op TELIC to the Middle East and provided engineer support to 16 Air Assault Brigade during the liberation of Iraq and subsequent operations in Maysan province to the north of Basra. In addition to the Middle East, in the last three years, squadrons from the Regiment have seen operational service in Northern Ireland, FYROM, Kosovo and Afghanistan, often deploying from the UK at very short notice.

The two Close Support Squadrons, 9 Parachute Squadron and 51 Field Squadron (Air Assault), are dedicated to providing engineer support to the Airborne and Aviation Task Forces. Much of their equipment is lightweight and tailored to the air assault role, allowing them to enhance the Brigade's mobility, block an enemy with counter mobility obstacles and improve the survivability of our own forces. A lot of new equipment has been brought into service in recent years with the introduction of new lightweight explosive systems, man-portable minefield breaching equipment, air portable plant machinery and a new light bridging system is expected in service in the next few months.

12 (Nova Scotia) Headquarters Squadron (Air Assault) and 61 Field Support Squadron (Air Assault) both support the Close Support Squadrons and provide additional engineer specialist capabilities in the form of engineer divers, design specialists, portable workshops and additional plant.

23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault), the newest addition to the Brigade's Order of Battle, will continue to develop the air assault engineer capability within the Brigade and provide the essential support required. As 16 Air Assault continue to evolve and bring on line the Apache helicopter, 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault), the newest edition to the Brigade's Order of Battle will ensure it is ready to provide the essential engineer support.

On Parade with 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault)

Tom Ormiston

The Formation Parade for 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) in its new role as support to 16 Air Assault Brigade was held at Waterbeach Barracks on Thursday the 31st of July 2003. The AEA was represented by Major Dick Brown and his wife Mary, Gerry Hicks, Dave Lincoln, Ralph Pedder, Bob Wardle and me. We were made very welcome by the WO1 (RSM) Ian Smith together with the other guests who were mainly family and friends of the Regiment.

It was a standard format for the parade with the minimum of formality. It was a strange to see a full Royal Engineer Regiment on parade all wearing "OUR" Berets. Maj. Gen. Wall, CBE, made the point during his address of how important their new headdress was and how much hard work had gone into earning pride and respect for the Red Beret and that they have a responsibility to live up to.

At this point Maj. Gen. Wall CBE informed us that there would be a fly pass by two Jaguar aircraft of Crab Air (sorry I meant to say The Royal Air Force). The aircraft would approach from the left and travel to the right along the line of the parade. So we all carried out a smart left incline and with cameras at the ready holding breaths in the interest of good shot we were all set. One aircraft came from the right flew down the line to the left, banked to the right and came back over the centre of the parade, banked to the left and found his wingman who was loitering there, he probably wasn't qualified to fly over the public! Following the parade there was a complimentary tented bar and superb buffet laid out on the square, which gave us a chance to meet and talk to the Sappers, (I will talk about my impressions another time).

Dave Lincoln had very kindly brought along an AEA Shield which was presented to WO1 (RSM) Ian Smith with the hope that it would not be too long before he had his own WO's and Sgt's Mess in which to hang it.

On behalf of the AEA contingent, it was without doubt a very successful day for the new regiment and gave us the opportunity to meet and talk to its members.

We were made very welcome by all concerned and we wish them good fortune for the future.

Arnhem- 59th Commemoration



Harry Faulkner Brown MC

A Hexham man stepped out of his quiet, and seemingly anonymous, retirement in September to lead the annual commemoration of the Battle of Arnhem. Fifty-nine years ago, operation Market Garden was launched during the closing months of the Second World War as the Allies attempted to lay a carpet of airborne troops across Holland. The aim was to provide a path for the Allied army into Germany, which would, hopefully, enable them to shorten the war by many months. But even before the 1st British Airborne Division took to the skies - their mission to take the bridge at Arnhem senior officers were warning of fatal flaws in the plan. Ultimately, their fears proved correct and, of the 10,000 men dropped or landed by glider on the outskirts of the occupied town, three-quarters were killed, wounded or listed as missing in action. Lieutenant General "Boy" Browning, commander of the British Airborne Corps realised the danger inherent in the plan, which would stretch resources to breaking point.

He is famed for telling his officers, "We can hold the Arnhem Bridge for four days, but I think we might be going a bridge too far."



Harry congratulates some of the veterans who did a tandem jump onto Ginkel Heath

Among the members of the 4th Parachute Brigade dropped in Oosterbeek, a suburb of Arnhem was 24-year-old sapper Harry Faulkner Brown. Holding the rank of captain at that time, he went on to distinguish himself in battle, win the Military Cross, and later gain promotion to major.

As one of the most senior of the surviving veterans, he returned to Arnhem to lead the services in remembrance of his fallen brothers-in-arms. Now aged 83, he described himself as honoured to have been asked. "The number of veterans who attend is falling each year, inevitably, and last year there were about 200 there," said Harry, "But there must have been 2,000 Dutch people."



Harry has just laid a wreath of poppies at the Airborne Memorial (a shattered column from a civic building destroyed in the battle)

This year, Harry Faulkner-Brown led the ceremonies of wreath laying at the Airborne Monument in Arnhem, at the King Willem III Barracks in Apeldoorn, at the Polish Monument in Driel, and in Oosterbeek, site of much of the action during the battle. He also attended the burial of ashes at Oosterbeek Cemetery, watched the 4th Parachute (V) Battalion undertake a mass drop onto the heath in the suburb of Ginkel, where he and his comrades were originally dropped, and attended a service of communion at the Old Church in Oosterbeek.

Describing the two most moving moments of the weekend, he said, "Every year, on the anniversary of the battle, the veterans go to the end of the bridge at Arnhem and have a ceremony. Then there's the 'Silent March' from the bridge to city hall. The extraordinary thing is that on every grave in the Oosterbeek Cemetery a bunch of flowers is laid by a school child, and that's been going on for 59 years. There are 1,756 graves in the cemetery, all British and Poles.

A particularly poignant duty for Mr. Faulkner-Brown was to lay flowers at the Stone of Friendship in Oosterbeek, a monument paid for by Allied veterans and erected on the 50th anniversary of the battle. The inscription reads, "To the people of Gelderland. 50 years ago British and Polish Airborne soldiers fought here against overwhelming odds to open the way into Germany and bring the war to an early end. Instead we brought death and destruction for which you have never blamed us. "This stone marks our admiration for your great courage remembering the women who tended our wounded. In the long winter that followed your families risked death by hiding Allied soldiers and airmen while members of the Resistance helped many to safety. You took us into your homes as fugitives and friends we took you forever in our hearts. This strong bond will continue long after we are all gone"

Harry remembers the courage of the people of Arnhem, "We went in there and landed in gardens, and knocked their windows out to use their houses as defensive posts. The Germans then bombarded us with tanks and heavy artillery and decimated Oosterbeek and the rest of Arnhem. We didn't liberate them, because our operation wasn't successful. We thought there would be some resentment about it, but they have been the absolute opposite. They have always been very warm and welcoming. Some of the veterans go every single year and are absolutely devoted to the Dutch families, who look after them. Very strong and warm friendships have grown over the years.

Having distinguished himself in military service, Harry Faulkner-Brown went on to do the same again in his career after the war, both at home and abroad. Specialising in sports buildings and libraries, he founded the largest practice of architects in the north-east, Faulkner-Brown, Hendy, Watkinson, Stonor Architects, based in Newcastle, and he was awarded a Bronze Medal by the Royal Institute of British Architects for his design for Jesmond Library. In recognition of his services to the profession, he was made an OBE in 1982 and awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Civil Law by Newcastle University. Further afield, he was awarded a knighthood by Iceland, conferring on him the pleasing title of Knight of the Icelandic Order of Falcon, after he acted as consultant to its national and university library for 25 years. And he was a member of the panel of judges for what must stand as one of the most prestigious architectural projects of the last century, the rebuilding of the ancient library of Alexandria.

