



THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



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The Airborne Engineer



April 2005, Issue No. 15

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Bob Ferguson, Tom Ormiston, Fred Gray, Ray Coleman,
Chris Chambers, Bob Jones, Bob Prosser BEM and Tom Carpenter

Publication Deadline – August 2005 Edition

Members submitting material for publication in the August 2005 edition of the Journal, are advised that the closing date will be Saturday 16th July. Articles received after this date will not be published until the December 2005 edition.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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President's Review

Peter Bates

Since the AGM in Coventry your President has been busy on a number of fronts. The first was that of attending the Remembrance Service at Aldershot in the presence of 9 Parachute Squadron, AEA members their wives and families. After the service all were invited back to the Squadron bar for an excellent curry lunch. The Aldershot branch meeting had ensured a good turnout to their branch meeting by organising directly after lunch in the John Rock Room. I was particularly grateful to Don Doherty and Joe Stoddart for their kind invitation to address the members on a number of issues facing our Association.

With the coming of the New Year the first invitation was for Amy, my wife, and I to attend the Aldershot branch annual 'late' Christmas Dinner at the Aldershot Garrison WO's & Sgt's Mess. An excellent evening was had by all and grateful thanks to the Major Frazer Ross (OC 9 Sqn) for updating all on the current squadron news. During this period I informed the committee of my initiative of linking my bursary with Raleigh International to soldiers in 9 Sqn and the sons and daughters of AEA members. The aim of the initiative is to assist in sending young persons to go on expedition with Raleigh thereby helping to develop their potential by working in challenging environments worldwide. There is a strong view that any sapper serving with 9 Sqn needs little help!

March saw a long drive North to the market town of Ripon, and the Black Bull pub in particular, as guest of Bill Rudd and the Yorkshire branch at their Annual Dinner. The evening was interesting as it transpired that the REA Airborne branch had arranged its inaugural meeting the same afternoon and toasts were made to their success. One of the many highlights of the evening was being asked to present Ray Coleman with a statue of an airborne soldier in recognition for his long service to the Association.

Bunny Brown kindly invited me to the Birmingham branch St Georges Day dinner, however, Amy and I will be in warmer climes, but I will get up there soon. Not to forget Eric Blenkinsop of the Chatham branch who together with his colleagues is doing a great job in setting up 'The John Rock' display in the RE museum at Chatham. With the coming of spring it is time to get readily for the annual migration to Wales where Chris O'Donovan and many friends will spend a few days chewing the cud, sinking a few beers and maybe climb a mountain or two. Oh life is hard!

I now look forward to our committee meeting in June!

Association Chairman

Bunny Brown

Dear Members,

Whilst sitting writing this piece my thoughts, as with many of you, are with the terrible events around the Indian Ocean, I dare say that many of you have donated money, time or just thoughts to the victims. Someone during a collection said charity begins at home! The AEA is also a charity, our only funds come from new members or the occasional legacy, an easy way of swelling our funds is through a Gift Aid Declaration, where for all taxpayers who fill in the form the Association is able to claim an allowance, anyone wishing to help in this way must fill in a gift aid declaration, which is available from our Treasurer Maj Dick Brown.

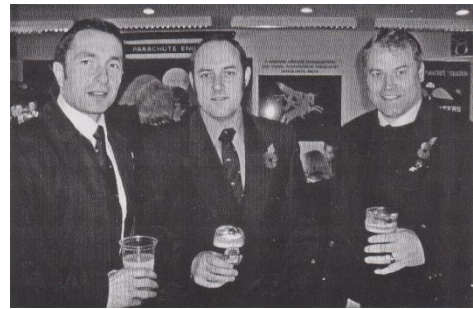
Somewhere in the pages of this esteemed journal you will come across the booking form for our AGM and reunion to be held once again at the Royal Court Hotel Coventry, may I remind you all to book early and please use the booking form and the booking system, last year the only hiccups that occurred were because some individuals booked directly with the hotel, if this happens the organisers do not know that you have booked, you do not appear on the seating plan, and people get upset, because they cannot sit with friends. The system is there, it works, please use it!

I look forward to the summer months when all the Branches hard work comes into its own, and functions are in full swing, I will attempt to attend as many as possible, in this my final period of office and meet up with many of you during the year.

Rogues Gallery



"Officers Take Post" - The Sqn officers attending the Remembrance Service



Reg Grantham, Billy Morris & Tony Fry at the Aviary Bar Buller Barracks on Remembrance Sunday



Kevin Lambeth, Ivor Sherrad & Pete Allan
Arnhem September 2004



Yorky Davies, Bill Rudd & Dave Grimbley contemplate whose
buying the next round
Arnhem 2004



SSM Al Pearson tops up his water bottle – nowadays he drinks
lager



Ken Teeley and the Sqn prepare for a jump in Egypt 1953

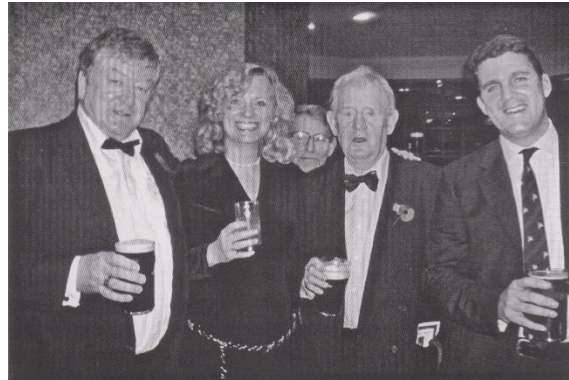


Sgt 'Jenny' Wren and L/Sgt Stan Head, Gaza 1946

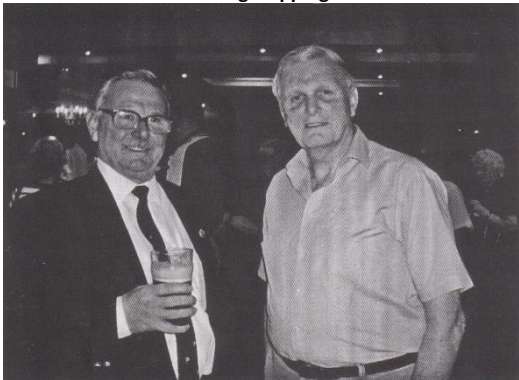
Coventry Reunion 2004



Chris Lunn, Syd Hoyle, Bernie Barnwell, John Hughes & George Tipping



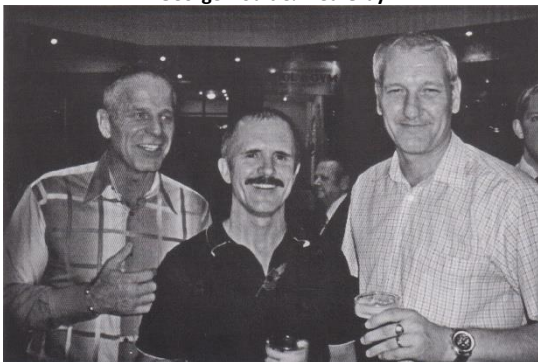
**Paddy Boyce, Sandra Ross, Louie, Maj Frazer Ross
- and Roy Gambrill in the background**



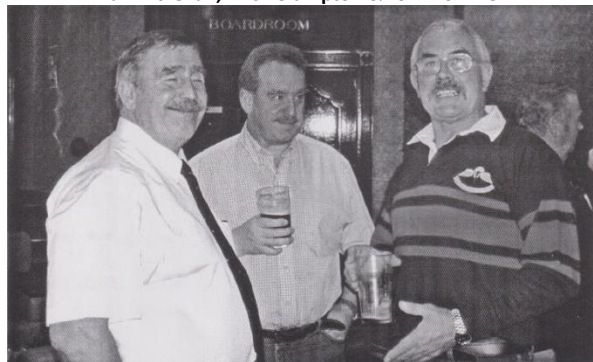
George Hault & Fred Gray



Ian McLellan, Mick Crampton & Tom Downie



Mick Mathis, Dave Leibrick & Andy Mount

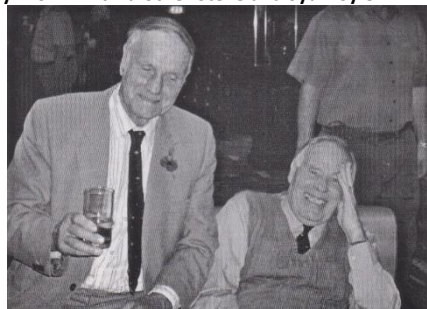


Bunny Brown with brother Steve and Syd Hoyle

**Tom
Downie
&
John
(Tommo)
Thompson**

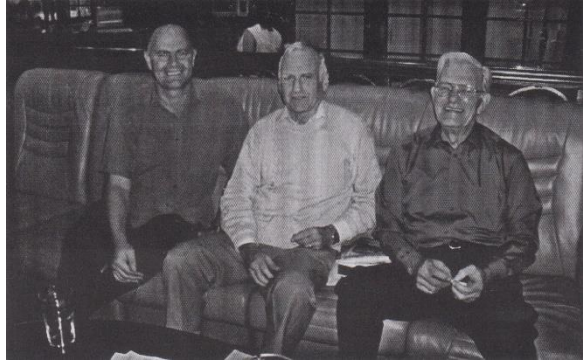


**Charles
Barker
&
Harold
Padfield**





Phil Poulton, Barney Rooney, Froth Beer & Fennymore Fleck



Jim Harrower, Ray Richards & Tom Brinkman



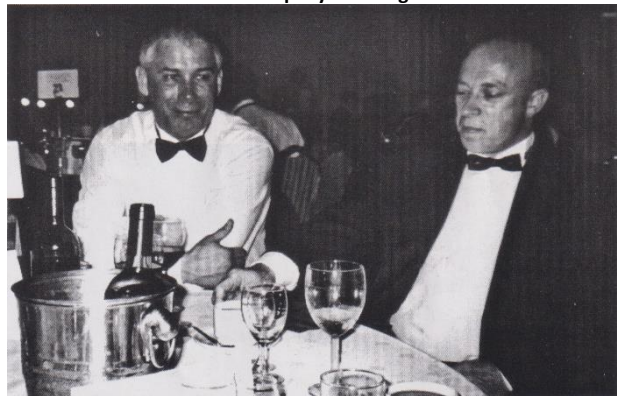
Harry Mennie does his Jerry Lee Lewis 'take-off'



Bob Clow with Sue in the company of George Barrett and Bill Rudd



Ken Roberts, Monty, Brian Gibson & Don Lay



Mick Robertson & Nat Hague ponder over the empty glasses

Sid Warrilow & Sid Burrell





Ladies' man, Smokey Gibson with Ken Roberts



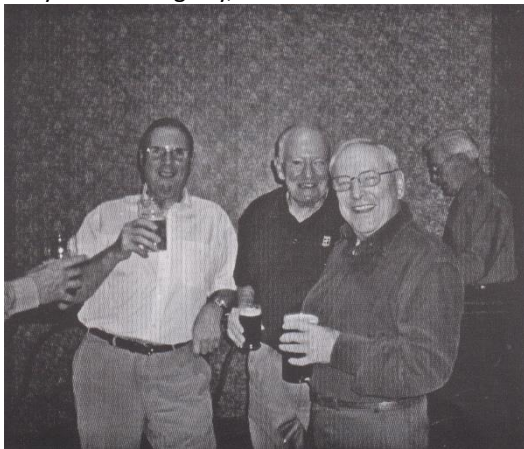
John Moorhouse and his good lady with 'Clog' Cloughton



Tony 'Toots' Ridgway, Mac MacLellan & Ken Turk



Fennymore & Peter Bates



Bill Shields, Gerry Hicks & Ted Ellis



Mr & Mrs 'Paddy' Fulton

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry on 30th October 2004

1. Opening Address - The Chairman opened the meeting and thanked the 104 members in attendance for their continued support and promised that the programme for the weekend is an extremely exciting one. He hoped all those in residence at the hotel find the accommodation and facilities acceptable.
2. Apologies - There were 27 notifications of apology.
3. Silent Tributes - The members stood in silence for one minute in respect to the following colleagues who have passed away during the past year: Syd Briton; Brian Butcher; George Taylor; George Bell; Eric Cross; Edward Triggs; James O'Donnell; Alfred Scott; Derek Barratt; Brian Jones; Brian McKean; John Chivers MBE; Charlie Papworth; John Tharby; David Trotter; Gareth Hughes; Harry Dunstan; Harry Stokes; George Earl; Jim Gabbitas and Bob Knowles.
4. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2003 - The minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2003 held at Coventry were passed as a true record of proceedings.
Proposed by: Charlie Edwards - Seconded by: Joe Stoddard, MBE - Agreed Unanimously
5. Chairman's Annual Report - The Chairman stated that the Association have just completed an extremely full and eventful year. Many members had attended remembrance services and reunions in Normandy, Arnhem and Double Hills and wonderful reports have been received from each venue. In addition we look forward to 2005 with interest as hopefully Airborne Forces Day is to be revived.
6. Treasurer's Annual Report - In the absence of Major Dick Brown, RE, (on duty in Iraq), Dave Rutter presented the audited "Statement of Accounts" of the Association as at 22 October 2004. After a full explanation of all entries and an acceptance by those assembled it was agreed that the Association was in a healthy position.

Balance Sheet as at 22nd October 2004

| <u>Previous Period</u> | <u>Fixed Assets</u> | <u>Current Period</u> |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| ██████████ | | ██████████ |
| | <u>Current Assets</u> | |
| | Cash | |
| ██████████ | Current Account | ██████████ |
| ██████████ | Deposit Account | ██████████ |
| | Shop | |
| ██████████ | Total Current Assets | ██████████ |
| | Total Assets | |
| | <u>Liabilities</u> | |
| ██████████ | Newsletter | ██████████ |
| | Projects Fund | |
| ██████████ | Total Liabilities | ██████████ |
| ██████████ | Total Assets minus Liabilities | ██████████ |
| | <u>General Purpose Fund</u> | |
| ██████████ | Balances as per last Balance Sheet | ██████████ |
| | Add excess of Income | |
| | Deduct excess of Expenditure | ██████████ |
| ██████████ | Accumulated General Purpose Fund | ██████████ |

Auditors Comments: (Mr Peter Bates & Mr Bob Ferguson)

Subject to the observations given below we are satisfied that proper books of account have been kept and that the final accounts are a true and fair view of the results of transactions over the period and of the state of the Fund's affairs as at the date of the balance sheet. Subject also to our observations we are satisfied that cash and bank balances and stocks on hand have been properly checked at prescribed intervals.