16 Para Bde Adventure Training Hut- Glencoe

Baz Henderson

Anyone who has stayed in the Glencoe adventure training hut may like to know a little of its history.

The hut started life in WW2 and was until the late 1950's used as office accommodation at a naval establishment near Gosport in an old fort built as defence against Napoleon.

In the late 50's a section from 2 Troop, under the watchful eye of Sgt. Ifor (Taff) Anthony (later Lt Col) were dispatched to dismantle the hut. Although it was a single building, it was built on the same design as the leg of a 'spider.' For those not familiar with a spider, this was a wood framed six-legged barrack block. Examples of which can be found in Deverell TA barracks at Ripon.

It was found that all frames wall, roof and floor panels had been prefabricated; and once a single bay had been dismantled to establish the construction method, the rest came down quite rapidly. The Squadron Scammell and low loader transported the components back to Aldershot, but it was some time before the troop was dispatched to rebuild it on its present site just along the back road from Glencoe - not far from the site on the infamous massacre.

Greetings from Wales

Harry Barnsley

Being a Welshman has its disadvantages because the AEA is very thin on the ground down here, in fact I don't know of any branch in Wales - so I became a member of the Neath branch of the PRA, and murder often crosses my mind when we are referred to as "that shower." But one day I will take a General Wade with me and send them all to hell!

Few members will know me from Adam, but I served in 3 Para Sqn with old Rosy, Bob Sullivan, Sgt. Docherty, Peachy and Lt Beaumont; to name but a few of the well-known ones. I still have happy memories of Bulford camp and the little shopping centre known as Tintown.

I really would like to thank the committee for all the time and effort they put in to making the AEA the success that it is - maybe it would be a good thing to amalgamate with the REA, after all we were all ROYAL ENGINEERS, we simply employed different means of getting there.

I enclose my contribution for the next two years subscription, but at the age of 88 I am afraid to push my luck any further because I already have one foot in the Jordan and this water is bloody cold!

May your success be boundless and when men meet for a guzzle they will hold their 'goblets' to the sky and cry in a loud voice, "ALL HAIL TO THE AEA."

23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) Reformation Parade

23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) has celebrated its official reformation, with a formal parade in front of military dignitaries, family and friends at its Headquarters in Waterbeach, Cambridge.

23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault), whose operational role during Operation TELIC (Iraq) was featured in the August edition; was formed in January of this year to provide engineer support to 16 Air Assault Brigade.

Rehearsals had been taking place for the parade at Squadron level weeks before the day itself. A number of drill instructors from ATR Basingborne and RMAS, kindly donated their dulcet commands in order to get the Squadrons ready to parade in front of their family and friends. All three Squadrons: 12 (Nova Scotia) Headquarters Squadron (Air Assault) - Waterbeach, 9 Parachute Squadron - Aldershot, 51 Field Squadron (Air Assault) - Ripon, 61 Field Support Squadron (Air Assault) - Maidstone travelled to Waterbeach at the beginning of the week of the parade to practice as a Regiment and iron out any last minute problems.

On the day of the parade the Squadrons, marched on to the Airfield to the Royal Engineer Corps Band, marking a monumental moment in the Regiment's short history.

The Reviewing Officer Major General Peter Wall CBE, General Officer Commanding 1st United Kingdom Armoured Division arrived at the airfield to see the 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) contingent formed up awaiting his inspection. Major General Wall CBE already has a great affinity to the Regiment as he was previously a Troop Commander with 9 Parachute Squadron and then went on to become Officer Commanding. He most recently commanded 1st United Kingdom Division in Iraq.

His inspection of the troops culminated in a fly past by a Jaguar aircraft while he walked back to the dais and took the Salute as the troops marched past.

The Jaguar represents close links between the RAF and 16 Air Assault Brigade, since this type aircraft provides support to the Brigade during training and operations. The aircraft flew over twice adding a bit of excitement to the parade with spectators and guests craning their necks to get a better look.



Major General Wall CBE addressed the regiment, in his capacity Reviewing Officer. He spoke about the excellent job that the Regiment had done in Iraq highlighting the hard work that had been necessary by all ranks to allow the Regiment to form and deploy in such a short period of time. He also described the proud heritage of engineers operating in support or Air Assault/Airborne forces, which dates back to World War 2 and includes D-Day and Arnhem.

The parade ended with the Regimental Second in Command; Major Paul Stanley, asking for permission to march off the Regiment's contingent.

This was followed seconds later by what should have been a spectacular display by the Royal Engineer Freefall Parachute team, led by Captain Paul Moore Quarter Master 51 Field Squadron (Air Assault). Unfortunately, the cloud cover was too low for the team to jump safely. The team made up for this by flying in the Lynx helicopter at 50 ft across the airfield waving at crowd below, a perfect end to the parade.

The Commanding Officer 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) said about the parade: 'Although the Regiment has already deployed on operations, this is a very important day to us and to the Corps as a whole as we formally celebrate the reformation of an Engineer Regiment in a new, exciting and rapidly developing role.'

Sgt Healey's Patrol Report of Contact

23 March 2003 – Iraq

On 23rd March 2003 call sign 12A was tasked alongside a patrol from the Pathfinder Platoon, to exploit North of An Nasiriyah to Qalat Sikar Airfield to secure it for a helicopter insertion by 1 Para.

The patrols bid their farewells from the Brigade location and made our way West to An Nasiriyah. The route was busy with American units moving slowly towards their next objective, the town of Nasiriyah. As we got closer to the town we could see that the Americans were making slow progress in taking the town. The Americans held us until late afternoon, watching the attacks on the town by Cobra helicopters and the Artillery. Then we were told we could move forward to the first bridge in the town.

As we moved up through the town to the bridge it was like a scene from 'Hamburger Hill.' There were burning vehicles and buildings lining the route, along with hundreds of American soldiers everywhere. We reached the bridge and at the time witnessed two Cobra helicopters attacking a building on the main road across the bridge. This had already been nicknamed 'sniper alley.' The snipers however seemed to prefer the use of RPG's and to good effect, as two American APC's (armoured personnel carriers) were testimony to this as they lay smouldering in the street, all occupants dead.

It was then we all realised that things were quite serious.



WMIK vehicle

As darkness fell we decided to push forward across the bridge and down 'sniper alley' with no lights and using NVG's, (night vision goggles) something we knew the Iraqis didn't have. We moved off and as we passed the smouldering wreck of one of the Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC's), a large piece of shrapnel from the debris punctured our Weapons Mounted Installation Kit (WMIK) vehicle. Within a couple of minutes the tyre was flat but there

was no way we could stop. Spr MacLaren drove the vehicle on unperturbed until we finally reached the next bridge, which was approximately 3-4km away. Thankfully when we reached the bridge there were a number of American Abraham tanks stopped on it. We positioned ourselves beside one of them and changed the tyre.

Eventually we crossed the second bridge and arrived at RCT 5 LOE where we established comms with the Brigade by use of the tac sat and gave them a Situation Report (sitrep). We then moved off through the American's forward positions and headed north towards our objective.

The Iraqi's had destroyed all street lighting apart from in front of any of their positions. This was not a problem though as we still had the use of NVG's. It was hard work for the drivers when we encountered numerous civilian vehicles that were obviously using their headlights, which would temporarily blind the drivers. Needless to say they drove on regardless.

About half an hour into the journey, came our first small contact, this was in the form of a Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) being fired over our heads. The next came as we approached a street lit area, again from the right but this time a couple of bursts of automatic fire. Again, no rounds returned as we just kept up our speed and continued north.

Approximately 40km into the journey our rear vehicle sped up alongside us and informed us, we were being

followed by a number of civilian vehicles. The occupants were possibly armed and presumably from the areas of our recent contacts. Once the message was passed all of the vehicles broke track off the road and lined up beside each other facing the road the road. Approximately 5 minutes later we witnessed 8-12 civilian vehicles pass us heading north. These were a mixture of large cars and 4x4's. In the back of at least one of them we saw a 12.7mm Dushka clearly visible. The remainder of the cars were laden with armed men. As soon as they passed we crossed the road and into an LUP (laying up point) which had more cover from the road. From there we again established comms and informed the Brigade that the patrol had been compromised.

At this point it was clear that we would have to extract ourselves, as there were no friendly assets available at the time. One of the initial ideas by the Pathfinder Officer within the patrol was to destroy the vehicles using explosives, then tab the 40km or so, cross-country to our objective, the airfield. However, the Pathfinder SNCO and myself were against the idea as it meant, losing all of our mobility and also the large amount of firepower, which was available from the WMIK's. The decision was made, we would get back on the road, and using speed, aggression, firepower and hopefully an element of surprise and we would drive south back down the road. As we left the Laying Up Point (LUP) there was a definite air of apprehension with everyone in the patrol. We knew that the Iraqi's were now probably 'stood to' as they had engaged us on the move north. We got back on the road, this time lights on and no NVG's and started to move south.

It wasn't long before we were approaching the first lit area, and sure enough as we approached it the place erupted on a hail of automatic fire and RPG rockets in our direction.

Four of the rockets went straight over the top of our WMIK and we later found out from the rear vehicle that one had gone under our vehicle. It was this initial contact that I was hit by a round, which threw me off the General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG). The round however, had gone through my webbing into my tarns and against my 9mm pistol. Once I realised that there was no pain I re-engaged the enemy. The gunner LCpl Edin, was initially experiencing a lot of stoppages on the .50 Browning, but because of his slick drills he soon had the gun re-firing and ripping apart the enemy positions. We eventually extracted ourselves from this ambush and pushed on down the road.

About 5-10 minutes later we found ourselves in yet another ambush, this time the Iraqi's reversed a pickup truck across the road to try and block it. The first WMIK engaged the vehicle stopping it, and enabling them to get past. My vehicle closely followed them, as we approached it both the GPMG and the .50 Cal Browning opened up ripping the vehicle apart.

In total we were ambushed five times with the fourth ambush producing the most concentrated amount of fire from small arms, RPG's and at one point what we believed to be an anti-aircraft gun. Again all three vehicles were able to fight their way through. Finally just before we arrived at the American lines, an Iraqi bunker engaged us. However, unfortunately for them, the patrol was now by now running on pure adrenaline and was ready for them, destroying them with a mixture of a heavy weight of fire and grenades.

Finally we reached the forward American line where we stopped, did a casualty check and found that thankfully and miraculously there were none. The vehicles were also checked and found to have taken a few rounds but otherwise okay. The Americans that met us were overjoyed that we were okay, having lost sixteen men out of their Company that day. We were lucky!

Return to Soqotra

John (Tommo) Thompson

A Portuguese shipwreck carrying gold and silver species from the Sultan of Oman to the Sultan of Turkey sank on Soqotra. A passenger cargo ship on its way from Yokohama to Liverpool, carrying a precious cargo of Chinese porcelain and copper ingots for the European market. Two Portuguese shipwrecks with 200,000 ducats in silver and an idol weighing sixty pounds encrusted in diamonds, pearls, emeralds, sank on islands just off Soqotra. All drawing me back to the island of the past.



On the 6th April 2001 after nearly 35 years, I stepped foot onto the island of Soqotra. As we flew into the airfield I got my first glimpse of the island from the porthole and let out an almighty yell! Everyone on board knew of my story and that I was returning to Soqotra after a very long period absence. As the port-door of the aircraft opened, the heat hit me smack in the face. It was around 38 degrees centigrade. Arriving at the bottom of the stairway I looked around me and could not recognise any of the surrounding area. Thirty-five years ago we had landed by Royal Air Force Beverley onto a solid but dusty airstrip. I later found out that

when the British vacated the island the Russians moved in and finding the approach to the old airstrip not to their liking had moved the airfield, which is still in the process of being built. The previous approach had been between two mountains and the Russians had lost one aircraft it having been unable to negotiate the steep turn and crashed into the mountainside.

As the rest of the passengers alighted from the aircraft, the two hundred baggage handlers rushed forward to assist. Besides food and supplies, the aircraft also bring in the supplies of qat, a leafy plant which they all chew which apparently gives them a high! Life could not go on in the Yemen without qat. I think it was more the qat than the other supplies the baggage handlers were worrying about.

We were met at the airport by our Italian dive guide, Fernando. He had been on the island for a period of nine months, setting up tourist trips for his company based in Sana'a, capital of the Yemen.

Driving into Hadibo I noticed many vehicles in the capital. Thirty-five years ago the only form of transport was either by donkey or camel. On arrival at our ½ a star hotel, (the Summerland) we dropped our baggage off and went for a cool drink. Fernando informed us that transport would be taking us to the beach for a swim. We had met a crowd of young people from Kenya on the aircraft, three guys and two young ladies who had also come for the diving and they joined us for a swim.

The following day we drove for about an hour to a place called Dyhammery, where we used a small fishing-boat to make our first dive and pre-test the equipment. I had trouble getting my buoyancy, as I had not adjusted my weight for diving in swimming trunks and tee shirt after just completing a Rescue Divers course in a lake near the M25. A big change from wearing a dry suit and woolly bear. I still have a commercial diver's mentality, put on lots of lead and get to the bottom as quick as possible! The dive for me was more of a test, as the previous year I had had a horrendous allergy due to arthritic drugs, which had left me quite devastated. The dive went off very well. There were lots of beautifully coloured small fishes and a quite large grouper and swordfish. It was great to be back in the sea again.

Apparently Fernando had thought it was about thirty meters deep and had instructed the divers accordingly, but as they descended, Dave (Rubberdick) Ruddock, looked at his gauge; it was forty-five meters and still going down. Richard (one of the Kenyan divers) was kicking and flailing his arms and legs, obviously narked (nitrogen narcosis) up to the eyeballs! Fernando got him and started to take him up slowly. Rubberdick who is vastly experienced, carried down keeping his eye on the depth and hit bottom at sixty-seven meters.

Rubberdick has similar professional background as me, he carried out his basic training at the Royal Engineers Diving School at Marchwood, (in fact, I was his instructor). Following my example, he then went on to do his advanced and supervisor's course. I left the army after twelve years' service, but Rubberdick stayed in and became an instructor at the diving school, and later went on to become the Army's Diving Safety Officer. He completed his twenty-two years' service but felt he was now too long in the tooth for the offshore commercial diving world. He took on various diving jobs worldwide and finally ended up working for a company called Divcon in Kenya. I would say that Dave is probably one of the best-bush divers in the world. One of his jobs was the recovery of 300 bodies from a ferry that sunk on Lake Victoria in Africa. He was awarded medals for his bravery from some of Africa's presidents (more medals than he got in 22 years' service!)

Because of his vast experience in remote areas I chose Dave to be in my team. The other member of my team was Willibauld Forstner an Austrian diver. From 1976 I had worked with Willy in the Gulf. In my opinion he is one of the best offshore diving superintendents in the world. He is highly professional with a great sense of humour. He had also worked on a major wreck recovery in the Caribbean for two years. Unfortunately Willy got stuck in Dubai two days before we left, leaving me in a state of panic. I rang a number of divers, including my standby diver, but all had commitments. So I decided to carry out the reconnaissance with just the tour guide, Rubberdick, and myself.

We departed Hadibo the following day en route to an area called Ras Momi. After a three and a half hour drive, we arrived at a place called Fakir Springs which featured beautiful fresh water springs tumbling down the mountainside. We stopped for a break and as the temperature was in the 40's decided to have a swim. From there it was on to Ras Momi where we got the diving gear ready and waited for the local fisherman's boat to arrive. The boat was a sleek craft with a 15 hp outboard. We set off to dive on the reef in the location of Ras Momi. The first dive was terrific. There is not much coral around Soqotra but many outcrops of rocks in and around the reef, with bits of soft coral.