1. It is noted that a detailed Receipt Voucher does not support some amounts credited to the account. This leads to confusion while auditing the main account and should be rectified for all future transactions.
2. Varying subscription rates, outside of the AEA constitution, have been charged for life membership during the audit period. Membership subscriptions must be supported by name and personal profile with each banking transaction.
3. We recommend that the treasurer review, at his earliest convenience, the percentage profit margin on items sold within the Association.
4. A Payment Receipt does not support the purchase of Qty 10 Pegasus standard mounts. These items should be transferred to the Property Account.
5. Given the value of the shop stock holding, it is recommended that an independent stock check be conducted immediately prior to any audit.

Proposed by: Tom Ormiston - Seconded by: Sid Warrilow, MBE, that the accounts as presented be accepted.

Agreed Unanimously

Bob Prosser, BEM, proposed a "Vote of Thanks" to the auditors, Peter Bates and Bob Ferguson for the excellent presentation. Agreed Unanimously

7. Membership Secretary Report - Chris Chambers, our Membership Secretary, has now issued Membership No 1191. He gave a detailed report on how he recruits new members but emphasised that he relies a great deal on reunions, functions and our present members to publicise our Association. Chris again asked for clarification regarding the criterion for membership to this Association. After a protracted debate it was agreed that we must conform with the legislature of the Association's Constitution and that if any Branch or any individual consider that this requires an amendment then an Amendment Proposal may be forwarded for consideration at the 2005 Annual General Meeting.

8. Election of Officers - The following members were elected as officers of the Airborne Engineers Association:

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| President: | Peter Bates | Hon Treasurer: | Major Dick Brown, RE |
| Vice Presidents: | Bill Rudd, MBE & Tom Brinkman | Membership Secretary: | Chris Chambers |
| Chairman: | Bunny Brown | Editor of Journal: | Dave Rutter |
| Vice Chairman: | Mick Humphries | Entertainment: | Mike Holdsworth |
| Hon Secretary: | Bob Ferguson | Archivist/Property: | Fred Gray |
| Asst Secretary: | Don Doherty | | |

9. Election of Representatives

The under mentioned personnel were unanimously accepted and shall be members of the Advisory Committee:

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1 Sqn | R. Jones | Aldershot Branch | J. Stoddard, MBE |
| 3 Sqn | R. Sullivan MBE | Birmingham Branch | G. Barrett |
| 4 Sqn | E. Richards | Chatham Branch | E. Blenkinsop |
| 9 Fd Coy (AB) | T. Carpenter | Edinburgh Branch | R. Drummond |
| 131 Sqn TA | B. Brown | South West Branch | R. Runacres |
| 591 Sqn | A. Jackson | Yorkshire Branch | Bill Rudd, MBE |
| 9 Sqn | OC, SSM, Cpls Mess | | |

10. Life Vice-Presidents

The following members were unanimously appointed as Life Vice Presidents of the Association:

Bob Prosser, BEM and Tom Carpenter

11. Confirmation of Trustees

The following elected officers were appointed as trustees for this Association:

Mr Bunny Brown, Mr Bill Rudd, MBE & Mr Tom Brinkman Agreed Unanimously

12. Amendments to the Association Constitution - Two amendments were forwarded for minor deletions to Rule 8b and Rule 12. Both amendments were proposed by Ray Coleman and seconded by Chris Chambers and were agreed unanimously.

13. Association Journal - Dave Rutter gave his usual comprehensive report regarding the Association Journal. He regretted that at present 114 members have not renewed their subscription and requested guidance in what action, if any, is to be taken. Dave also raised the difficulty of obtaining new patrons for advertising which helps considerably in determining the cost of our Association Journal. Those assembled agreed unanimously with the request of Dave that the cost of the Journal must be increased. However, it was decided that this matter be raised at the General Meeting, which follows this meeting, for a decision.

14. Date and Venue of Next Annual General Meeting - The next Annual General Meeting will be held on the weekend of 21'22123 October 2005 at The Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry.

OGM - Main Points (following the AGM)

Retirement of the Association Secretary

The Chairman spoke at length on the excellent work that had been undertaken by the outgoing Hon Secretary, Mr Ray Coleman and the high regard that all present and past committee members have for his unselfish and dedicated support to the Association.

Association Journal

Following a presentation by Dave Rutter (editor) on the spiralling costs in the production and postage of the Journal, it was agreed to increase the cost per annum for UK members to £6.00 and for overseas members to £7.00. These Increases are to come into effect from 1st November 2005.

To ease the administration burden, all current members and in particular new members, are encouraged to raise a Standing Order for their annual Journal subscription. A Standing Order mandate can be obtained by contacting the Journal Editor.

Constitution Amendment

The following amendments to the Association Constitution (as agreed by a unanimous vote during the AGM) are to be implemented with affect 1st November 2004.

Para 8 Advisory Committee - delete: Welfare Officer - insert: Welfare Advisor

Para 11 Voting Rights (line 3) - delete: or attend as Life Vice-Presidents

Para 19 Duties of Committee Members (sub para k) - delete: Welfare Officer - insert Welfare Advisor

Airborne Engineer Exhibition - Corps Museum

The committee were informed that the Corp Memorial day shall be held on either the 10 or 17 September 2005 and the RE Museum would wish our Airborne Exhibition to be completed by that time. The exhibition is to be opened by Maj Gen Wall or Maj Gen Cowtan, OBE, but at the moment this has not been finalised.

The Chatham Branch requested the authority to represent the association in all arrangements. This was agreed with the proviso that they are representing the AEA and not the Branch

Reunions 2005 & 2006

After much discussion, with opinions both for and against it was agreed that the 2005 reunion will again be held at Coventry. The Royal Court hotel has reduced our package for 2005 down to two nights. It will be cheaper, but we will have to vacate our rooms by 1000 hours on the Sunday morning unless we can negotiate a deal. A provisional booking will be made for 2006 as a backup but serious efforts are to be made to find an alternative suitable location.

AEA Website

John Aldridge in an effort to improve communications shall maintain a web page and requests information from all sources to keep it 'LIVE.' The Edinburgh branch has an excellent site with direct links to 9 Para Sqn up and running - it's worth a visit.

Journal Subscription Increase

The annual subscription for the AEA Journal is to be increased as follows:

UK residents £6-00 per annum - All overseas members (inc. Eire) will be increased to £7-00 per annum.

The new subscription charges are to come into effect as at 1st November 2005. Members paying by standing order will receive an amended mandate enclosed in their August edition.

The rise in subscription is due to increase postal charges, printing and general administration costs and is the first and only increase in subscription charges in 9 years. Much credit for keeping down our costs is attributed to our advertisers, all of whom are Association members. I therefore draw your attention to these members and their businesses:

Mr Ian Rosenvinge: Skydive Academy at the Peterlee Parachute Centre

Mr Mick Humphries: Tinba Fine Art Retailers and Picture Framers

Mr Dave Norminton: Holidays in the Sun (Nerja on the Costa-Del-Sol)

Mr Barney Rooney: Northern Engineering Maintenance Services

Mr Kevin Lambeth: Machinery Sales & Supplies

The Way I See It X9

Congratulations to Peter Bates on his election as Association President. You know Peter you are now a member of an elite band of men who went from being lowly NCO's but ended up as Presidents. To name a few, Napoleon, Hitler, Idi Amin. What an illustrious group!

Poppy Appeal

It is nice to know that members are very generous when it comes to donating to charity. Well done on the amount raised. I don't know if you know this but there are two things in this world that are of no use until they are dead - one is a pig, the other is a miser!

Rogues Gallery

I can't figure out if Cliff Joy (PJ) is chalking his snooker cue or tamping his muzzle-loader. It could be that with his seemingly poor eyesight he is trying to stab a straw into his bottle of pop! PJ., you remind me of one of Santa's little helpers!!

Froth Beers demob party. I guess that was the day you legged it from the army Froth!

I don't know why Margaret feels safe, because the look on Bob Ferguson's face suggests he has just released a 'sly one.' It also appears that the two to his left have caught the brunt of it!

Two great articles by Tom Carpenter and John (Houdini) Humphreys. Adversity brings out the best in many people. As for P.T.S. Tom, it is a man's only answer to P.M.T!

What happened to the military dress code, which states the cap badge, should be worn over the left eye? Look at the evergreen Rick Mogg as an example. Has the dress code changed or are we trying to emulate the French? On the subject of dress, I find it very sad to see Airborne soldiers on parade with no Pegasus insignia.

Once again it's great to see 'Youngsters' gathered under the Arnhem Oak. I salute each and every one of you.

Well-done Ruth and the girls for their 'Teddy' making. Tell me Ruth, are the teddies modelled on husband John? As I remember he was rather 'cuddly'!

It was good to read the clip by Bill Morton in the Aldershot newsletter about the hospitality afforded him by the members. This can also be said about the Yorkshire branch who took in 'strays' in their already cramped environ. A doff of the cap to you all!

Although Winston Churchill was quoted as saying 'We don't give out medals for defeats,' worth more than any medal and a wonderful tribute to those at Arnhem is the letter by Greet Scholten found at the north end of John Frost Bridge.

The Ultimate Target

This is an edited version of a story provided by Niall Cherry, who is the UK representative of the Society of Friends of the Airborne Museum, Oosterbeek and the author of 'Red Berets and Red Crosses.' The events, which have been edited, were related to Niall by three survivors, Harold Padfield, L. Wright and Eric Booth, during a visit to the School by the above Society.

If anyone would like any further information please contact Niall at: [REDACTED]

About 140 men of the 1st Parachute Squadron RE, consisting of HQ, A, B & C Troops, embarked from RAF Barkston Heath on Sunday, September 17th 1944; destination, Arnhem. They landed in relatively good order after a fairly smooth flight, escorted by fighters. L/Sgt Padfield, a member of 'B' Troop relates; "I made a good exit, with no twists and not much oscillation, but found a tree barring my descent. I took evasive action, covering my face. My chute caught in the trees and I just hung there. I lowered myself onto a branch and climbed down, then ran over and joined the rest of my stick at the rendezvous, which was marked by blue smoke. We collected our stores and weapons and moved off in the direction of Wolfheze, travelling with the 2nd Parachute Battalion (2 Para) and Brigade HQ on the LION route."

In the meantime the 3rd Parachute Battalion (3 Para) was making its way towards the bridge on the Heelsum-Arnhem Road, the route code-named TIGER. Steady progress marked the first two hours until the leading elements; B Company reached the crossroads, just past the Koude Herberg, where an armoured vehicle from the Battalion Krafft, which was supported by infantry, stopped them. It was around 6 pm and the CO, Lt Colonel Fitch, realising that further opposition could be expected along the TIGER route, ordered 'C' Company down the Bredelaan, a side road, in an attempt to outflank the Germans and create a clearer route into Arnhem.

At about 6.30 pm, 1st Squadron RE, travelling at the rear of 2 Para, had carried out a left flanking manoeuvre to cover the escape route, as 2 Para dealt with German opposition at Den Brink. They were then, apparently, about 400 metres north of LION route. An hour later 1st Squadron RE were on the move again; one half of 'B' Troop with Brigade HQ and 'A' Troop acting as rearguard for the entire column. It is believed that about 8.30 pm, 'A' Troop were ambushed in a square, west of the pontoon bridge. There were no casualties but a trolley load of stores was lost.

L/Sgt Padfield, detailed to find the pontoon bridge and check its suitability for use recalls, "I took Danny Neville and Frank Navin with me. We found the bridge a short distance downstream minus its centre section. We carried on for a bit and then found the centre section. On inspection we found it had explosive charges fixed to it, so we cut them away and dumped them in the river. We then made our way back to the main section, which also had explosive charges fixed, so we did the same with these. We then rejoined the Squadron who weren't very far from where we had left them."

The time was now around 10 pm and pushing on they reached the Arnhem bridge area about 30 minutes later.

They reported to Brigade HQ, which had been set up in a large building to the west of the bridge. Within minutes an effort was made to take the southern end of the bridge by A' Company of 2 Para, supported by about half of 'B' Troop from the Engineers, commanded by Captain Livesey. The Sappers main offensive weapons were two flame-throwers and Sapper 'Ginger' Wilkinson, using one of them, attempted to put out of action a troublesome pillbox. He missed and set alight a hut next to it. This contained petrol and ammunition, which exploded, causing the paintwork on the bridge to catch fire.

The Squadron then took up a defensive position on the east side of the bridge. According to an edited statement by L/Sgt Padfield, "We managed to get under the bridge without any bother. Coming across a large building Lt Simpson ordered me to break into and search it. Breaking the glass in the door I turned the handle and once inside established that it was a school. There was a good view of the bridge from the window of one room. On the basis of my report it was decided to occupy this building."

The building was a girl's school, the Van Limburg Stirum School, a two-storey building. Other Sappers, mainly from 'A' Troop, occupied a further building, to the north of this school. Sapper George Needham, describing the

event, stated, "We started to prepare it for defence, smashing the windows and pulling down the curtains. We had only been there about ten minutes when the Germans attacked, throwing grenades into the rooms. The building was too vulnerable, so the OC of 'A' Troop, Captain Mackay, ordered us out, into the larger building next door, already occupied by 'B' Troop. 'Bugger off! Go and find your own place.' they said, but eventually let us in and we started fortifying some of the empty rooms."

Meanwhile 'C' Company, 3 Para, leaving the Bredelaan, turned northwards and then right, along the railway line into Arnhem, through Oosterbeek. Various German vehicles were encountered and several Germans killed, but not without suffering some casualties themselves. At several places 'en route' German machine guns were firing on fixed lines and the Company crawled under the fire. Reaching the outskirts of Arnhem they destroyed an armoured car with a Gammon bomb. They deceived a large group of Germans by forming up in a column of three abreast and pretending to be a German unit marching by in the dark. Under the direction of Major Lewis, they took up a position to the east side of the bridge. Unfortunately, while 'C' Company was attempting to get into the perimeter, 7 Platoon and 8 Platoon bumped into a German force, which was attempting to launch an attack on the defenders at the bridge. During the fierce firefight that ensued, a number of men from these platoons were killed, including the OC of 7 Platoon, Lt Hibbert. About 50 men were taken prisoner and only about 45 men made it to the bridge perimeter.

The rest of that night was spent preparing the building for defence. Windows were smashed to create better fields of fire and to avoid injury from flying glass. Barricades were made for doors and windows and utensils were filled with water, as it was common practice for an enemy to cut off essential utilities, i.e., gas, electricity and water to a defending force. L/Sgt Padfield remembers, "We used desks and cupboards to make barricades. There were fires around the place to see what we were doing, and then we settled down to wait. I positioned myself on the stairway, so that I was in a position that I could readily respond to events. I sent Arthur Hendy to the basement to see if there was anything of use in the way of clothing that we could use to muffle the sound of our boots, and just as important, to see if there was any food. Our luck was in; he came up with pullovers, slippers and skirts. We passed them round and he cleared off again saying, 'There were some vegetables down there.' After a while he came back with some hot soup.