On the second dive I asked Fernando if we could move closer to the main reef, more in accordance with my research. This was where the SS Oder, a German passenger cargo vessel which sank in 1887 was located. We moved in closer and four of us went over the side. That was when I discovered the dangers and complexity of diving on this reef. The two on the other side of the boat had no problem, but Chris, a Kenyan and I zoomed off, just like being in an express train. Not much you can do but let it take you.

Sue was acting as dive-master and came after us very fast, passing me in the process and picked up Chris. Chris was her boyfriend what could one say? When we arrived back at the first location, Lengie Crotzie another Kenyan had found the wreck. The Oder had been built at Cairds shipyard in Scotland for the Norddeutscher Lloyd line, a German marine company who had the mail contract on behalf of the Imperial German Postal Service/Agency. She had done many immigration runs to New York and in 1897 was on her way back from a trip to China and Japan when she ran onto the reef at Soqotra in a terrible storm with the loss of many lives. When the storm finally subsided days later, the Soqotran's (who were renowned wreckers) tried to get onboard the now stranded Oder. To their dismay there was an enormous tiger prowling around the deck growling and acting very fierce. It was days before the Soqotrans finally set foot on to the Oder to find the skin of the tiger and a much emancipated body, it had died of starvation? They took what they could find but within days another storm blew up and took the Oder into deeper water. My thirty-five years' dream had not ended - but just begun.

I dived onto the wreck and was amazed at the change after thirty-five years. It was broken up beyond recognition. The following day we carried out two more dives on the Oder and for identification purposes looked at some small bits recovered. Chris had found a small brass plate, which looked as if it had a serial number on it. I thought this could be crucial to our search! Warily we headed back to Hadibo in our 4x4 arriving back at the Summerland Hotel. The following day Fernando said they were going to dive on a wreck on the South West of the island. I believe this was the MV Sunset, which had sunk with a cargo of steel plate and zinc anodes. Looking at this wreck, from the point of salvaging these materials, would cost a lot of money but there would be massive returns. I decided to stay in Hadibo to look at various things like the medical cover, what we would do in event of a major

emergency, the food and materials situation etc. So Dave went off to do the recce and on his return gave me his report and said that he had found zinc anodes scattered all over but no steel plate. Someone had got there before us!

The following day Dave set about fabricating the dive ladder and the towed search bar. I also bought lots of goodies as I had decided that we would go back to the reef in the Ras Momi area but this time instead of driving back and forth in the 4x4, we would camp at Fakir Springs which was twenty minutes from our dive site. The divers from Kenya had now departed so we set out for Ras Momi with two 4x4's carrying all our camping gear. On our arrival at Fakir Springs we set about building our campsite. This is where Dave excels, he had made a cooking stand in the fabrication workshop in Hadibo. We also dug into the cool flowing springs to make it deep enough to soak our bodies in on return from our diving trips. The following morning I awoke at 5-30 am to find the sky clear with a fading moon but the star still shining bright over my reef, was someone trying to tell me something?

Sayheed Our boat captain (as we called him) was a great character and was very genuinely concerned when any divers were down. Dave gave him a diving mask, which he treasured. His forefathers had been pearl divers, as well as fishermen, so it was not unusual to find Sayheed tapping you on the back when you were 10 meters down with a smile on his face. He arrived in his fishing boat at 6:30 just after our breakfast of tuna and nan bread. This time I set up my GPS system which I had calibrated back in the UK to a position of longitude and latitude onto the reef where I had determined the location of another wreck.

We set off following the positioning system. Sayheed and Ga his brother were amazed by the technology and we landed smack on location. I had decided we would carry out towed searches, so off we went. I remained in the boat whilst Fernando and Rubberdick were towed behind. We had only been gone a couple of minutes when they both dropped off. We had found another wreck. Fernando came inboard and I dived with Dave. It was an incredible sight. It looked as though the ship had been split down the middle just like a banana and you could look down the whole length of the keel. At the far end was an enormous propeller. From my research I had a feeling it was the MV Aden which sank on its way back to UK from the far-east with a cargo of Chinese porcelain. We carried on with the towed search using the GPS system to direct us. Again in a very short period Fernando and Dave dropped off. It was quite exhilarating. This time the ship was enormous but badly smashed up. We saw a six-foot shark and Dave tried to grab it by the tail! Completely mad! We spent the whole day taking pictures and checking on an anchor we had found (all being necessary for identification purposes). Following a meal around the campfire we settled down for the night and I thought, "What would tomorrow bring?"

The following day we towed to the end of the reef without success then started down the other side. Within a few minutes, they had dropped off the tow. I had insisted that one of them wear a buoy. It made it easier to locate them. We tied it to the wreck for easy access. Sometimes the current was running at about 3 knots and very difficult to get down. I think that area is probably one of the most dangerous in the world with its currents, eddies, and swells. It is the configuration of the reef and sometimes, offshore storms affect the sea conditions quite considerably. One day an enormous whirlpool appeared about 50 meters from where we were diving. It was another wreck; I began to feel that these were just the tip of the iceberg as in my research there is over twenty-nine ships gone missing in the area of Soqotra. This one in particular had an enormous engine block. I was taking down all these details for when I arrived back in UK I was going to write to the pertaining authorities: the Salvage Association and Lloyds register.

That evening lying on my sleeping bag I felt the wind start to get up. By two o'clock in the morning it was a raging gale. We stayed on location a further two days but I decided in the end to return to Hadibo. The sea conditions were far too dangerous to even contemplate making a dive. It was very hot and humid in Hadibo and I yearned to be back up country. I wished now that we had stayed out. I decided we should leave early the following morning, so we packed all the gear for the following day.

The next morning I awoke at five and decided we should go to prevent driving in the heat of the day. Within half

an hour we were on the road and in no time arriving at Fakir Springs. Amazingly with fifteen minutes of our arrival Sayheed turned up with his boat and an ever- present smiling face.

Soon we were heading for the reef through quite a large swell, the storm had abated but not the sea as yet. I used the GPS system but on arrival we were amazed that the buoy was still attached. Dave and I descended through a very bad swell and were being thrown around quite a lot. This wreck had been smashed up quite badly. We swam to the far end to find what I can only describe as the slimmest and largest prop I had ever seen. The amount of shoals of fish around this wreck was incredible. We finished the initial survey and ascended to find the seas dropping quite fast.

I decided we should search at the end of the reef, and within minutes, found another wreck: This one was enormous with a very large anchor and for this area not that badly smashed up. It had an enormous prop. If these propellers were phosphor bronze they would be worth around £15,000.00 to £25,000.00 each. We dived throughout the day taking note of the varying aspects.

We carried on surveying our huge wreck and just after midday I decide to call a halt. It was the 21st of April and we were flying out the following day. We had to have 24 hours out of the water before flying to prevent decompression sickness.

Later that day we struck camp, said our sorrowful good-byes to Sayheed and his young brother, Ga and headed for the airport.

On reflection, I had returned to the island after thirty-five years and found my wreck with the additional bonus of the other wrecks. I was already organising in my mind my next expedition, which I hope will be in November 2001 when the sea state is at its best and apparently the visibility is terrific. Also my reflections were about preservation and conservation of this unique place. Any work we carried out would be within the guidelines of the conservation bodies and great care taken with regard to any archaeological finds.

My plan next time was to spend a week back on the reef identifying the wrecks we found and to search for further wrecks. It is rumoured a Dhow, with a Rolls Royce on board sank in a small bay with a sandy bottom and not too deep. Are there any Rolls Royce fans out there?

That night and the following day were fairly hectic as we helped Fernando sort out the equipment and I spent the rest of the time writing up my report. On Monday we flew out of Soqotra, weary but contented after attaining my life long achievement.

As the plane pulled away from the island I was already making my plans for the next phase.

News from the Branches

Aldershot

Joe Stoddart

Since our last bulletin there has been quite a bit going on to keep us busy here in the branch.