Daylight came and I went round organising the various fields of fire that I wanted each man to cover. Sid Guerin, as I determined, seated himself on a desk where he could comfortably sit with a wide view to the west, through a porthole window. Having described the area I wanted him to cover I couldn't understand why he didn't acknowledge my instruction, until I found that he had been shot through the mouth. It must have been a stray bullet because I had not heard a thing! We laid him out on the floor ensuring that his identity tag was round his neck."

About 8.30 am a German column of armoured vehicles, led by Hauptsturmführer Viktor Graebner of the 9th Panzer Division Reconnaissance Battalion, attempted to cross the bridge from south to north. The men in the schoolhouse had a good view of the vehicles and the leading two or three vehicles were allowed through before the order to fire was given. No other vehicles survived the hail of fire that poured down on them. The action lasted about two hours and about 12 German vehicles were destroyed and an estimated 70 Germans killed.

A citation for Sapper Ron Emery stated, "On 18th September 1944, a column of German armoured half-tracks came over Arnhem Bridge and attacked the house in which Sapper Emery had a defensive position. Sapper Emery shot the driver and co-driver of the leading half-track which crashed into the house with its machine gun still in action, ten yards from Sapper Emery's window. Disregarding the hail of fire aimed at him, Sapper Emery stood up in full view of the enemy and threw a hand grenade into the half-track killing the crew. After this he took a prominent part in the destruction of a further five half-tracks.

On another occasion, on the night of 18/19 September, Sapper Emery was a Bren Gunner defending a room when it was heavily attacked with grenades. Six grenades came into the room wounding all the occupants. Sapper Emery, although half stunned by the explosions, and wounded by shrapnel continued firing his gun and drove off the attack. Throughout the operation Sapper Emery showed the greatest courage and determination in defending a particularly dangerous post. He personally destroyed 13 of the enemy."

This recommendation was approved and the Military Medal was awarded on the 9th November 1944.

After this attempt by Graebner to get across the bridge, things quietened down for an hour or two except for the odd round, probably fired by snipers. After this time the schoolhouse was constantly under virtual attack as instanced by the following recorded reports.

1 pm. School mortared for one hour. Bren gun groups defending south side engaged.

2 pm. Enemy infiltrate into houses opposite and set up machine guns firing directly into the eastern rooms.

6 pm to 7.30 pm. Desultory machine gun and mortar fire.

7.30 pm. Two knocked out half-tracks resting against the school are attempting to set us on fire. Fire-fighting parties keep flames in check until danger is past.

8 pm. Germans fire 51 mm mortar bombs directly through the northern windows from next house. Forced to evacuate rooms for one hour.

Harold Padfield recalls, "We had a lull for almost an hour, except for the odd sniper. Tommy Gray was our next to be killed. The Germans then opened up with mortar and artillery and life was getting difficult. 'Twiggy' Hazelwood was badly wounded and 'Ginger' Partridge had the sights shot off his Bren gun, but miraculously he wasn't touched. Houses around us were set on fire from the constant barrage of shells, and we just waited. We could hear battles going on all round us, but at this particular time shelling was our main worry.

During the darkness of night came attacks with grenades and spasmodic raids which were successfully beaten off, robbing us however of the ability to sleep. At midnight I decided to take one of my Benzedrine tablets, as I hadn't had any sleep since Saturday and we were now entering the early hours of Tuesday."

About 3 am the defenders at the schoolhouse had what was probably their most successful moment. A large German force, probably misidentifying the building in the darkness, assembled alongside it, standing around and chatting directly under the windows on the second and third floors manned by the defenders.

Len Wright describes what happened next, " We all stood by with our weapons and grenades, we had plenty of those. Then Major Lewis shouted ' Fire! ' And the men in all the rooms facing that side threw grenades and opened fire down on the Germans. My clearest memory is of 'Pongo' Lewis running from one room to another, dropping grenades and saying that he hadn't enjoyed himself so much since the last time he had gone hunting. It lasted about a quarter of an hour. There was nothing the Germans could do except die or disappear. When it got light there were a lot of bodies down there, eighteen or twenty or perhaps more. Some were still moving. The guts of one man, visible because of a severe stomach wound, needed immediate attention and some of our men, showing a Red Cross symbol, were shot at as they tried to get him in. They were unharmed but were unable to help the German."

For the rest of Tuesday, 19th September the defenders came under an increasing number of attacks from a variety of different weapons, including small arms, mortars, artillery and around 7 pm, tanks. A German tank approached to within about 30 yards of the schoolhouse and blew away the northeast corner of the building at the first floor level, with other shots going right through the building. In spite of this the defenders held on. In a first room floor off the landing, about a dozen mattresses had been stacked to give protection against splintered glass. Harold Padfield remembers, " Suddenly there was an explosion and one of the mattresses was on fire. I went in to pull it off the pile and put it out and was hurled to the doorway by another explosion. It was thought that a rifle grenade might have caused it from a sniper across the road. I crawled back and there was another explosion with the same result. The third time I was lucky and managed to extinguish the fire. "

German pressure was increasing and ammunition was starting to run low. By the end of this day it is recorded that 2 Sappers had been killed and 24 wounded.

Next morning, 20th September there was still no sign of XXX Corps. At 7 am considerable activity around a crossroads south of the school was observed. About 9 am the end was in sight for the gallant band who had held this vital position for so long with nothing bigger than a Bren gun. It has been testified that a tank and a SP gun

firing from about 70 yards range started systematically blowing away at the roof and top storey of the school. One shell set the school ablaze and another explosion injured and stunned Major Lewis and Lt Wright.

Len Padfield observed, " Joe Simpson and 'Paddy' Neville were killed. The rest of us were OK and moved into the basement. It was becoming obvious that we would have to move out. 'Twiggy' Hazelwood was getting worse by the hour. Sure enough, another direct hit and the school was well alight."

While the evacuation was in place a few Sappers were detailed to stay behind to guard their rear. The wounded were brought up from the basement, with eight or so of the more seriously wounded being transported on doors or mattresses. The two medics, Cpl Roberts from 'C' Company and Sapper White from 1st Parachute Squadron, with no other support, did sterling work looking after the many wounded with very limited medical equipment. The two doctors who had made it to the bridge area, were isolated with units stationed at the west of the bridge, separated from the schoolhouse by a wall dominated by German gunfire. Several men from both areas were either wounded or killed trying to run the gauntlet of this obstacle.

Meanwhile the rearguard was suffering from the shelling, with some also wounded or killed. It was intended to move to the smaller building, which had been evacuated by the Sappers on the first night. But as the first men started to move under the command of Lt Simpson, he was wounded. Harold Padfield continues, " As we made our way across to a wall, we came under fire. John Bretherton was killed as he was getting over it, 'Twiggy' got a burst of machine gun fire up the side of his body as we were lifting him over the wall, but he clung onto life.

The next 20 minutes were catastrophic; we were caught in an enfilade of fire and airbursts. A stray bullet hit Charlie Grier; it made a hole in his helmet but left no mark on his head. Billy Marr was uninjured but his pack was severed from his back."

Major Lewis called out from his mattress, " Time to put up the white flag," Captain Robinson, his second in command, said, " Being unwounded, I felt guilty allowing myself to be captured, so I called out to him and asked if the fit men could attempt to escape. He shouted back that we could. " About ten men ran across to some gardens in the houses to the east, but were soon discovered and taken prisoner.

Major Lewis shouted that the remainder should surrender and that they should take pride in their performance. Men took their bolts out of their weapons and threw them away, leaving the weapons behind. Spr Butterworth put a white handkerchief on the end of his rifle and went forward waving it. While he was doing this, a German opened fire and shot him in the legs. A German officer then apparently shot the man for opening fire on a man trying to surrender. This officer then told them to come forward, saying, " You are very brave but very foolish."

Betrayal- Operation FRESHMAN

When five British servicemen on a mission to disrupt Nazi Germany's nuclear weapons programme crash-landed in Norway in the winter of 1942, they hoped still to escape with their lives.

But documents released on 19th October 2004 at the National Archives in Kew, south-west London, described how they were betrayed by the villagers they approached for help, interned in a prisoner-of-war camp and then killed under orders from Berlin.

Details of the murders were contained in witness reports compiled for use at a war crimes trial after the end of the Second World War.

The men, all Royal Engineers, had been assigned to Operation FRESHMAN, a mission to destroy a heavy water plant in Rjukan, Norway. It was feared that the plant had a crucial role in Germany's effort to build the first atomic bomb. A later raid against the plant formed the basis for the 1965 film 'The Heroes of Telemark', starring Kirk Douglas, Richard Harris and Michael Redgrave.

Most of the crew were killed when their glider crashed in dense November fog. According to the files, the mountainside was strewn with wreckage, but Lance-Corporal Wallis Jackson, 28, and Sappers Frank Bonner, 25, James Blackburn, 21, Thomas White, 23 and John Walsh, 21, survived. Three were injured and the other two walked to the nearest village, where they asked the village mayor for help. Instead, he telephoned the German authorities, who arrested the men and forced them to lead them to the glider and their comrades. The five were taken to a camp near Oslo, where they were interrogated.

In January 1943, with the war beginning to turn against Germany on the Eastern Front, orders were issued in Berlin to shoot all commando personnel as saboteurs. Together with a sixth British serviceman, Seaman Robert Evans, who had been captured on a separate mission, the five sappers were led into Trandum Forest, blindfolded and shot in the head.

A German soldier who later boasted about the killing threw their bodies into a makeshift grave. Workers at the camp had been sent home just before the killings. When they returned, they found blood in the snow and blood-soaked clothing.

In a witness statement, one of the labourers, Hans Rundevold, said he heard that a German soldier who took part in the shootings had called the incident "one of the finest things he had ever participated in."

Another, Per Rasmussen, said the officer who had led the firing squad was "a very brutal man" who had been reduced to a lower military rank for brawling. Mikael Sleteteboe, a farmer, said that someone in the firing squad had boasted "he should gladly shoot another ten if he got them."

A Norwegian soldier, Kurt Hagedorn, said he had been told that the British soldiers were to be regarded as saboteurs, as they had civilian clothing underneath their uniforms. "However, I have not seen that," he said. "They were also alleged to have carried explosives and poison in order to contaminate our drinking water."

But in an affidavit, Lt Gen Karl Maria von Behren of the German army, expressed regret that the men had been killed before he was given a chance to question them. He described the matter as "very painful."

After the war, the six bodies were exhumed and given a ceremonial burial near Oslo.

“One of History’s Lost Opportunities”

Lou Varrone (Miami USA)

Over these fleeting years we have occasionally loaned this column to recipients of the Victoria Cross, Our mother country’s equivalent of our Medal of Honour. It is only proper that we should do so inasmuch as the highest awards of Allied nations were earned in some of the same wars and battles.

A thick volume of the official “Register of the Victoria Cross” in my personal collection lists Henry Tandy, VC, as “The most decorated Private (of the British Empire) in the First World War; served as a Recruiting Sergeant during the Second World War.”

Yet his VC was but a modest award compared to a lost opportunity that might have altered the course of world history.

On 28th July 1997 an incredible story appeared in England’s “Daily Telegraph. The feature article is herein reproduced that begins with bold headlines: “PLEASE SEND MY BEST WISHES TO PRIVATE TANDY” SAID HITLER. HE IS THE MAN WHO SPARED MY LIFE.”

“Private Henry Tandy, VC, one of Britain’s most decorated heroes of the First World War, could have changed the course of history by killing Adolph Hitler. “He had the future Fuhrer in his rifle sight at point-blank range on a French battlefield, but could not bring himself to pull the trigger when he saw that the German corporal was wounded.”

“So goes the legend that has been circulating for decades among soldiers of the Green Howards, one of the regiments in which Tandy served. But now archivists at the regimental museum in Richmond, North Yorkshire, have unearthed evidence that it may be true.

“Pte Tandy gave his account of the story in an interview with the Sunday Graphic on 1st December 1940, after the

German air raids on Coventry, where he then worked as a policeman at the Triumph factory. He said he had spared

a German corporal’s life at Marcoing, near Cambrai, in hand-to-hand fighting on 28th September 1918 - the day when his courage earned him the VC. At the time he was serving with the Duke of Wellington’s Regiment.

“Only years later, he said, did he discover the identity of the object of his mercy. “I couldn’t shoot a wounded man,” he said. “So I let him go. If only I’d known what he turned out to be.” When I see all the people women and children, he has killed here in Coventry, I’m sorry to God I let him go.” Now the Green Howards’ archivists have found that Hitler himself may have believed that Pte Tandy saved his life.

“When Hitler became chancellor of Germany in 1933, says the museum’s newsletter, he set his staff to pouring through British Army accounts of the action at Marcoing. “They discovered that Tandy was the private who led an attack on Hitler’s platoon. “The archivists have found that in 1935 a doctor Schwend asked the Green Howards on Hitler’s behalf for a print which hung in the officers’ depot. Painted by Fortunino Matania, the Italian war artist, it showed Tandy carrying a wounded comrade to safety at the Battle of Menin Crossroads in October 1914, four years before the Marcoing action. Hitler had also fought at Menin at about the same time. The regiment dispatched the print to the Fuhrer, who hung it in his Bavarian retreat at Berchtesgaden.

“The museum ~ have also found a letter from Hitler’s adjutant, Capt Weidmann, thanking the regiment for the picture.

“The Fuhrer is naturally very interested in things connected with his own war experience,” the letter says, ““He was obviously moved when I showed him the picture. He has directed me to send you his thanks for your friendly gift which is so rich in memories.’ Pte Tandy is said to have been unaware of Hitler’s interest in him until 1938, when he received a telephone call from Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, who had just returned from signing the Munich Agreement with Hitler.

”Chamberlain told him that Hitler had sent him his personal best wishes. He had pointed to the picture of Tandy and said: “That man, came so close to killing me. I thought I would never see Germany again.”

William Whately, Pte Tandy’s nephew, said of Chamberlain’s call: “Afterwards my uncle recounted it in a matter-of-fact way.’

“He added that his uncle had always thought there was something familiar about the photographs of Hitler in the newspapers.

”Major Roger Chapman, spokesman for the Green Howards, said of Pte Tandy: ‘He was a remarkably brave man, only 5 ft 5 “ and 119 lbs and intensely modest. He was no line-shooter.”

“After a lot of research we have no doubts he did meet up with Hitler and allowed him to live, an act of compassion he regretted 22 years later.” “He said the Green Howards would like to track down Hitler’s picture of Tandy, which may still be in Germany or a souvenir in the home of an American GI.

”Pte Tandy, VC, DCM, MM and bar, died in 1977, aged 86.

His ashes were buried near the old battlefield where he earned his VC - and where perhaps he met Hitler.”

Extensive research has added weight to the legend that a war Hero had a chance to alter history!

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Found and Lost- Harry Dunstan

Harry (Brummie) Howell

So sad to hear of the death of Harry Dunstan (December 2004 edition) whose whereabouts were found not long ago through your fine Journal. Memories came flooding back from Norway and Palestine with 9 Airborne Squadron.

I can picture him now on that boat to Palestine giving us a rendering of the "raspberry," his famous party piece.

It was a pleasure to have known him. Never forgotten by those who knew him.

Sgt Dunstan- Fond Memory Ken Cole

November 1944, 1 Troop 9th billeted in an old 2 storey stable block and a Nissen hut in Coningsby. Available was a 50 mm short barreled mortar, a parachute flare and Harry. A convenient upper storey window, dark night, mortar on the window sill, "Thunk," Coningsby illuminated over Coy. H.Q.

We were a bit uneasy but the incident was never traced back to us!

A Gestapo Salute for the Airborne

Percy Liggins (1st Canadian Parachute Battalion)

At the time, (1944) I was a prisoner of war in Leipzig on a work party, or, as the Germans called it, "Arbeits Commando". We were housed in the upper floor of a large two-story brick building, the bottom floor, being occupied by our German guards under the command of a small, neat, pinch-faced-man - immaculate in dress but gave the impression of a small yappy dog. Although only a corporal, he acted like a field marshal.

One day the word came down that a Gestapo group led by a Captain would visit us. This led to a scraping; scratching and general clean up until the drab surroundings almost shone. Naturally the prissy, little martinet of a corporal was everywhere, checking this, checking that and at the same time making life for the guards hellish who in turn passed their agony on to us.

Five of us had joined forces pooling our Red Cross parcel contents, which enabled us to make deals on the black market, which allowed us to eat a little better. I usually made most of the deals as I had picked up German a little better than the others. Now with the Gestapo arriving, we were dreading the possibility of discovering some of the forbidden goodies we had in our lockers. All we could hope for was that the inspection would not be too fine or vigorous for if we were found out we would suffer "Heaven knows what" punishment. Even though there was a thriving black market ROW'S were not supposed to be involved in it. Why, at one time we were eating white bread (it tasted like cake) while everyone else was eating black bread. I had managed to obtain by devious means the proper coupons, which were only for invalids and pregnant mothers. This alone would stir up a hornet's nest. The day came when the Gestapo arrived. The Captain really stood out, he was a tall, broad shouldered man, greying at the temples, and stern faced, with cold, grey eyes. He made quite an imposing figure. He wore a well-fitted uniform with impressive multi rows of ribbons, set off by the Swastika armband. I was at my place of work not far from the barracks or "Lager" and did not see the "Captain" until later on in the day. Our POW leader and interpreter (A London Jew!) had the pleasure of escorting the Captain and the entourage of the bouncing, little Corporal plus a couple of guards.

According to the interpreter and leader it was quite a thorough inspection but the lockers were chosen at random and ours were not among them.

After consuming what passed for the noon meal, usually turnip soup, we were all herded outside where our foreman would sign the register and lead us to our place of work. This day however, due probably to the visit, by the Gestapo, there was a longer waiting period before the foreman appeared. As we were standing waiting, the Gestapo Captain appeared on the small porch that fronted the building where we were imprisoned. Leaning on the low rail of the porch he peered at the group of prisoners. I know we presented quite a sight for very few wore complete uniforms, only cast off clothing or a mix of uniform. There was one item common to everybody's garb, that being a bright red triangle over the heart, front and back, plus another on your knee cap to enable anyone shooting at you to either get a shot in your heart or knock out your knee.

I was wearing a pair of British army trousers topped with a warm, tight fitting, French Army officer's jacket, red trimmed epaulets on the shoulder and a row of little brass balls that served as buttons. I wore this uniform because the heavy fabric made a nice warm garment, good protection against the chilly "Leipzig" days. I also wore a maroon beret from my old unit. Now, whether the maroon headgear stood out or whatever, suddenly this tall Gestapo Captain was standing before me. I came to attention and he waived for me to relax, then proceeded to ask me in perfect English why I wore the red beret while my friends wore khaki, black or different coloured headgear. I replied that it was an insignia of my military unit. He nodded and mentioned, artillery, tanks, infantry or engineers then looked at me for an answer to his question. I replied, "none of those sir, I was a paratrooper or as the Germans called them 'Falschirmjaegers.'" The Captain paused for a moment, made no reply and suddenly saluted me with heels together. He then spun on his heels and strode off. I was not the only shocked one for everyone there was amazed at the reaction to my answer.

However it was as nothing compared to the little German Corporal in charge - he turned red, then pale, screamed and almost danced like a small child in a tantrum. He screamed at me in English and German "what did you say, what did you say to the Captain?" I replied that I had only told the officer what my unit was - he turned away to join the captain but was still not sure and was still angry at everyone, especially me!

As I Recall

Mervyn Potter

Sapper Initiative

During the weeks leading up to the invasion of Italy (Taranto for us), the C.R.E. must have sensed a feeling of frustration and boredom amongst his sappers and in order to bring back some "life," he decided we should hold a SPORTS DAY. The venue would be in the camping area of 261 and each of the Squadrons should organise some particular event, such as inter squadron short duration soccer matches, relay races, etc.

Our squadron decided to hold horse racing, well, horses were not much in evidence in North Africa, so it was to be donkeys. Someone, I don't remember who, engaged the services of some local donkey owners, who arranged to bring them to our camp at a certain time and were briefed on what they were going to do. I remember very clearly; the donkey owners were highly amused about this and no doubt thought we were mad.

Our MT Sgt (Sgt Powell, nicknamed, SANDY POWELL), was in civilian life, a book-maker's clerk and was well versed in the art of book-making. So, naturally, it fell to him to organise the betting. After some races, it became abundantly clear, one of the donkeys did not have his heart in this foolish activity and no matter how hard his owner used the stick, he would not go faster than a slow walking pace and was last in every race. Towards the end of the racing, some of us 261 lads put our heads together and decided on an idea. The Last Race. In view of the poor performance of this errant donkey, the bookmakers odds on it were tremendous and we suddenly descended on Sandy Powell and laid on a lot of money, (we had plenty, there was nothing much to spend it on in our area!). Sandy looked puzzled and worried, but he took the bets.

The race started and true to form, the errant donkey was well behind, when the leader was well up the field. This was the time for action and about 8 or 10 of us ran forward, picked up the donkey and rider and rail like H— for the finishing post. We won, there were no objections and Sandy sadly paid out.

Rocket

On our return to England from overseas, many new items of equipment had been added to the G 1098's of the units in the Airborne Forces, (there were now two Airborne Divisions in the British Army), the new 6th had been raised while we were away. In due course, these items were issued.

A piece of equipment which was of special interest to me, was a rocket launched harpoon, which could be launched to take and anchor, a breast line, (rope about 1 1/2 inches in circumference) across a gap, such as a ravine or river, then a man could pull himself across the gap, then, haul across a larger rope, such as one about 4 inches in circumference. Trial firings were carried out and a technique derived.

One day, a visiting "Red Tabbed Officer" decided he would like to witness the firing of this rocket and I was detailed to carry it out, under the supervision of a newly arrived 2nd Lieut. The equipment was erected and "our officer" decided to attach the heavy rope directly to the rocket and NOT the thinner rope, as was the original practice. Since these heavy ropes were of restricted length, it was necessary to join three together after they had been laid out in "snake fashion" to avoid "tangling" when paying out." I bent the "falls" together (that is the correct name for ropes of that nature) using a double sheet bend and then for extra safety, moused the ends. Our junior officer, told me I had used the wrong knot, which I questioned and was told to use a reef knot. (Definitely wrong), but I had to obey.

When all was ready, "RED TAB" said carry on and our officer shouted: - FAH (fire).

Off went the rocket with the first length of rope, then the first reef knot parted and a "LOOSE ROCKET" went trailing around with about 30ft of rope behind. It was a very dangerous situation about which, we could do nothing, only hope it would not come down on the local village about 300yds away. Fortunately, no harm was done, only to our unit's reputation.

About a year later, I had to use this equipment on a demonstration for the late King George VI, near Spalding, when we fired the rocket over the river, one man pulled himself across, hand over hand on the rope, then pulled

the larger ropes, two or three being joined together, finally, ferrying a jeep across on our special airborne raft, which was made from "2 man" RAF inflatable dinghies and the necessary wooden bearers, which could be assembled in about 10 minutes. It was a good and reliable raft, when used by experienced "sappers." Our squad were taken before His Majesty, who congratulated us on the performance.

"FAH" was no longer with us!

Seats for WACO Gliders

Sousse 1943. At this time, I was a L/Sgt and one day, I was called urgently to the Company H.Q. Tent and told: - We need immediately, "X" quantities (forget the amount now) of 9"x3" timber, which can be cut up and made into seats for Waco Gliders (American). Get it!. North Africa does not have many timber yards, especially in an area where for miles and miles, one can only see olive groves. So, I took my chaps to Sousse, selected a nice long line of single story shops, chucked out the Arabs and their belongings and removed the roofs. As you can guess, the Arabs were not at all pleased and happy with this, but, stens can be a powerful persuader. Working night and day, we completed the Jobs in about 3 days, snatching a few hours rest in relays. Meanwhile, 3 tonners were ferrying the timber back to camp, where a squad was checking for nails with a mine detector, another squad removing them. Now, our "workshop section" came into their own. Airborne circular saw, airborne planer (they didn't want splinters in their a*** when going into battle, did they? Off came the seats at the end of the production line. All made in record time, but sadly resulted, in the breakup of a very strong friendship between two lads in the Workshop Section. When the job was completed, the CO produced a large barrel of red wine for the workers. It was strong, rough and lethal. These two over did it, fell out over some trivial happening and were never to speak to one another for a very long time.

British Gibraltar 1704- 2004

Jack Braithwaite

Earlier this year the secretary of the REA Radio branch contacted me to say that the Government of Gibraltar was offering those who had served on the Rock a week's free holiday. I spent 3 years on the Rock enjoying a mostly a 9 till 5 job with a good social life and plenty of other activities. After my tour as PSI/SQMS with 300 PARA SON RE TA it was an easier life. The applications had to be made via the REA and the lucky ones would have to make their own way to Luton Airport and provide beer money. Married ex-servicemen could take their wives but had to pay for them. The reason for the invitation was to show appreciation for all that the Services had done for Gibraltar during the last 300 years. Spike Bernard and I were given a place the first week of December.



We were met at Luton Airport by Lucy Frost, a member of the Gibraltar Office London, who accompanied us to Gibraltar. On arrival, we were greeted by a large banner 'Gibraltar Welcomes the Veterans,' behind which we gathered for a photograph.

Coaches were waiting to take us to our accommodation. This was the former Sergeants Mess at Lathbury Barracks on Windmill Hill, now a Retreat Centre managed by John Roddgues and his wife Ita who made

us all very welcome. Anyone who served on the Rock after the mid-1960s may know this building. The Mess had been turned into a hotel and two bunks had been made into one room. Extra rooms had also been built, and downstairs had been altered to provide a dining hall and comfortable sitting room.

A busy programme of visits had been arranged in the mornings but the afternoons were free. Eika Azzopardi, a member of the Gibraltar Tourist Board, accompanied the group on all official visits proving an excellent host. Spike an ex electrician arrange a visit to Calpe Power Station which is inside the rock. I had visited Calpe 9 years ago and found it was in a poor state; unfortunately it is even worse now. We could not get permission to visit REME Chambers or workshops as some people would know them. Every day we had either a lunch or dinner in a restaurant or hotel hosted by the Gibraltar Government, British Legion or the Royal Gibraltar Regiment, other meals were provided by the Centre. Coaches ran every 1/2 hour from 1430 into town and back again so there was no need to walk up the steep hill from the local bus stop on Europa Road.

Spike and I had applied for amateur radio licences, which we collected on our arrival. The room Sally and I were given was the room I had when I first arrived in Gibraltar and, to our surprise; a radio station and aerials had been provided for us. Conditions were not good for working back to UK but the rest of the world was easy. On Tuesday night we went to the Gibraltar Amateur Radio Club, and were made very welcome. After the meeting we retired to the Yacht Club for a drink and tapas (the largest helping of tapas we had ever seen!) arriving back at the Centre after midnight. Gibraltar like most places has changed - land has been reclaimed from the sea, high-rise flats and commercial buildings occupying many spaces. Down at Europa Point houses are being built on the old playing fields, and most of the married quarters have been handed over to the Gibraltar Government. 28,000 people live on the Rock and every one of them seems to have a car and scooter.

Over 600 Ex service personnel have visited Gibraltar to celebrate their Tercentenary year; I do hope they all enjoyed it as much as we did! KEEP GIBRALTAR BRITISH

Regimental Cap Badges Fred Gray

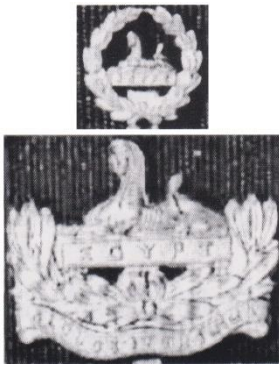
Hands up all those who thought there was only two cap badges in the British Army, those of the Royal Engineers and the Parachute Regiment. If you did then you are quite wrong. If all the badges of past and present units and all the variations of those badges were assembled in one place it would take many months, if not years, to look at each one individually. Our regimental badges have evolved over many centuries and are a record of the British Army's continual dedication and service to Great Britain and our former Empire. Even before the establishment of uniformed armies, the need to identify friends from the enemy on the battlefield was paramount. To this end the foot soldiers were known to fix a handful of grass, or a flower (i.e. the Red Rose of Lancaster and the White Rose of York in the Wars of the Roses) or a twig from a tree, (the acorn badge of the Cheshire Regiment) onto their helmets and caps. Welshmen were known to fix a small leek on their caps as a means of identification and this has survived as the regimental badge of the Welsh Guards. This form of identification was known as the "Field Mark."

Over the centuries the size of the badge has varied to suit the caps and helmets worn by the soldiers. From the Grenadier Cap of 1776, the "Regency Shako" 1816-29, the "Bell Topped Shako 1829-1844, the "Albert Shako" 1844-855 and the "Quilted Shako" 1869-1878, large one piece metal badges in either brass or copper gilt with the number of the regiment or other devices pressed into the metal was the pattern of the day. Gradually the badges were reduced to suit the size of the headgear until we arrived at the modern day Field Service Cap and the Beret. Only museums and very wealthy collectors can afford to buy those badges dating back before 1850. Not only are they expensive but also very rare. The last "Shako" helmet was replaced in 1878 by the "Cloth" helmet, which is very similar to a police constables helmet worn today. The Infantry Glengarry (adopted 1874 to 1881) has been a favourite date with many collectors to start a collection. My own Collection starts from 1897. Most collectors concentrate on either a particular branch of the Army or a Regiment. I collect Cavalry, Yeomanry, and Infantry Regiments. Over a period of thirty-five years I have acquired hundreds of badges of the Corps and Departments, The Militia, The Officer Training Corps, The Volunteer Force, The Cyclist Battalions, The Ghurkhas, The Commandos, The London Regiment, the Women's Services, Universities and Schools plus a large number of Canadian and other Commonwealth countries.