After our AGM on 1 June the following day saw members at the funeral of Col Eric O'Callaghan MBE MC. The service was held at St. Marks Church in Lymington. Several of our members helped to form a guard of Honour and the Association Standard was carried by Chris Chambers.

Later in August our members were once again on Parade at the funeral of Brigadier "Fergie" Semple MBE MC. The service was officiated by the Reverend Sylvia Robert's, wife of Ken who is a member of our branch. Finest tributes were paid by both family and Military friends, it proved an eye opener for all who thought they knew him. Both of these stalwarts will be sadly missed.

On a brighter note, membership of the branch has increased , we have three new members who reside in various parts of the country:

Barry Ludlow	1955-57
Bert Flatters	1955-58
Jim O'Hagen	1955-57

They haven't a branch near where they live, so they have joined us to keep in touch. Yet another new member is SSM Al Pearson, the current SSM of 9 Para Sqn.

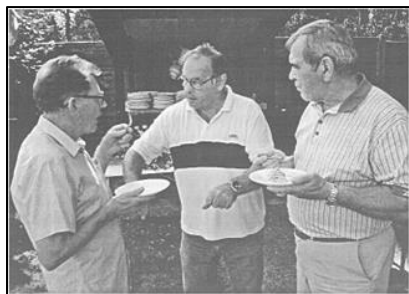
After being welcomed to the meeting by the members Al proceeded to give us an insight into future Squadron activities.



Charity Parachute Jump - A branch donation was made to a Sponsored Parachute jump which was carried out by the wives, partners and girlfriends of the Sqn members. Twenty-one ladies successfully jumped and the monies collected by sponsorship will be going to three worthy Charities: - The Army Benevolent Fund, BLESMA and the Breast Cancer Campaign. The total collected was £6,049 with still more pledged.

A triumph for the Squadron ladies. **Congratulations.**

August ended with the Branch BBQ, which went off excellently with 55 - 60 members and their partners present. The day lived up to expectations. Everyone contributed with drinks and raffle prizes; the latter being carried out by Wally Clift, who always seems to get the best out of everybody when selling tickets. A total of £104 was raised Plus £5 from photographs from the archives sold by Fred Gray. Tony Manley was congratulated on an excellent



BBQ. Both the quality and presentation was superb and cooked to perfection with the help of his very able assistant Dave Rutter.

Danny Exton, Joe Stoddart & Bob Ferguson get stuck in!

The tents and furniture were supplied and assembled by John and Glenda Smith, Ron and Daphne Day, assisted by Fred and Betty Gray who also provided the venue for the occasion.

The guests present thanked everyone concerned for all their hard work. A very memorable day.

Operation Market Garden 2004

(60th Anniversary) Our trip to Arnhem 17-20 September 2004 is being organised by our entertainment representative John Smith. The coach and accommodation have been booked and the outline planning published.

We extend best wishes for a speedy recovery to Sally Wilson and Reg Emberson, who suffered accidents during the summer months. Sally decided to dive head first down her garden steps resulting in a badly gashed leg, and Reg tried to do a 'wheelie' on his invalid carriage and suffered a broken arm and three broken ribs. The latest news is that they are both making steady progress to full recovery.

Our branch meetings are still held on Sundays bimonthly and we would welcome any visitors in the area to the John Rock Room, Rhine Barracks. Details of dates times etc. are available from the secretary Betty Gray or myself, our contact numbers and E-mail addresses are in the Membership Directory, copies of which are available from Bob Ferguson (price on application)

Birmingham

Nev Collins

The summer months of June and August have been full and varied for the Branch. We were invited to a ferret racing derby by the North Cotswold Hunt, a clay pigeon shoot followed by a very successful BBQ organised by the branch was arranged shortly after the ferret derby.

Roy Hicks, led the team in a SA80 small arms shoot which was organised by the local Fusilier unit.

An invitation to attend the International Polo Tournament at Royal Leamington Spa was received from the Midland Naval Officers Association. The event was much enjoyed by all of the branch members that attended.



As you can see our AEA chairman did a starring role at the branch BBQ doing a spot of burger bashing!

Our sunny season concluded with an invitation by Lord and Lady Areley Kings for a croquet afternoon at their Warwickshire home. This appears to be becoming an annual event on our entertainment's calendar.

The afternoon commenced with champagne cocktails, plus Pimms and brandy in abundance. Later we enjoyed high tea and much later, a superb evening supper of Cuban pan roasted pork (with all the trimmings).

On the welfare side, Tom Smith has had a warning shot across the bow, and is soon to go into hospital for medicine and duty! We extend our best wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

The branch were well represented at the funeral of Ron Smallman (ex 301 Sqn) and condolences were extended to his widow and family.

Chatham

Eric Blenkinsop

August

As our last branch news ended in Normandy, this one kicks off a little nearer home in Sussex not quite “by the sea” but deep in the heart of that lovely county. This is our annual s sojourn to Orchard Cottage courtesy of Robert & Dee Fordham via the Five Bells at South Chailey for lunch. Well this year the visitors were in contention on the roads with myriad's of cyclists heading for goodness knows where, which slowed the rate of progress considerably. However all managed to arrive on time for lunch except Keith and Sue King who made it by the skin of their teeth.

It was once again a memorable occasion; the weather was sunny the lunch was good which primed everyone for a restful afternoon at Orchard Cottage. We were fortunate to have with us our venerable association secretary Ray Coleman, who, rumour has it, did a lot of his courting in this locality! So it was tea and cakes in the delightful garden followed of course by the usual raffle, which raised £45.00 for the Ghurkha Welfare Trust.

It was an opportunity also for our most recent branch member Roland (Ray) Ogden with his wife Angela to meet up with everyone on their own ground.

September

The book launch “Go To It” - This was a venture initiated and actioned by Nick Gibson “Son of Smokey” in an attempt to raise sufficient funds for the installation of a fitting memorial to the military founder of Airborne Forces, Lt Col John Rock RE. The RE Museum curator Rebecca Cheney has set a suitable section of wall and floor space aside, and it was now down to us, the Association, to provide a fitting display of Royal Engineer Airborne activities from Operation Freshman to this present time. So 17th September was the day selected for the author Major John Shave MC to come to the RSME and talk to the Medway members of Friends of the Royal Engineers Museum (FOREM) on the primary objectives of the Royal Engineer units of the 6th Airborne Division on D Day. Given the important purpose of the occasion, the branch rallied round and provided the best possible support to this eventful day as follows: Lunch for all was held in the WO's & Sgt's mess, followed by a free conducted tour of RE Museum by the very knowledgeable assistant curator. The talk by John Shave in the Command Wing took place from 1800 hours onward with some forty or more people in attendance. Following the talk, Nick Gibson made a presentation to John Shave of an enlarged framed copy of the book foreword by HRH Prince Charles, this presentation was in recognition of John's generosity in allowing all of the proceeds from the sale of the books to be used for the 'John Rock display.'

We were fortunate on the day to have with us five members from the Aldershot Branch, Ron and Daphne Day, Peter and Sally Myatt and Major John Mason, who was chauffeur to John Shave on the day. The evening drew to a fitting conclusion over a buffet supper in the WO's & Sgt's Mess with the members of FOREM.

Friday 26th September was a sad day for the branch as we joined with Neave family to say farewell to Peggy. The funeral service took place at the Brompton Garrison Church St. Barbara's followed by the burial at the Military Cemetery Fort Pitt where Peggy was laid to rest with her late husband Major Les Neave MM. Our branch Chaplain Bernard Foulger officiated throughout.

We will close on that note and leave Coventry for the next issue to avoid swamping the editor at the last minute. Just one snippet for members of the Canal Zone era, the SW Branch have located Les Wiggins who is most keen to hear from his pals of that time on telephone No 01823 254074.

South West Branch

Bob Runacres

The story, about his escape across the Rhine at Oosterbeek as recounted by Gilly Potter, sure beats the hell out of trying to find something stimulating to write for the editor's deadline. There must be hundreds more of these very interesting stories out there, if only we can dig them out and get them recorded.