Metals

Badges have been made of various metals depending on the rank of the wearer, the cost and the availability of the metal. During the Great War officer's badges were made of bronze and are highly sort after by collectors. At the beginning of the war most of the other ranks badges were bi-metal (brass and white metal). The Scottish Regiments favoured white metal badges backed by a clan tartan. The exception being the Royal Scots Fusiliers (all brass) and the Royal Scots who had a bi-metal badge, white metal and gilding metal (very similar to brass). As the war went on metals became very scarce and most regiments had to adopt a brass only version until the war ended. These brass badges form a separate collection. During the Second World War metal again became very scarce and a large number of units had to accept Bakelite (a form of plastic) badges and where once they could be bought for 3 pennies in old currency they would now cost anything from £15 for the less glamorous units to £50-£60 for a major unit. In the 1960s the hated "Stay Bright" made its appearance but now they are very much sort after, especially the badges of the 9th and 12th Lancers, two very rare Stay Bright's. Officers were not asked to use this very unpopular metal but had to buy very expensive silver and gilt badges instead. Beret badges for officers were usually gold and silver wire, known as "Bullion."

The Infantry



In most cases the regimental title is borne on a scroll beneath the main device or just an abbreviation of the title, i.e. KSLI (Kings Shropshire Light Infantry) and DLI (Durham L.I.). Others have no identification at all. The Oxford and Bucks L.I. only wear the Bugle Horn. The Yorkshire L.I. display the White Rose of York in the loop of the Bugle Horn and this is sufficient to identify them as a Yorkshire Regiment. The main device on many of the badges shows where regiments fought and gained their most treasured battle

The Gloucesters

honour. Nine of the thirty-one regiments that fought in the Egyptian campaign of 1801 carry the Sphinx on their badge as a battle honour. It would have seemed appropriate to have the Egyptian Sphinx and not the Creco Roman as depicted. The Egyptian Sphinx is exclusively male and has a beard. The tail lays on its back, as opposed to pointing up over its back. That shown on the badges are of a female Sphinx with breasts and no beard, clearly not Egyptian. Light Infantry Regiments carry the Bugle Horn as their main device.

Originally they were a fast moving reconnaissance regiments of skilled riflemen. Instead of carrying drums to give signals they carried the bugle, hence the device on their badge. Fourteen regiments of the British Army wore the Bugle Badge. Nine Fusilier Regiments of the regular infantry of the 1st WW all carried a grenade with a various numbers of flames, indicating that originally they carried a fused bomb to throw over walls and other defences whilst attacking the enemy. Another popular device was the Castle of Gibraltar. Again regiments that had served on the Rock of Gibraltar displayed this. A key at the base of the castle indicated that Gibraltar was the key to the Mediterranean Sea. Only one regiment is entitled to wear two cap badges at the same time. The main device is the Sphinx over a block engraved EGYPT. This sits on the regimental title "Gloucestershire." The second badge, (known as the back badge) is much smaller with the sphinx inside a laurel wreath. This is worn on the back of the headdress. In 1801 the Gloucesters were engaged in a battle when they were surrounded and outnumbered. The order was given for the rear rank to about turn and engage the enemy to their front. The attack was driven off and the regiment survived. One hundred and fifty years later during the battle of the Imjim River in Korea 23rd - 25th April 1951 they were once again surrounded, this time by Chinese infantry. They tried the same tactic but lost the battle with a large number of the regiment dead, wounded or missing. They were later awarded the United States Presidential Citation for outstanding heroism during the action.

Lancer Regiments

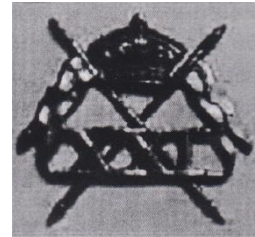
Lancer Regiments came late into the order of the British Army. It was after the Battle of Waterloo that the value of cavalymen on horseback armed with a long pole topped with a spike was first recognised. Napoleon's Polish Lancer Regiments had created havoc amongst the British Regiments particularly out-reaching the swords of the cavalry and the bayonets of the infantry. Between 1816 and 1897 six regiments of cavalry were converted to lancers. This created a whole new range of headdress badges. The regiments also adopted the Polish Lancers Cap called the "Czapska" (Polish word for cap).



The Czapska

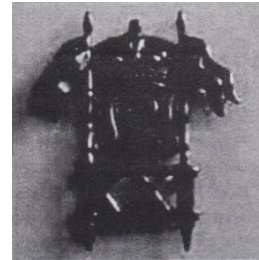
This was a flat topped black helmet with a wraparound triangular brass badge with the Royal Cypher pressed into the metal for other ranks and a very ornate silver and gilt badge for the officers.

The first regiments to convert to Lancers were the 16th Light Dragoons (1815) the 9th LD (1816), 12th LD (1816) followed by the 17th LD(1823), 5th LD (1858) and finally by the 21st Hussars (1897). The last named regiment had great difficulty in deciding on the design of their badge.



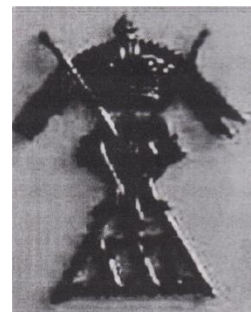
1897

The first design was simply crossed lances with a flat topped Victoria Crown and the regimental number (21) in Roman Numerals superimposed on the lances. The following year (1898) the design changed so that the lances were vertical with the VRI cypher (Queen Victoria as Empress of India) inserted between the crown and the regimental number.



1898

Between 1899 and 1902 the lances were again crossed but at a much steeper angle. When the Queen died in 1902 the Victorian Crown was replaced by the Imperial Crown and the badge enlarged. This design lasted until 1914 when the size of the badge was reduced and made of brass.



1899

In 1922, amalgamating twelve regiments reduced the Cavalry from twenty-one to fifteen regiments

The new regiments became the 4th/7th Dragoon Guards, 13th/18th Hussars, 14/20th Kings Hussars, 15th/19th Kings Royal Hussars, 16th/5th Queens Royal Lancers, and the 17th/21st Lancers. The senior regiment provided two squadrons whilst the junior only one.



1902

The 16th/5th were different to the other five regiments.

The 5th had been disbanded in 1799 for recruiting a number of rebel Irishmen into the regiment where they created a lot of dissent and trouble. It wasn't until 1858 that they were brought back onto the establishment but had lost almost sixty years of seniority; hence they became the junior regiment to the 16th. The amalgamation of the 17th and 21st Lancers caused the 21st to lose their badge and collar badges completely. The "Deaths Head" badge of the 17th Lancers took priority. This badge came about when Major General James Wolfe, the hero of Quebec lay dying after his victory over the French in 1759.

He requested that his friend Colonel John Hale be allowed to return to England with the news of the victory. When King George 3rd saw Hale he gave him £500 and appointed him the Colonel of a Light Dragoon Regiment just about to be raised. Hale chose the "Deaths Head" badge out of respect for General Wolfe. The badge is the skull and crossbones over a scroll with the motto "Or Glory." The badge is referred to within the regiment as the regimental motto and the nickname of the 17th has always been the "Death or Glory Boys". The 17th also took a prominent part in the Charge of the Light Brigade being in the front -rank of the charge. One hundred and forty officers and troopers took part and only thirty four returned, a 76% loss.



17th Lancers

The London Regiment.



During WW1 it was intended that the London Regiment would have twenty-eight battalions of infantry plus a number of Yeomanry Regiments. Two of the intended units, The Honourable Artillery Company (Infantry) being the 26th Battalion and the Inns of Court Rifle Volunteers the 27th. However, these numbers were never taken up:

the HAC remained as they were and the Inns of Court became an Officers Training Corps. The titles of the battalions usually gave an indication as to their recruiting area and the type of person to be found in the battalion. The 8th Battalion was called "The Post Office Rifles" whilst other battalions had titles such as the Civil Service Rifles (16th Bn) The London Scottish (14th Bn), The London Irish (18th Bn), Popular and Stepney Rifles (17th Bn), and St Pancras (19th Bn), all very similar to the "Pals Battalions of the north of England where the men of villages, whole streets of towns and large industrial companies had enlisted together and marched off to war as a unit of mates. One of the more unusual battalions was that of the "Artist Rifles" (28th Bn), a battalion entirely made up of London artist. (I pity their drill sergeant). They wore the badge of Mars and Minerva (God of War and Goddess of Wisdom). This battalion managed eight variations of their badge before the war ended. Of the twenty-six battalions in the London Regiment there is more than forty variations of badges to be found.

The Naval Division



The Naval Division was formed from men of the Naval Reserve units and they served throughout the 1st World War, first in Gallipoli and then in France and Flanders. Originally there were eight battalions of infantry, one Machinegun Corps and one Armoured Car Section. The Infantry battalions were named after famous admirals; Nelson, Drake, Howe, Collingwood, Anson, Benbow, Hawke, and Hood. Benbow and Collingwood battalions suffered such severe casualties in the Gallipoli campaign that they were disbanded before they had even been issued with a cap badge. Up to their disbandment they had worn the traditional naval cap tally. It was only when the division went to France that service caps and metal badges were issued. All the badges were designed on a naval theme but the most impressive is that of the Nelson

Battalion, a representation of Nelson's flag ship HMS Victory in full sail.

How many badges are there? In the reference book, Headdress Badges of the British Army by Hugh King of Farnham there are 1900 illustrations. These do not cover any of the variations and only cover that period up to the end of WW1. A number of regiments managed as many as nine or ten variations. Many of the Volunteer Battalions had different designs to their parent regular unit and the Scottish, Irish and Welsh regiments had so many battalions of Militia that title and designs have been lost to time. Taking into consideration the arm badges worn by cavalry regiments and the bed box badges that every soldier had whilst in barracks, the shoulder titles of the 1st WW, the plastic and Bakelite of the 2nd WW, the anodised badges of the early sixties and the regiments that were raised for wartime service only, then the number runs into thousands. Some are plentiful but others

are so rare that the ordinary collector has no chance of seeing them in his collection. One in particular is the Life Guards, minted for the reign of Edward VI. When he abdicated all the badges were melted down, but it is known that three escaped the pot. Another is the 16th Queens Lancers with an Imperial Crown 1902/3. After a very short time the title was amended to read 16th The Queens Lancers. By adding the word "The" into the title the first badge would cost in excess of £500 to buy if ever one became available, which is highly unlikely.

Now go and have a look in your attic and if you come across a tin full of old Army Badges that belonged to your granddad, give me a call, "QUICK."

Palace Barracks Memorial Garden Magazine

The Palace Barracks Memorial Garden in Holywood Northern Ireland has become a poignant place of pilgrimage for the bereaved families of those members of the Armed Forces who lost their lives Northern Ireland and the Falkland Islands as well as other conflicts around the world. The Memorial Garden, coupled with the Felix Memorial Garden in Lisburn, County Antrim, pay tribute to the men and women who have lost their lives in conflicts from Northern Ireland to Iraq. The Memorial Garden Custodian is about to go into print with an 80-page full colour magazine, A4 size, which will include the Rolls of Honour and Regimental Badges and crests for Northern Ireland and the Falkland Islands 1982.

The magazine will be on sale at the War and Peace Show, Beltring this July with a cover price of £7.00. It is hoped that the sale of these magazines will make £20,000 for Demelza House Children's Hospice. The Custodian will be bringing the magazines to Beltring as it is the largest military gathering and he hopes that the people attending will have an interest in those men and women that laid down their lives for others freedom. The magazine can also be ordered from the Palace Barracks Memorial Garden website: palacebarracksmemorialgarden.org

Airborne Engineers Directory

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Heroes Return Grants

Heroes Return Grants are available to all British veterans of WWII wishing to return to the theatre in which they served. In addition to grants to individual veterans there are also similar grants for accompanying spouses and/or carers required to tend the veteran concerned.

Ring 0845 0000121 for application form or 0800 169 2277 for HELPLINE.

Veteran's Badge

Ladies and Gentlemen, did you serve in HM Armed forces during the Second World War? If so you are entitled to receive a Veterans Badge, which the Ministry of Defence (Veterans Policy Unit) is issuing. It is a neat, well-made badge.

You earned it. Claim and wear it with pride. For Application forms- telephone 0800 2277 or write to Mr Terry Marsh (Post Room Manager), Ministry of Defence, St Georges Court, 2-12 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2SH

Greetings

Harry Barnsley

Greetings from the land of song, Welsh cakes, cockles, woeful rugby team, worse soccer team, Derelict chapels, and an acute shortage of Cardiff virgins, but an abundance of schoolgirl mums.

By the way, it wasn't me who gave the Duke of Edinburgh a shiner. He received it while trying to sexually assault one of our Dragons when he came down here.

Felicitations to all those bloody skinflints who are too mean to subscribe to our journal, my good friend (yes I still have one or two) Ralph Brooks and I ventured over the border to attend the 2004 remembrance service at double Hills which was very well attended, and we made many new friends especially the family from Newport, and the gentleman and his lovely wife who discovered my identity as the person who writes these tomes of useless information, but instead of blacking my eye he removed his new Veterans lapel badge from his blazer and pinned it on mine with the timely assistance of his wife, aren't wives wonderful! I was married for fifty years and never once thought of divorce, but murder many times. But on a more serious note, I do apologise but I have forgotten their names, but I would very much like to hear from them, my address is in the AEA Register and my telephone number.

The police were very helpful, ferrying us candidates for the knackers yard across the fields in their vehicles. I saw Chris Chambers placing his wreath and when the service finished I went looking for him but he must have galloped off into the sunset faster than John Wayne.

Exposé of X9

Harry Barnsley

In answer to that demented PHANTOM SCRIBBLER who hides behind a screen of anonymity to expound his infantile and vitreous and racist insults at other more sincere correspondents who try to make our journal more informative and interesting, and above all, help our hard working editor to produce a worthwhile edition.

So I will lower my dignity and answer him in like vein by saying that I have carried out some research on him which produced the following: - After prolonged study of ROGET'S THESAURUS I found that the X is the first letter of XYLOID, an alternative name for WOOD, so he probably possesses a timber scull, and the 9 denotes that his intellect is, 9 ounces to the pound, he served in the BOY SCOUTS for 14 days, as latrine orderly, being dishonourably discharged for pinching another boys conkers.