Having heard Gilly's story, I'm sure that we can all pay tribute to the Canadian Engineers who helped our lads back safely to fight another day.

Whilst writing about Arnhem, over a hundred people attended the Service and March Past at the Paulton Double Hills Memorial in September. For a change we had good weather and although there was no bandsmen playing, the sound effects from the loudspeaker playing the Last Post were brilliant. Peter Yates, who has been organising the annual event since 1979, has finally bowed out and said in his address that although he was retiring from the job, he hoped that the annual attendance to remember the fallen would continue. Making our way back over the fields I heard talk that it most definitely would. One meeting had already been held in Bristol to discuss this very matter.

Finally, a correction to a small error that I made in the last issue, I said that Mervin Potter was the Troop Sgt to Col Eric O'Callaghan in Palestine. He wasn't. Apologies to Mervyn and his wife Eileen, for the mix up and to the Troop Sgt concerned. As we've seen in the press in recent months, one should always double-check their information source!

Yorkshire

Mike Pallott

We had a splendid weekend at Elvington 20/22 June which was very well attended and included a dinner night on the Saturday, Church Service and March Past on the Sunday, involving the veterans and a great number of cadets. The salute was taken by Brigadier Ian McGill CBE and afterwards there were numerous displays and sideshows. The whole of the facility including the Airborne Engineers Museum were available to us. The Dutch visitors laid on a superb display of Airborne Memorabilia, which attracted a great deal of interest. Our last meeting was held on 12th September with 25 members in attendance. This level of turnout bodes well for the Branch.

We look forward now our Christmas Lunch on 13th December at Howston near Doncaster and our Annual Dinner in February.

Our special annual dinner night is to be held on Saturday 21st February. If you would like to attend please contact Bill Rudd for further details.

On a welfare note Myra Barnwell and Frank Robinson are recovering from Heart by-pass operations and our Chairman Bill Rudd is due for a similar operation in the next month or so. All are wished well and for speedy recoveries. I must add that most of the Branch is of the opinion that Bill needs a by-pass op round the Black Swan in Ripon first.

The Branch was well represented at the funerals of Brig Fergie Semple and that of a branch member, Albert Sweetlove.

This will be our last contribution before Christmas and so the members wish all in the AEA a very Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year.

International Triathlon

Graham Sheward



Anne and I arrived in Ibiza Airport on Wednesday 7th May, it was a cool and windy day, but compared to the Tuesday it was good. On Tuesday they had torrential rain all day with roads flooding.

We collected our car, booked in our Hotel and went to the team HQ to meet the others and our old friends Sue and Richard. Richard competing in the 60+ age group, while I was in the 65-69 age group. Also in this age group was Arthur Puckrin an old adversary of mine.

Next morning there was an 8 a.m. team swim in the harbour, a chance to see what the water temperature was like. It was cold; although we only had half an hour in the water I thought the full time in it would be just a wee bit cold so I had decided to wear my neoprene swim hat in the race.

On the Saturday evening we took our bikes and kit to the transition area. This race was being run the 'Ironman' way, instead of us laying our kit out by the bikes; we had to put the first transition kit [that is the swim to cycle] in a black bag second in green bag and this is hung up on racks for when we need it.

Race day

My alarm watch went off at 0530 hrs, we had our breakfast in the room, and after we had eaten and had a cup of tea we were off to the start. It was already warm, not a cloud in the sky or a puff of wind. At 0630 hrs I was in the transition area to check the bike was okay and put on my wet-suit, Richard was already there all raring to go. Anne and Sue were just outside the transition, so we had to talk through bars.

Swim

The swim was in the great harbour of Ibiza town, which had been closed for the morning.

Soon it was time for us to move to the swim start, all 900 of us were put into holding pens according to our swim hat colour (hat colour according to age and gender.) Our hat, the SOS's (the 'Silly Old Sods,' or over 50 age groups) colour was pink, which shows the Spanish have a sense of humour! As our start time came we moved to the side of the harbour ready for a 4 ft jump into the water. At 0738 hrs our group, jumped into the sea, and I was amongst hundreds of black rubber covered bodies struggling for enough water to swim in. Slowly we spread out and I found myself in a group too slow for me, so I worked my way through them until amongst swimmers of my pace. At this point, faster swimmers 'white hats' from the open group [athletes who did not qualify for their National Teams but were still good] came swimming through us, a new fight for space in the water. Things were just settling down again when I started to get cold, "Why?" I asked myself "Was I feeling suddenly cold" The reason my wet-suit zip was working its way slowly down, swimming to the side of the other swimmers I managed to pull the zip back up but not to fasten the Velcro, so this had to be done again later in the swim. After about 3000m I was catching and passing other swimmers as they were starting to tire. After 1 hour 21 min I climbed out of the water up a steep ramp helped by willing hands, then ran to the racks, got my black bag and went into the change tent. Wet-suit off; [to be put in black bag.] helmet, glasses, gloves and shoes on, bike out of the rack [only 3 of my age-group had taken their bikes] and run to the bike mounting line, then away.

Bike



The course was two laps through the mountains. All the roads had been closed to other traffic so we had them to ourselves. It was a very beautiful ride, hilly with lots of sharp corners and the day was now hot. Hot means drinking lots of liquid, I had loaded up as much as possible with Lucozade and then water. I was going quite well but not pushing it too much but was just a little surprised that I was not passing many other riders 'what was going on?' I thought I was going well. At the turn we went for about 5 miles down the road to Ibiza Town, then back up the same road so was able to see who was in front and who behind. At first I saw just a few dozen then there were hundreds, I think it was because I had done a good swim and it had put me further up the field than usual. After 4 hours 25 minutes this was slightly better than I had hoped, however I had got slight heartburn - not a good sign. As we entered the town the closed roads were lined with enthusiastic crowds who made us very welcome. As I got to the transition area willing hands took my bike so was able to run straight to the bag store grab my green bag and go to the changing tent. When I got there I surprised to see Richard who was getting changed. I left before him but had to go back as I had forgotten my hat. No way could I run in that heat without a hat.

Run

Now when you do a triathlon it is a bit like throwing a dice, it can all go just right or any number of things can go wrong! The longer the race the more the chance of problems.

I started running and was going well feeling strong but the heartburn got worse and I soon had to slow to a walk. After a short while it improved and was able to run again. This went on for most of the run getting worse as the day progressed. As I passed through the centre of town the big clock was reading 1441 hrs and 28c - now that is quite warm! The run was three 10km laps starting from the transition then running to and past the lighthouse through to the end of the new harbour wall then back past transition grandstand to other side of town and back. As Richard and I, came round on the second lap we were quite close together, as we came past one of the harbour cafe's we spied Anne and Sue raise a glass of cold beer to our health. Friend Arthur I had observed was now about 10min behind me, at each turn he was getting closer while my heartburn was getting worse and my pace slower. At about 4 km from the finish Arthur passed me . and slowly pulled ahead, going well, he was now out of sight when I brought up wind just like a baby. Wow!! Suddenly I felt fantastic, not the least bit tired; and running fast. I had such a surge of adrenaline that it made me fly, the crowds suddenly seeing someone running so fast cheered me making me feel even better. As I passed Ian the team manager he handed me a small union jack and shouted "Arthur is just ahead of you" I replied "It is my intention the change that." Soon I had him in my sight, then just behind him. The crowds still cheering more than ever near the finish. Arthur still unaware of my presence carried on running while giving his royal waves to the crowds. Just as I was about to pass him at the finish line someone shouted a bit like a Pantomime "He's about to pass you" he looked round in horror seeing me and just managed to put a spurt on. We both crossed the line in 9 hours 33 min and 44 seconds giving us joint 4th The commentator was getting very excited, shouting "This is amazing, this shows that age is no barrier these guys are over 65"

A very satisfying end to a super day. The event in a beautiful Mediterranean Island, well organised and with super support. The long hot race left me with red sunburn in strange shapes round my race suit.