What he needs is educating, so I will begin by putting him right about national emblems, he is confusing the sheep with CAFR CYMRAEG or WELSH GOAT which is the mascot of the WELSH REGIMENT, AND ALSO OF THE ROYAL WELSH FUSILEERS and proudly marches in the forefront of two famous and brave fighting men, and I think you have been "hoist by your own petard" by your insults because I would not object to wearing it on my blazer.

You also state that I am a staunch and patriotic Welshman, yes indeed to goodness I am boyo! What you need is baptising in the river TAFF but we have stringent pollution laws down here so that's out, but if you could come down to Wales (if you know where it is) I could arrange it for you to make love to GAFR CYMRAEG, but you will be required to consume a four foot leek while in the act, but I must warn you, what you can't consume will be butted up your anus slowly and relentlessly which will make your eyes stand out like Baptist Chapel hat pegs, "Oh" by the way, bring your own gumboots. This act will be performed while the elastic band of the Welsh Assembly plays the Welsh National Anthem as the Merthyr Druids fallen virgins formation dancing team will perform a line trumping sequence at 180 steps to the minute.

So, to end this first lesson, I will quote the Patron Saint DEWI SANT, SAINT DAVID to those who can't stand the TAFFS.

Lift up thine eyes unto the hills, saddle thine ass and journey unto the Wilderness to the land of laver bread and Welsh cakes, find ye there the RED DRAGON, adorn thine heads in sackcloth and ashes, and with much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, get thy self severely stuffed.

PS: According to the bible David slew the lion with the jawbone of an ass and I think X9 is using the same weapon.

Touching Base

Brendan Snoddy

Ann and I have just returned from another stint in Kenya, where as usual we had a great time. During our stay in Nairobi we met up with another association member and former 9 Para squadron chap, by the name of Willy Lawrence. We had a good chat, as we knew a lot of the same people during our service days, although we never served together.

On a personal note, although I have now reached 60, I am still at work on a part time basis three days a week, retained on a year-by-year basis. I am still enjoying my job and will try to stay there until I am 65 provided that I am still enjoying it and my health remains fine. I have been diabetic for the last 15 years and just before I went on holiday was put on insulin but otherwise I am fully fit (although a bit over weight).

Well, all the best to everybody you see around Aldershot, (and everywhere else), it's good to see them all appearing in the magazine on a regular basis (I think Louie Gallagher must bribe somebody as he appears in every issue) and it brings back good and happy memories.

4th Parachute Squadron

Eric Richards

Since not having sent an article for the above for some while now, and having only just received our squadron Reunion Week-end Newsletter from our Hon Sec on the 18th January, it's left any news nearly a year late.

With reference to the No 11 issue of the journal the Arnhem Pilgrimage 59 Commemoration 2003 was led by Major Harry Faulkner-Brown OBE.MC, who then was Capt Faulkner-Brown, was 3 Troop commander of the then 4th Parachute Squadron RE, that later point was not mentioned at all in that article.

The Squadron Club held its 24th Reunion Dinner once again at the Falcon Hotel, Uppingham, Rutland on Saturday 1st May 2004. Unfortunately only 8 former members attended, plus 8 guests. The numbers have greatly reduced due to ill health and deaths of old members. Prior to the dinner a Memorial Service was held in the Glaston Village church and later a Bench Seat was blessed by the Rev Terence Treanor and placed in the church grounds bearing the simple inscription,

"Remember the 4th PARACHUTE SQUADRON ROYAL ENGINEERS 1942-44". The club donated £464.00 and the fixing will bring the total cost to £700, so we are appealing to those former squadron members and Friends for any donations. If so, make any cheques payable to the

4th PARACHUTE SQUADRON ROYAL ENGINEERS OCA., and forward to: Eric Richards, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED]

As also a matter of interest, the Squadron Roll of Honour is placed inside Glaston Village Church about 3 mile outside Uppingham on the A47 going East.

The Reunion Dinner this year will be on the 30th April at the same venue.

On a Final sad note, the following squadron Club members have since died:

James (Jock) O'Donnell 3 Troop age 90, April 2004

'Jim' Scott HQ, Troop April 2004,

Cpl Cyril Brown 3 Troop in August 2004, (I believe they were all AEA members).

Photographs- Arnhem Request

Harold Padfield

I am writing on the behalf of a Dutchman who wants photographs of men whose headstones are in the Oosterbeek Cemetery.

Mr Andries Hoekstra has permission to put photographs to the headstones of men who were killed at Arnhem and have their headstones in the Oosterbeek cemetery.

If any Arnhem Veteran has photos of friends or relatives who are in the cemetery, he would be very grateful to receive them, and if possible give a few details. He will return photos if they so wish. His address is:

Mr Andries Hoekstra, [REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

Visit Down Under

John Elliott

On a recent visit to family in Australia, Liza and I were fortunate to have a reunion with Bill and Sheena Dickson. We last met Bill, a veteran of 3 Para Sqn, in France at the D Day 60th Anniversary.



We spent a wonderful day (actually, Australia Day 26th January 2005) with them at their home in North Manley reminiscing about times gone by and old comrades.

After an excellent lunch we sat outside on their decking where the attached photo was taken.

They then chauffeured us to the Manley ferry for our return to Sydney to watch the Tall Ships Parade followed by a spectacular firework display.

9 Parachute Squadron RE

EX EAGLES EYE 04

LCpl G. Shepherd (Support Troop)

When 9 Para Sqn RE's Sp Tp were first tasked with completing an ADR serial on this year's Airborne Task Force (ABTF) exercise, the first question raised by the younger POMs was AD... what? ADR, or Airfield Damage Repair is something that 9 Para Sqn RE, and indeed 23 Engr Regt (Air Assault), had not been involved in for some years, and never in the parachute role. The need, however, to parachute into an operation and repair a cratered runway in order for air-landing operations to take place is clear. The blokes in the Plant Sect, however skilled in the art of digging toilets on Operations, were a bit new to this role. There was help at hand though, a comprehensive training package was designed at Waterbeach, where we practised filling in demo craters and got used to the new plant. In the training environment we got to grips with the kit quite quickly ... and the craters and by the end of the package we were all ready to be thrown in at the deep end on a two week Bde Ex! The question was: would the kit, which was bright yellow and on hire, hold up to a two-week exercise, being worked all-hours?

After rigging our heavy drop equipment and waiting around at AMC South Cerney, we did some more waiting then finally jumped onto Braid Fell DZ, near Stranraer, at dusk on day five. Our Plant landed successfully on the Heavy Drop DZ, however, whoever did the geo-survey for this DZ clearly had cataracts, as it was more like a water feature, or swamp at best - but somehow on top of a hill! We rendezvoused with the Plant on the DZ and began to de rig it, before moving off to our holding point, ready for the first phase of the exercise. Once on the move, again the one vehicle with a cab turned into a mobile drying room for all our wet stinking socks... there weren't too many volunteers to drive, strangely everybody wanted to patrol to the task site! We cleared obstacles from two airfields, firstly Castle Kennedy, which 2 PARA had seized and then West Freugh, which 1 A&SH secured later on.

Until we arrived, it looked like it had been overrun by pikeys, but we soon removed the debris from the runway and the EOD teams, from 49 Fd Sqn (EOD), dealt with the 1000lbs bombs and booby traps which were denying the runway. By this stage the vehicles, due to the socks, were starting to attract flies and the use of respirators was seriously considered!

We moved on to the old bombing range at Luce Sands, where the runway (pavement area) had been cratered by runway denial bombing trials for Op Granby. These craters were dug out by neutral org, seven of them to be exact; ranging from 6 to 12 m diameter and up to 4 m deep.

The task was to repair them within 48 hrs. To do this, the ejecta (spoil from the crater now littering the runway), which contained large amounts of concrete, had to be cleared and the crater assessed. Any water pumped out and any utility supply (electricity/gas etc) dealt with, large pieces of concrete had to be broken down, then the ejecta could be dozed-in in layers and compacted before the scab repair finishing... a long and tedious process.

The Plant worked solidly with the use of limited NVG and with only a punctured tyre and some loosened couplings, temporarily halting otherwise excellent progress. The hire kit performed well, enabling us to finish the task with some time to spare. The task proved an excellent tool for the development of SOPs and initially trailing some new equipment. The Section agreed that the Cat 277 was an excellent machine with much to offer, the JCB-1CX however proved marginally underpowered on task and possibly too delicate for this type of work with wheels all round, not tracks. The next exercise deployment on Ex Eagles Flight 05 will no doubt enhance our SOPs, and with the addition of some ancillary equipment on the CAT 277, hopefully speed up our operations.

All in all a good task to complete on Ex and a capability gap in the Regt firmly plugged... but then, what else do you expect from 9 Para Sqn... and Sp Tp in particular!

3 TROOP- OP TELIC 05- First Impressions

(February 2005)

Stood too at short notice, and after much 'on/off the bus,' 3Tp finally got the go ahead to deploy to Iraq for 6-8 weeks. The troop was to support 21 Engr Regt already in theatre. The tasks were not known so in true Sqn fashion we packed as much as possible and were ready to adapt and improvise as required.

We arrived at Basra International Airport on the evening 2nd February. The blokes were then flown by Chinook helicopter to Shibah Airfield and were given their home for the next few weeks, air conditioned tented accommodation, so it's not all that bad. The blokes quickly settled in to their temporary homes and began to make full use of the welfare facilities, consisting of T.V, Internet, and the ever reliable satellite phones. The next few days were spent on mandatory in theatre training. No sooner had we finished before we were straight out on task. The task was known as Compartmentalization of Waterloo lines - otherwise known as force protection of somebody else's camp!

The task took four days to complete and was a good warmer in the bank for the lads for future tasking. After a few days rest for personal admin it was time for the blokes to move to Um Quasr (Southerly port) for the next task. The task was split into two with Cpl 'Keith' Floyd commanding one team and Cpl 'Devon' Malcolm the other.

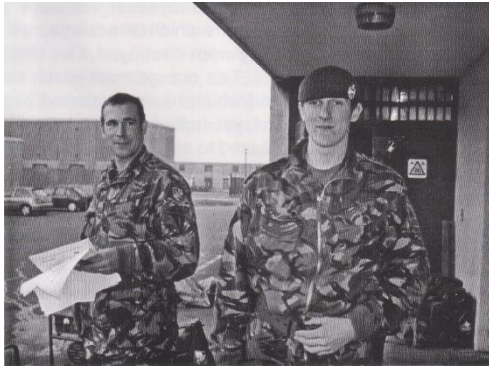
This proved a little more interesting than force protection and involved Cpl Malcolm's site constructing the concrete pads for a new camp front gate and Cpl Floyd's site enjoying fantastic cuisine at the Naval School. We were finished after two days and returned to Shibah Airfield. Due to our high standard of work at Waterloo Lines the Brigade Commander requested that The Squadron to be employed on further tasking at his location. So this meant more dealings with the local traders and more shovelling of sand. Hurrah! The next few weeks flew by with a number of small tasks and recces for future jobs.

But it has not all been work. The majority of The blokes where allowed to go Camp Doha (American camp , north of Kuwait City) for 24 hour respite. The facilities there include cinema, swimming pool, supermarket, a gym to die for and awesome scoff.

The usual evenings activities consist of tea at 5 o'clock followed a swift visit to Muscle Junction Gym where LCpl 'Henri' Lloyd has been seen on numerous occasions transfixed on the reflection of his own boy like body. After the gym, a few blueys are followed by a riveting game of scrabble contested between the two scrabble giants Devon and Keith whilst drinking copious amounts of tea. Needless to say the tour is dry!

On a final note the time is passing quickly as we are being kept busy. We have also found out that the rest of the Squadron will be joining us in April. Suddenly 6-8 weeks has extended to 6 months. Slight change of plan but all part and parcel of the Squadron.

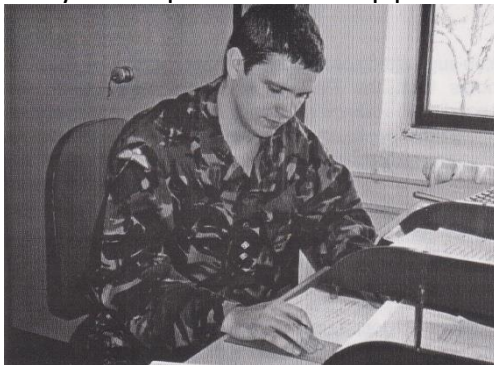
9 Para Sqn- At Work, Rest & Play



Cyril Sear & Spr Ellis check out the equipment



Tony Cross on camera



Staff work is an endless task - Lt Andy Lowe



Tom, Ash & Will (2 Troop)



Mark (Oozie) Shaw and mates in the Aviary bar following the Remembrance Service

Life in the Philippines

Peter Twelftree

You suggested some time ago that I might send you some notes from the Philippines, where Belen and I are spending the summer, for entry into the Journal.

This has been going through my mind and I am rather at a loss as to what to say that might be of interest to warriors past and present. Life here is similar to that in retirement in the UK, or in Spain where we spend most of our time, that is to say we eat and sleep, and in between spend time socialising, working about the house and garden etc.

Perhaps if I touch upon some events that have taken us through the months until we are now nearly ready to return to Javea they may be of some small interest.

We hadn't flown to Manila from Spain before, and it was a long journey. Alicante - Madrid - Paris - Singapore - Manila. Nearly 24 Hours journey time, plus the road journey each end to and from the airports. At Manila airport visitors are not allowed into or near the terminal building, so passengers have to exit the building to the hot and humid outdoors before having an opportunity of being seen by those who have come to meet and collect them. Relatives held back behind the restraining fence, who then bring the transport to collect and carry us home, usually pick us out quickly.

Home for us in Manila is a one-bedroom ground floor apartment we have in Mandaluyong City, a municipality in the centre of the metropolis. Belen's cousin lives next door and tends the apartment in our long absences, as well as having it ready for our arrivals.

We had planned to stay there several days to get over the flight and to orient ourselves before flying on to our eventual destination, but as the water company were only making water available for two hours a day due to upgrading works in progress we decided to visit Belen's brother at Clark Airbase where he serves in the Phils, Airforce. A two-hour air conditioned bus journey and we were there.

Four days later were ready to fly to Catanduanes, the small island where we have our main residence, and where we are spending the summer.

Flights leave Manila at 0630 daily and it is a flight of over an hour in a SE direction from Manila. A very efficient local airline, one of many covering the Philippines, with the journey costing £20 one-way. Manila newspapers and refreshments are served during the journey.

Catanduanes island is located offshore North of Legaspi, which is towards the SE tip of the main island of Luzon upon which Manila is situated. Virac is the capital of the island.

We have a two storey house located adjacent to the Virac airport so it is not long after we have landed before we are home. Whilst we are away Belen's sister - in - law looks after the house. We found things were much as we had left them two years ago, but not quite.