Our best support was from Anne and Sue who had been there all day nearly 11 hours in the heat of the day. They were standing just behind the finish line and we talked through the fence, as they were not allowed in the finish enclosure. We waited for Richard to come in then collect bikes and kit to take back to the Hotel. We then had a hot bath, and down for a good meal with lots of wine before going to bed early.

The GB team had been the most successful with 5 gold 2 silver and 4 bronze.

Holiday

After the race it was just like an ordinary holiday with 10 days of morning runs on the beach before breakfast, lots of swims and touring round seeing the island.

Anne has herself been in the British Triathlon Team with very good results in the several World Championships she has taken part in. My thanks to her for all her support over the years, of me going out training many hours each week, for her encouragement in the events we have gone to all over the world.

John Stelling

Chairman of the Trustees, Military Vehicle Museum. Newcastle upon Tyne

I would like to thank those who responded to our plea for help, which you published, below is the current result of the information. One more plea, is there a photo of it in service out there? It would be nice to display it alongside. Also as we are trying to tell the story of the North east soldiers any photos of sappers with a north East connection would be welcome.



Last year the Military Vehicle Museum was given a two wheeled field cooker on long-term loan from the Imperial War Museum at Duxford. We were told that it was a wartime British army cooker that had had some post war modifications:

Provision for a No1 Cooker (Hydro burner) to fire into the cooker, NATO tow hook and lights. The Army had given it to the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in the early 1960's.

We were a little unsure about the make, there was no Data plates, the wheels were defiantly not British,

although there were fourteen Trailer, 2 wheel, cooker were made during the Second World War according to the British Army census numbers but as yet no photos are known to show them.

Whilst researching army cookers for our display this year I came across some photos of Czechoslovakian field cookers, which were identical to ours.

This triggered a memory of a snippet in the book about 9 Parachute Squadron RE and via the Squadron Association I was able to ascertain that our cooker although on Army books was acquired by not so legal methods. I am indebted to those squadron members who have replied to the request and the following information from Brian Jones and Frank Robinson ex members of 9 Independent Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers.

The story starts with the Anglo-French invasion of Suez in response to the Egyptian Nationalisation of the Suez Canal. Although the invasion was a Military success the political backlash caused the British and French to withdraw.

British and French paratroops were instrumental in capturing airfields and their support vehicles and ground train were landed by sea. When things settled down Sgt. Alex Black (who had been with a small force of Sappers that had landed with the French), suggested a reconnaissance of the drop zone in Frank Robinson's Commer truck. There they found all sorts of abandoned equipment and two motorbikes were put in the back and the kitchen hooked on the back. Frank towed it around for about three weeks when it was left at the HQ in the Brook Bond Tea warehouse.

When the Squadron left Suez Frank had the Kitchen in the back of his truck together with the squadron's motorbikes plus the extra two as he was due to leave the Army on return, as he was a reservist called up for the invasion.

Unfortunately Frank left the army without his motorbike but the kitchen went on to serve the squadron well Brian Jones takes up the story.

Reflections from Port Said

Brian Jones

In November 1956, as many will know, the Squadron was deployed to Port Said. After the ceasefire the Squadron was withdrawn back to Cyprus leaving behind a substantial rear party consisting of the following: - Lt J R M Hill, Sgt. Bob Andrews (fitter Sgt.), myself (Sqdn signals Sgt.), together with drivers and store men. This was because all our transport and G1098 equipment was not yet landed. We, therefore, had to receive it and get it back to Cyprus; this took place some three weeks later. During this time we (mysteriously Liberated) Egyptian Army Vehicles in the form of a 1 ton Radio truck, 1 ton Commer Winch Truck, 2 Jeeps and the famous cook trailer. (These vehicles had "British Army" serial numbers painted over the Egyptian ones, these were made up of the driver's date of birth, initials and last two of his service numbers. JS).

This field kitchen turned out to be of Czechoslovakian origin and took the form of a trailer mounted central fire box designed for wood burning on the outside were cooking containers, on top was a funnel. Now the question was how to put it to good use.

We were billeted in the squash courts at the rear of The Brooke Bond Tea Factory; HQ 29 Brigade occupied part of the factory.

It was not long before our two enterprising entrepreneurs Messrs Dennis Scott and Rick Mogg had a plate welded on the rear by the fire door and secured a Hydro Burner to it. Wood for fuel was not practical. Now we were in business.

All that was needed was cooking oil and spuds to produce high quality chips. The lads were busy peeling and slicing and we were drying tonight." Needless to say the chips were not only for domestic consumption as there was a ready market in our infantry neighbours.

On return to Cyprus, some three weeks later, we were met by the RMP on the docks at Famagusta, who had no sense of humour and confiscated the lot, including some of our G10 and all our loot, needless to say the booze went over the side (what a waste).

On return to the squadron the OC was not best pleased and sent the SQMS Terry Dalton and yours truly to Famagusta with orders not to return without or kit armed with the ledgers to prove ownership the task was accomplished, including the mobile kitchen. I will leave you to guess how?

Somehow or other the field kitchen arrived back in Waterloo Barracks. How was this done? Some more of the squadron magic I guess. The trailer did sterling work, providing Charlie Edward's stew to the ranges at Ash and to the hard at the bridging camp at Weymouth.

I am pleased to learn that that equipment has gone to a good home at The Imperial War Museum.

In England, when inventory checks and inspections took place, it was hooked to the back of a Champ and drove around the countryside until the inspection was over.

At some stage it must have been discovered and given to the IWM who in 2002 loaned it to the Military Vehicle Museum in Newcastle. It is now displayed alongside a desert painted Austin Champ and Trailer, which was the main transport of the squadron in Suez.

Early 66 – Location - Maida Guardroom, Aldershot

Tony (Toots) Ridgway

My situation: - doing 28 days for misappropriation of Government property, i.e. I had a heavy date, great prospects, and no money. So I borrowed a Landrover, picked my date up, did what was necessary, dropped her off, and then went to the NAAFI club. If you are wondering how I could do that with no money, then if I may remind old hands that all Sqn. blokes could drink on tick in the old Roundabout club.

Crap hat MPs picked me up (the Landrover had been reported stolen) and slung me in their nick. Dave Edmonds, our guard commander that night, picked me up and took me back to Crookham. I was charged and awarded 28 days. I think the Sqn. was going on leave so they sent me to Maida Guardroom.

Situation in Maida: - 4 prisoners: -

- 1) A soldier recently Court Martialled who was awaiting confirmation before being sent to Colchester.
- 2) A Para Regt soldier doing 14 days.
- 3) Myself.
- 4) A Battalion recruit who had gone AWOL.

The recruit kept whinging and moaning about how he wished he had never joined the army. He was pining for his girlfriend. In 2 days he made our life a misery with his moaning. We got really peed off with it and said, "If you don't like it just bugger off!" "How?" he asked. I said it is dead easy to get out of this nick, your problem is to get back to Brum, and when you get there, don't go home, stay away from regular haunts, don't let your family know where you are staying, and tell your girlfriend to stay shtum cos in a week or so the law will be knocking on your family's door and the less they know the better.

So the scene was set. He wanted to get out and we wanted rid of him. Maida guardroom in those days, consisted of the guardroom through the front door, which was kept locked, to the right, was a small alcove with a window (no bars) and in front of it was the Provo's desk. (Where he used to sit most of the day). At the back of the guardroom was the toilets and shower, while to right was the prisoner's accommodation, layout typical, locker and bed with suitcase on top of the locker.

The Provo Cpl. had a set routine, in the morning after Orderly Officers inspection we would be put on fatigues, the usual stuff, scraping polish off floors ready to put it back on again, cleaning toilets and showers, etc. The Cpl would then retire to his desk, open the window, and read the newspapers.

The following morning, all was ready. It was made easier for Brummie, because he had been picked up in civvies and they were in his suitcase. He got dressed in denims & shirt, with civvy trousers and shirt underneath. After the inspection he whipped his beret under his shirt, then we started our fatigues, (one bulling floor in guardroom, one bulling the floor in the accommodation, one cleaning toilets, and the other going around cleaning and polishing anything that wasn't moving. We were allowed to alternate these jobs between ourselves. 10 o'clock, smoke break, where we are lined up in the guardroom, given a cigarette and light, and we'd stand there smoking our fags. 10:15 back to work, 10.20, a shout from the toilets, "Cpl come and look at this."

The Cpl went into the toilets where a discussion took place, Brummy is given a helping shove through the window, sticks his beret on to walk through camp, and we carry on working. The Provo comes out the toilets, glances at us, and goes to his desk, where he stays until lunchtime. Then he calls, "OK mess tins.' This is the 3 times daily ritual where we are marched over to the mess, collect our meals, and return to the guardroom.

So we lined up with our mess tins. The eagle eyed Provo counted us twice and realised that something was wrong. With a slightly worried look he said, "Where is Brummy?" "Probably in the toilet," was the reply. He dives in the toilet and back out, "He's not there" now with a very worried expression. "Try the accommodation, he was doing the floor". He leapt in there and back again, eyes wild, and proceeded to look everywhere again (even

under his desk). Then in a state of absolute panic, he dived out the guardroom door leaving it open (and the window) shouting, "Stay there." "What about our dinner," we called after him. The reply was unprintable. 2 or 3 minutes later, he is back; accompanied by an officer who demanded to know where the other prisoner was. (I thought, half way to bloody Birmingham, I hope) We repeated our beliefs that each of us thought that he were working somewhere else.

No. 1 prisoner went to Colchester a few days later.

No. 2 prisoner finished his shorter sentence.

No. 3 (Me) I did my 28 days with 4 days remission, keeping my fingers crossed that Brummy didn't get caught before my sentence was up.

No.4 prisoner. I never found out how long he managed to stay on the run.

And yes, The Provo Cpl got busted!

The Twelve Days of Christmas

On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me, I'm glad we bought fresh turkey and a proper Christmas Tree.

On the second day of Christmas, much laughter could be heard, as we tucked into our turkey, a tender, tasty bird.

On the third day we entertained the people from next door. The turkey tasted just as good as it had the day before.

Day four, relations came to stay; poor Gran is looking old. We finished up the Christmas pud and ate the turkey cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas, outside the snowflakes flurried. But we were nice and warm inside: we had our turkey curried.

On the sixth day, I must admit, the Christmas spirit died. The children fought and bickered; we ate turkey rissoles, fried.

On the seventh day of Christmas, I saw my true love wince When he sat down at the table and was offered turkey mince.

Day eight, and nerves were getting frayed; the dog had run for shelter. I served up turkey pancakes with a glass of Alka Seltzer.

On the ninth day our cat left home; by lunchtime Dad was blotto. He said he had to have a drink to face turkey risotto!

By the tenth day the booze had gone (except our home made brew). And if that wasn't bad enough, we suffered turkey stew.

On the eleventh day of Christmas the Christmas tree was moulting. The mince pies were as hard as rock and the turkey was revolting.

On the twelfth day, my true love had a smile upon his lips. The guests had gone - the turkey too - and we dined on fish and chips

Harry Dunstan

Gordon Smith (New Zealand)

An article published in the August edition of the AEA Journal asked about Harry Dunstan. Firstly he was not a Sergeant but a Corporal and was attached, temporarily, to 2 Troop 3rd Para Sqn RE. Part of, or all, of the Sqn was billeted in an old quarry in Normandy. We dug holes with caves in the side and the brickies made a good kitchen cooking stove in the recess. We even erected a sign, 'Built by 2 Troop 3rd Para Sqn RE'. The sign was protected from the elements by a piece of Perspex taken from a glider. It was all built in and looked quite impressive. A short distance away was a heap of clay about 6ft high, and Harry would climb on top of the heap and yell for us to gather round. He would then burst in to song, these were mostly Cornish songs, and a couple of his favourites were the 'Floral Dance' and 'Uncle Tom Cobbley.' There were many other songs and stories - but of course his party piece was the "Raspberry!"

Now parts that I recall, Smokey Gibson may disagree with, but I'll let the readers decide.

While based in the quarry we used to be tasked with various jobs for other units. One task was to pick up mines and to clear some areas. We were sent to bring in some 75 mines that had been laid out next to a 'knock out' tank. The idea was to drag these across the road should the enemy approach. Corporal Harry Dunstan was in charge of a small party of about 5 men (sorry can't remember their names) and we were tasked to pick up the mines and return them the Battalion HQ. We'd just about finished the job when some shells landed nearby, forcing us to take cover. Once the shelling stopped we started on our way back to HQ. As we were half way across a field, more shells began to fall and Corporal Harry was hit by flying shrapnel. The medics arrived to casivac him and we continued on our way back to Battalion HQ.

That was the last I saw of Harry. The next day we were told that he had died from his injuries. We not informed of any funeral arrangements or where he was buried.

That is my story, I'm sure even after all of the passing years my memory serves me right - however, 'Smokey' may well disagree.



One final point, I believe I have discovered the identity of X9

Donington Weekend 27/28th September 2003



Membership Report

Chris Chambers

Since my last report in the April issue of our Journal, a further 16 new members have joined our ranks:

Andrew Dye	9 Para Sqn RE	1996-still serving
Malcolm Nash	131 Para Engr Regt	1965-1975
Stacey Farnell	9 Para Sqn RE/51 Fd Sqn RE	1998-still serving
John Thornley	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1967-1970
Colin Reid	131 Para Engr Regt	1958-1960
Rowland Ogden	131 Para Engr Regt	1960-1967
Jonathan De Carteret	9 Para Sqn RE	1998-still serving
Steven Oliver	131 Indep Para Sqn RE	1970-1987
Robert Connal	131 Indep Para Sqn RE	1975
Brian Truran	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1954-1962
Alan O'Hagan	3rd & 9th AB Sqn RE	1947-1948
David Breese	1 & 3 Para Sqn /131 AB Engr Regt	1942-1964
Ian Smith (RSM)	9 Para Sqn RE /23 Engr Regt (Air Assault)	1984-still serving
Ivor Sherrad	4 Para Sqn/591 Para Sqn RE	1943-1946
Mark Brightey	9 Para Sqn RE / 49 Sqn EOD	1990-1994
Guy Chalkley	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1975-1978

"Gentlemen, Welcome to the Airborne Engineers Association"

Association Shop

Description	Price	P& P (UK Post Rate)
Association Ties (Pegasus logo)	£13.00	£1.00
Association Blazer Badges	£14.00	£1.00
Association Jumpers (sizes 38-48) Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo embroidered 'Airborne Engineers'	£25.00	£3.10
Association Sweatshirts Maroon or blue logo – Med, Lge or XLge	£16.50	£3.10
Association Polo Shirts - Fred Perry Style Maroon or blue logo Medium/Large or XLarge	£15.50	£2.50
Association 'T' Shirts - Maroon only - Lge or extra-large only	£9.00	£1.80
Association Shields	£18.00	£3.30
A Memoir of 9 Para Sqn RE in the Falklands Campaign 1982 by Maj C.M. Davies MBE (now Colonel)	£12.00	£2.10
Anniversary Ties (silk with Wings & Pegasus logo)	£15.00	£1.00
Association Cuff Links (slightly smaller than the lapel badge)	£8.50	£1.60
The Shiny 9th (1939-1945) by Patrick Pronk The history of 9 Field Company (Airborne)	£9.00	£1.80
The 9th (1787-1960) by the late Tom Purves (Special offer while stocks last)	£7.00	£3.80

Would overseas members please send cheques in £ pounds sterling, with a little extra to cover postage, from your local bank or an international money order from the Post Office. Cheques should be made payable to:
"Airborne Engineers Association"

Please note my address when submitting your orders:



My thanks for your continued support,

Jan