The dog remembered us and made us very welcome. Catanduanes lies in the regular path of typhoons coming off the Pacific Ocean, and there are a number of these each Autumn/Winter. Winds of up to well in excess of 200 kph are known. Up to 100 kph are more common and are quite spectacular to witness. When we know they are coming we place "typhoon boards" over the windows to minimise damage. These boards are 1/2" thick, 12" wide and fit neatly and securely, side by side, to totally cover all windows. A friend of ours had a flying coconut break through the wall of her house into the living room, a veritable cannon ball.

Completely out of season a typhoon had struck the island several weeks before we arrived. This was not severe by island standards with winds not much over 100 kph. Electricity over much of the island had failed for weeks and fortunately for us had been restored to our area the day before we arrived. The public water supply was intermittent but we have an alternative with our own deep bore and electric pump.

The garden had suffered during the typhoon. All the paw paw (papaya) trees had been destroyed. Pineapple we planted before we left last time and which take two years to fruit were just producing, they were destroyed. Our large jack fruit tree was cut in half. Two orange trees which we had brought from Spain and which have developed well over several years, but not yet fruited, had the leaves stripped from them. I am pleased to say that they are in full leaf again. The mango and other fruit trees were unscathed.

Fortunately Belen's orchid collection had not sustained damage. This is adjacent to one tall garden wall and covered over by a light timber frame and fine mesh to keep off the worst of the sun. I would have thought this structure to be particularly vulnerable, but all was well.

Our garden rest house was partially destroyed. That is to say the four timber corner posts broke at ground level and the palm thatched roof fell to sit unbroken on the lawn. New corner posts of larger diameter and harder wood have been placed and the roof lifted back on. Much of the bamboo seating was recovered and refitted, and I can again sit under cover in the peace and quiet of the garden and watch the sunset whilst supping a San Miguel beer.

We had thought to hire a car and so avoid bringing our own vehicle from Manila. We couldn't find anything suitable so Belen returned to Manila, oversaw the overhaul of our vehicle and accompanied a cousin who drove it here for us. This involved them in a fifteen-hour drive, with minimal stops, to Legaspi, where they stayed the night with relatives. The ferry left at 0600 next morning for the four-hour journey to Virac.

The house has not deteriorated much at all during our absence. We have applied paint here and there, and made other running repairs, and it is very much up together.

We have visited Belen's "home" village on the North of the island. The road to the North is of rock and gravel, and not at all suited to light vehicles, so we travelled on the daily bus. The ninety kms took about three hours and cost 50 pence. In places it is a single vehicle width, climbs up and down the mountains, with the bus swinging around blind corners at speed. The views on either side are of green hillsides with rivers in the valleys, and very pleasant. There is plenty to see. The road is concreted as it passes through numerous villages. Then the dogs, chickens and pedestrians all have to beware the speeding bus! This bus is not air conditioned; the open windows provide the breeze. It is loaded inside and on top with passengers and goods, as it is the source of delivery of all manner of goods, building supplies etc. Due to the road surface, manner and speed of driving, the tyres don't last much more than three weeks.

In the village the electricity and water supply had not yet been restored after the May typhoon. A tidal wave had destroyed the houses nearest to the beach, the occupants had lost everything. These are resilient people who regularly lose so much during each typhoon season. Property damage, loss of the rice crop and maybe also next years seed, yet they help each other and continue. Fishing, rice and abaca (exported for paper making) are the sources of income and they live a quiet and unsophisticated way of life. For me it is totally relaxing. The large gently sloping near black sand beach makes for safe swimming and snorkelling. Not so many coloured fish or coral but interesting never the less.

Belen's brother is the farmer in the family. He tends the rice paddy and abaca plantations of all the family. We receive our share of rice whilst we are in Virac, supplementing it with potatoes from the market.

There are a number of retired expats in full time residence, all married to island women. It was good to meet up with them again and to know that little changes. Three Brits., two Swiss, three Germans, a Norwegian and several Australians form the core. They are scattered in the villages around Virac and have mostly built houses adjacent to beautiful golden sand beaches. We meet up regularly at one home or another, or on a particular beach, and are always bumping into each other in the town. There are a number of American missionaries around the island but they keep to themselves and their congregations.

The Norwegian is a particularly nice fellow, and he and his brother have both parachuted in Norway. His two children of six and eight years are being educated at a nearby school run by nuns. Tuition is in the English language, and Alf reckons it to be at least equal to the schooling in Norway.

One British newcomer worked in Hong Kong where he met his girlfriend from this island. He has built a three-storey 'mansion' on her father's farm adjacent to a most beautiful and sheltered beach. The snorkelling from there is fantastic. The reef can be waded to at low tide. The coral, and variety and numbers of coloured fish, are by far the best I have found on the island. They equal most of what I have seen previously in other parts of the Philippines. The waters being so warm at all times of the year a two-hour snorkel is no hardship.

Earthquakes occur here on Catanduanes, though I hadn't experienced them until yesterday. I was sitting upstairs at my computer, gazing out and across to the distant green wooded hillsides, when the house began to shake and tremble. The window frames moved sideways back and forth relative to the distant hills, I was reminded of a weak cardboard box that was collapsing sideways. I have experienced earthquakes in other countries but this was the most sustained and noticeable of them. I quite forgot to take the standard measure that in this situation one should leave the building as quickly as possible. The house was not damaged.

A coconut palm standing to the rear of our property and being on a neighbour's land posed a threat in that a typhoon might cause it to fall and damage our house. The owner is working in Brussels. Belen has been in telephone contact with him and he agreed that we might fell it. Two men with chain saw arrived last Saturday, and said they could fell it without damaging neighbouring properties and the overhead electric cables crossing the plot. Erring on the side of safety to the properties they promptly set the palm across the electric wires, cutting power to the houses of two neighbours, and leaving a live wire flying around on a wet and windy day. The elec. co. was extremely good. A linesman visited within an hour of a 'phone call, and within three hours supply was restored. This was remarkably quick service for the Philippines, where they have inherited from the Spanish a very easy going attitude to all such things.

A visit to the dentist last week for an inspection resulted in three small fillings. Total cost £10.

I recently visited the optician for an eye inspection and was measured for a pair of varifocal lenses with new frames. My previous pair bought in the UK four years ago cost £350. This new pair now cost £39, and they are equal in all respects.

You might be interested in several other cost comparisons:

Driving licence renewal for three years £3.26

Diesel 21.14 pence a litre

Petrol 25.72 p a litre

A crate, 24 bottles, San Miguel beer £2.82

Local Rum and Brandy 75cl bottle (very drinkable) 50 pence

Paint - gloss enamel - varies £1.20 - £ 1.90 a litre Skilled labour (carpenter, plumber etc.) £3 max. per day. 4 Hour ferry trip Air con. lounge £1.20, Deck with comfortable seats and cover 90 pence

The economy in the Philippines is not strong, and Filipinos find the increasing prices of everything very difficult to live with. For we expats the currency exchange rates are very favourable.

Belen has just returned from Manila where she visited relatives. She is talking of house prices there. A five-bedroom house in a nice and quiet location selling for 4 million pesos, £40,000. A nice house on the beach in Catanduanes or elsewhere in the Philippines will not be up to Manila prices, and if Catanduanes is avoided then so are the typhoons. Think about it!

Weather at this time of year should be of continuous sunshine. It is the time for tourists. It hasn't been normal this year though. We have had sun, but also overcast skies and rain. Much of the rain has fallen at night. I have found the variation in the weather to be particularly pleasant. With the overcast or rain has come pleasant cooling breezes, and the rain washes everything clean and fresh. The bonus is that it is never cold, no matter how much wind or rain there is.

Being close to the airport we have a land line telephone. This enables us to keep in touch with the outside world through the Internet. Family, friends, bank accounts etc. are all within easy reach. None of our expat friends have this home facility though there are many internet cafes in town that they can use. Two banks in Virac now have "hole in the wall" facilities for drawing cash out of hours. This too is useful.

I have not produced a literary gem, but you may have gleaned some idea of how we have spent our summer. I haven't mentioned Philippines politics, which looms large here, because we are not directly concerned with it. Nor have I brought in corruption, which with politics at all levels helps to keep the people and the country poor.

These notes are not typical of articles normally appearing in the Journal, and if you should think them not appropriate then by all means discard them. No offence will be taken. They might however fill a gap if you are in need of newsprint.

News from around the Branches

Aldershot

Don Doherty

Arriving home after being on a rather nice holiday in Australia and Bali the phone went and a rather peeved editor (Dave R) said, "have you got the notes for the journal, they should have been in by the 14th of March latest. (We got back on the 19th!). Instant panic, find a shirt with long cuffs and make it up as you go along, so here it is! In Perth (WA) met up again with George Jones, Renee and daughter Lesley and, as is usual with Renee and family we were right royally entertained, regards are sent to all sqn members in the UK who are known to them.

We also stayed with Jean, wife of Dan Tinworth (deceased) who used to be in plant troop and RHQ, Jean would be pleased to hear from anyone in the association who remembers Dan or herself (address through me, Doc.) Over then to the other side, (Queensland) to meet up again with Dennis Thomas, Dennis, a Suez vet, sends his regards to all and especially remembers the good time he had over here the first time at Coventry, if anyone gets over to his side on holiday or what-ever, Dennis would be glad to see them to have a "tinny or two!."

Back now to the UK. The 14th of November saw us having our first meeting in Buller Barracks after the Remembrance parade with the SQN, both the parade and meeting were well attended with our main guest being Peter Bates. At the prompting of the Chairman Peter gave a short speech saying it was his intention to visit as many of the branches as possible and to do all he could to further the aims of the AEA.

The branch Xmas Dinner on the 22nd of January was well attended with the main guests being Peter Bates, Bill Rudd, (where would we be without Bill?) and the OC of 9 SQN, Major Frazer Ross.

At the Dinner a presentation was made of a "Swagger" stick to the "Office of the SSM" that had been made, and suitably embellished, on behalf of the Aldershot branch, by Ron Day. This was accepted on behalf of the Sqn by "Jugsy" as the SSM was unavailable at that time.

Jan Chambers, our last report was that she had been taken ill at Arnhem; Jan is still fighting hard to get back to full fitness and as such has decided to give up being in charge of the "shop" after 15 years of dedicated service. Our new, "open all hours" shop manager is Ray Coleman, (where have we heard that name before?). Ray's long years of dedication to the AEA in running the football sweeps, being the association secretary for 10 years, was at last recognised at the Yorkshire Dinner night, our thanks to both Jan and Ray for all the years of dedicated service they have put in.

And finally, did you hear about the three Sqn lads who were brothers, Tom, Dick and Harry?

They had just passed "P" company and went in to get new boots from the QM, Tom took size 12! Harry took size 13 but Dick took size 15!

Tom got his first, (12) Harry got his (13), my my said the QM, you really have got big feet, that's nothing said Tom, wait till you see our Dicks!

Chatham

Eric Blenkinsop

Hot on the heels of the enthralling visit to Arnhem, came Double Hills. The timing was such, that for most of the members this was a "village too far" but five of us made it there and it was a joy to see it so well supported. We were able to lay the wreath that was intended for Arnhem had we registered our intention early enough.

Peter we note your appeal for attendance in 2005 and we have marked our calendar for Sunday 25th September.

Armistice Sunday 14th November

Several of our members with their ladies attended the service at the Garrison Church of St Barbara in Brompton, which was quite absorbing by its simplicity and most memorable with the Corps band in attendance. It was a joy to meet up again with one of our honorary members Bob Giles with his family. Bob (ex-Airborne Provost) has been spending his time in most of the trouble spots around the world and his next port of call was thought to be Sudan.

At the wreath laying ceremony our branch wreath was laid by Frank Ryan. We then retired to the WOs & Sgts Mess for lunch.

The branch Christmas lunch took place on December 12th and it was a most enjoyable family occasion. Top of the bill must go to Bob & Pauline Woolley & family who totalled ten in number covering four generations. Following closely were the regulars John O'Connor and Ron Gibson with their families.

It was also special because we were able to welcome Steve Collins with wife Kay to their first branch Christmas lunch. Thanks to Steve our IT man! (the 9 Sqn ferret) we were also able to welcome our most recent branch member Alan (Yorkie Craven with wife Tracy. Steve just plucks them out of his hat!

Also a pleasure to have with us Elsie Mayne who despite losing husband Dave recently, has chosen to continue in the AEA family.

It was great to have with us Mick & Pam Fisher once again. We hope to see more of them when Mick retires this year. The lunch was rounded off by our first ever Christmas draw, the purpose of which was to boost the branch funds a little following the drain on funds for wreaths & AEA plaques on the Normandy Pilgrimage.

The members were most generous with their gifts and ticket purchase so we made enough to put just the faintest of smiles on the face of the treasurer.

Of course these things do not just happen, so our thanks go to Bob & Pam Seaman for their time and effort in organising the lunch and to Ron Gibson for running the raffle.

Branch Meetings.

This year all branch meetings will be held on the 3rd Monday evening of each month 1930hrs for 2000hrs except for August and December when there will not be a meeting. The venue will continue to be the WOs & Sgts Mess Brompton Barracks Chatham.

The following notice is of Major Importance, so please enter the date on your calendars NOW.

The Official Opening of the "John Rock and Airborne Engineer Display" at the RE Museum Chatham will be at 1000hrs on Saturday 17th September 2005. This is the Corps Memorial weekend and there will be many other activities taking place over the course of the weekend.

It is most essential that we have the best possible airborne presence on the day, because this is our final opportunity to put Lt Col John Rock RE and the Airborne Sapper on a rightful pedestal among all of the other notable Corps achievements.

Further details will be circulated in the spring.

Edinburgh

Mick Walker

The Branch was saddened to learn of the death of Mary Dunn, wife of our member Jimmy. Our sympathies go to Jimmy and his family.

Charlie Imrie, late of both 9 and 300 Sqns, shocked us all at a recent function by revealing that he had asbestosis and was going to have a lung removed. He has never worked with asbestos and the only possible contact he can remember with it is on visiting his Dad at work as a youngster. Charlie took this development with his customary cheery attitude. He has now had the operation and reports are that it was successful and he is well on the road to recovery.

The Branch AGM went off fairly routinely in November. The "usual suspects" were appointed to office - Ronnie Drummond as Chairman, Dougie Archibald as Secretary, Mick Walker as Treasurer with Jimmy Simpson as his auditor and John Donaldson as Webmaster. I wish I could say the post AGM drinks were routine! It was good to see Frank Murray, who has been a member of the Branch almost since its inception, make an appearance.

One member who did not appear was Tom Robertson but this was not unexpected as he lives 150 or so miles away. We then remembered he had not been at the National AGM where he has been an ever present in recent years. Our worries were soothed when he sent a cheque for his subscription along with a note to say he had been even further away - in Australia for 6 months.

We joined our friends in the local PRA once again for their Xmas dance and all enjoyed the buffet, music and company. My suspicions about the raffle have been allayed -1 won a prize! It was a bottle of Scotland's national drink and needless to say it did not survive very long into the evening.



The 6th Edinburgh Branch AGM held in the Royal British Legion on 21 November 2004

Front Row L to R
Dougie Archibald, Roy Kay,
Ronnie Drummond, John Donaldson,
Raymond Mannion and Kim Panton.

Rear Row L to R
Melville Winton, Colin Reid,
Frank Murray, Robert Connal,
Jim Simpson, Brian Earl and Mick Walker

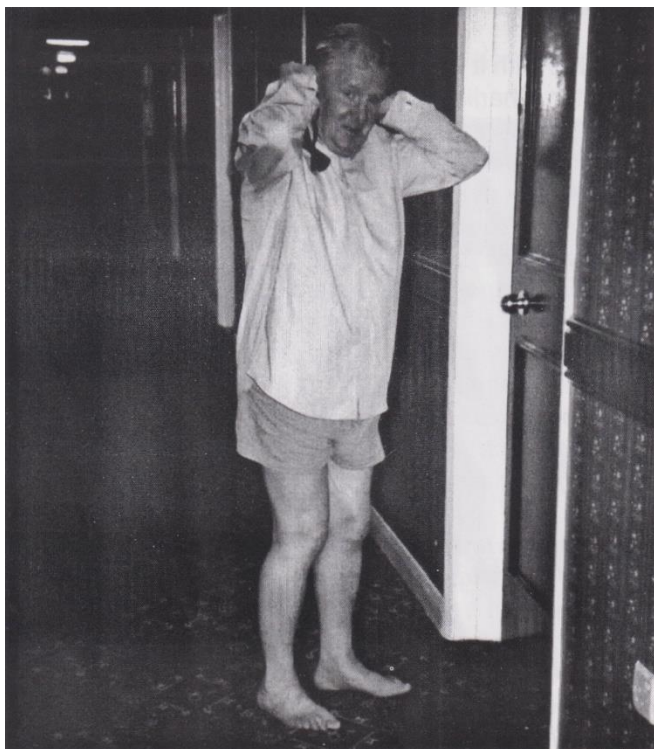
Missing from the photograph is
Ian Thomson

Yorkshire

Bill Rudd

The Branch has had a very quiet period since our last entry. The end of 2004 saw a well-attended Xmas Dinner, which was held in the Unicorn Hotel with over 50 enjoying an excellent lunch.

My own visit to the Aldershot Annual Dinner in February, which I thought was a most enjoyable evening, meeting many old and dear friends, thank you again for inviting Dorothy and I. The Branch continue to hold their bi-monthly meetings with a Sunday lunch in between, members, please note that beds are available at Strensall so come and enjoy a night out with the boys, Yorkie Davies chairs the meeting after the meeting!



So who locked Louie out of his room?

Our Annual Dinner was held in the WO's/Sgt's Mess on the 5th March with a full house of 124 members, wife's and guests attending. Many had travelled long distances and we welcomed Master Bates our new President, other familiar faces present were, Bunny Brown, Joe Stoddart, Chris Chambers, Moggy Metcalfe, Lou Gallagher and our favourite ex secretary Ray Coleman not forgetting the Birmingham 13 and my old friend Tony Manley, a little lost without his mate Dave Rutter. A presentation was made to Ray Coleman for his diligent services as Secretary for the past 12 years. Our piper Frank Menzies Hearne played us into dinner along with the Mayor and Mayoress from South Tyneside accompanied by Lt Col Chris Tickell OBE. Altogether a very successful evening and still dancing till 5am, some people have no homes to go to!

It now seems a very busy year ahead with our Branch Annual General Meeting as I go to press;

this is followed by our two-week trip to Crete. We will be joining our friends of the Crete Vets Association for several functions, leading the way will be Sid Burrell and a further 19 members and wife's supporting him, it's not too late to book, contact Bob Prosser.

Our annual trip to Arnhem is in the planning stages. Lastly our visit is also in the early stages to support the Chatham Branch and the Association, on the grand opening of the John Rock- Airborne Engineers Display at the Royal Engineers Museum on the 17th Sep 2005. A busy year ahead!

More from Coventry 2004



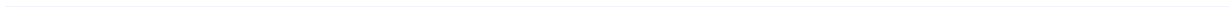
Paddy Boyce & Ken Mason



Mr & Mrs 'Paddy' Fulton



Sid Warrilow takes a quick '5' before continuing the action



Arnhem 2004- A South West Branch Perspective

Bob Runacres

We decided about two years ago to make the Arnhem pilgrimage to attend what we thought would be the last "official" pilgrimage. Luckily we had a genuine Arnhem veteran in Mervyn "Gilly" Potter in the branch who gave invaluable advice on where to go where to stay and how to get there. On his advice we booked a coach from Turners of Bristol and rooms in Park Hotel de Branding in Doorwerth. All his good advice paid off.

We decided that we would open the trip to other members of AEA as long as SW Branch members get first crack at the vacancies. In no time at all the coach seats available were oversubscribed so John Smith of the Aldershot Branch decided to organise a coach for his Branch. It was not too long before members of the Chatham Branch took the seats vacated by John's branch and a further six of the seats were taken by non-Branch members (and more of them later). There followed some e-mailing between the branch and Patrick Pronk (author of The Shiny Ninth) who agreed to lead the battlefield tour. Patrick got a little confused at one stage as John Smith also later contacted Patrick for help. As John Hooper had originally contacted Patrick there followed some puzzling e-mails between the two Johns and Patrick. Eventually it was sorted and Patrick realised that there were now two Johns on the scene and got hold of one of his friends who agreed to lead the SW Branch tour. Alexander Junier proved to be a most able tour leader and we were lucky to enjoy his services, busy man that he is.

We were also lucky that Lt Col Johnny Humphreys who had fought in the school as a Corporal was able to join the tour. Between Johnny and Alexander we got answers to all our questions and a really first class description of the major events in the battle. We also had Norman Swift who had been alongside Johnny in the school. We were also lucky in that the Turners coach driver had a real press on Airborne attitude and used the hard shoulder to gain at least a mile advantage over the other coach drivers in the huge queue to get to Ginkel Heath on Saturday. We arrived in time after a start at a reasonable hour thanks to him He also managed to squeeze his coach through gaps dust would have given a Jeep driver pause for thought. The red beret, a bit of nerve and a skilful driver is essential for a good Arnhem visit!

It would take too long to give a blow-by-blow account of the visit and we all have our own particular memories of a thoroughly worthwhile visit. Suffice it to say that we were emotionally and alcoholically challenged. None of us will forget the visit or Johnny's laconic accounts of some serious mayhem.

Many of us joined the Aldershot Branch members to attend the burying of Eric O'Callaghan's ashes in the cemetery which was done with due ceremony with Frank Menzies-Hearne on the pipes and a Parachute Regiment bugler. Those of you who were there will understand why Frank was invaluable as it was a case of "Rally on the Pipes" to get members together in the unbelievably large crowds everywhere. Queen Beatrice of the Netherlands spoke to Frank; he says to compliment him on his playing in front of the main memorial on Sunday. There is no truth in the scurrilous contrary rumour that she asked him to shut up. However, having all had tickets for the Tattoo on Saturday night and enjoyed, amongst other turns, a full brass band who played while riding bicycles, we do expect Frank to perform in future on a penny farthing bicycle!

It was good to see that HRH The Prince of Wales was present as were General Sir Mike Jackson, Lt General Sir Geoff Howlett and our own ex 9 Sqn Major General Peter Wall. General Peter and Johnny Humphreys had a long chat and Bob Prosser, without knowing who Peter Wall was, assured him that he had heard that an airborne Sapper called Wall was really going places. I am sure Peter was delighted to be reassured. It's such a comfort to have the boys behind one

The non-Sapper element consisted of a 1st Airborne Div R. Sigs, officer who joined the Division two weeks before the Arnhem drop so missed it but he was able to add a lot to the visit. The others, one ex SAS and four who were not even soldiers let alone Airborne Sappers, found the whole experience quite overwhelming. They did not really know what the red beret was all about before the visit. They do now.

Observations

Don Newman (down under)

This is just another submission (subject to your approval) for the next issue. Perhaps you do get second opinions on the subject matter, I've no wish to upset apple carts, or seeking glory just passing on a few facts that have passed my way.

With ref. to 'My Second Escape,' John E Humphreys, issue 14. This followed an entry to our own Newsletter issue 8 2004, there is an obvious connection with the following Citation published London Gazette 9th Nov. 1944 Sapper Ronald Thomas Emery - 1st Para Squadron R.E.

On 18th Sept 1944, a column of German Armoured Half-Track came over Arnhem Bridge and attacked the House in which Sapper Emery had a Defensive Position. Sapper Emery shot the driver and co-driver of the leading half-track, which crashed into the house with its machine gun still in action 10 yards from Sapper Emery's window. Disregarding the hail of fire aimed at him, Sapper Emery stood up in full view of the enemy, and threw a grenade into the half-track killing the crew. After this he took a prominent part in the destruction of a further five half - tracks.

On another occasion, on the night of 18th/19th September, Sapper Emery was a Bren gunner defending a room when it was heavily attacked with grenades. Six grenades came into the room wounding all the occupants. Sapper Emery, although half stunned by the explosions, and wounded by shrapnel continued firing his MG and drove off the attack. Throughout the Operation Sapper Emery showed the greatest courage and determination in defending a particularly dangerous post. He personally destroyed 13 of the enemy. (London Gazette 9th November 1944)

Ex RT Emery R.E. was a member of our association (Airborne Forces of Western Australia), passed away almost 30 years ago, his widow Mary now 93 and living alone is on the visiting list of our warfare reps.

Members may recall Phil Hyatt R.E. M.M. was also 4th Para Sqn R.E. at the same time, AEA Journal No 9 refers, note he passed away 1982, not 62.

On return to UK after Arnhem, the Sqn regrouped and made up strength. A friend of mine Derek Withers was one of the replacements, now 80, informs me that after a very short period of training the 4th Para R.E. were flown to Norway by U.S.A.A. and took part in disarming 35,000 German troops and then carried out other essential Engineer duties. During this time his Tp Sgt was Ron Emery R.E. M.M. long remembered for the large long fur coat he wore, having relieved a German officer of same.

Comment by delegate Offends

Dear Editor, (of the Listening Post, Western Australia)

As a delegate at the 88th State Congress in July 2004, I read with great interest a motion put forward by Belmont RSL (Returned & Services League) to revisit the recommendations of the Clarke Report. One of the items was that an extension of full entitlements to commonwealth and allied ex-servicemen, who are now Australian citizens. I was amazed at the attitude of one of the delegates; to me it was insulting to the British Ex Servicemen.

This person said, quote: "I don't want my money to go to 'the Poms'". And may I add many of the delegated voiced their disapproval at his comment.

I would like to say to this delegate, who seems to be stuck in a time warp, 'Pommy' means recent British emigrant! Also please take note that this younger generation does not refer any more to expatriate Brits as 'Poms.'

Also, let me enlighten this person and his followers. It is 'not' his money! It is as usual paid in the first instance by the 'taxpayer,' and given to Veterans' Affairs for distribution. I would like to point out that from the 1940s well into the 1970s, Australia canvassed in the United Kingdom for 'Brits' to migrate to Australia, this land of opportunity.

I and my husband, both ex-service people, were part of that scheme. We asked for nothing except to work and provide for our family, paid our taxes, like other thousands of British ex-service men and women until we retired and in retirement are still paying taxes.

We became Australian citizens, our children became citizens and their children, and still we asked for nothing.

So in my opinion the RSL do not run Veterans' Affairs nor should they. As Belmont RSL said, this issue should be put to Government level and hopefully with a favourable outcome. This is the 21st century; things change for the better I hope?

The non-agreement with Britain so long ago is in the past, this is now. We are talking about Australian citizens.

Question: Can anyone tell me why on earth the RSL membership badge clearly shows the rose of England, the thistle of Scotland, the shamrock of Ireland and the leek of Wales? What was the original reason for putting them there all those years ago? In my opinion, I would think, to acknowledge the British ex-servicemen and the Australian ex-servicemen as part of the Commonwealth. Who fought together on the same battlefields Gallipoli, World War II, Europe, the Middle East, Singapore, Burma, Borneo, Korea just to name a few?

I am curious to know how many British ex-servicemen are RSL members.

Leslie Ottley (Mrs)

Understanding the English Language

The middle aged woman who confided to a close friend, that her husband's sexual demands appeared to be at an end because he had become "impertinent"



Lean & Mean - today's men of 9 Para Sqn RE



Bob Grosvenor (131 Indep Para Sqn), Cliff Joy (1 Para before seeing the light and joining 9 Indep Para Sqn) & Vic Rhodes (9 Sqn & 1st AB Sqn 6th AB Div) taken at the BAF/NZ reunion in March 2004.

Membership Report

Chris Chambers

Since my last report, a further 7 members have joined our ranks.

| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Joe Walker | 51 Fd Sqn (Air Assault) Recce Tp | 2003 - still serving |
| Pete Lederer (Capt) | 9 Para Sqn RE | 2004 - still serving |
| Stephen Collins | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1982/85 & 1987/91 |
| Kevin Smith | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1987-1989 |
| Thomas Clifford | 51 Fd Sqn (Air Assault) Recce Tp | 2003 - still serving |
| Raymond Sharp | 9 Indep AB Sqn RE | 1952 -1955 |
| Steve Gabbitas | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1976-1982 |
| "Gentlemen, Welcome to the Airborne Engineers Association" | | |

Obituaries

David Mayne

David was born in Aldershot on the 3rd May 1937 the eldest of a family of four children.

He spent the first eight years of his childhood in India where his father was serving in the Army as an officer in the Medical Corps.

Returning to the United Kingdom to complete his education he eventually enlisted as an Army Boy Apprentice at Harrogate. Upon entering into man service he volunteered to serve with 9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers. During which time he served in Suez being a member of 3 Troop who under Capt Jock Brazier and Sgt John Smith took part in the Airborne operational assault on El Gamel Airfield. David also saw operational service in Cyprus.

In 1957 David met Elsie in the Pavilion Dance Hall in Gillingham and they married in St Margaret's Church Rainham Kent on the 18th June 1960.

David and Elsie travelled quite extensively during their service life before retiring from the service in 1980 in the rank of WO1 Clerk of Works M&E having completed 28 years' service.

David then accepted an appointment with Brig Bob Wheatley's works group in the Oman where he remained with Elsie for several years.

They finally returned to the UK in 1996 and settled in Newington near Sittingbourne where David became an active member of the Chatham Branch AEA.

David passed away in Medway Hospital on 11th November 2004 and is survived by wife Elsie son Lawrence and daughter Jeanette.

The funeral took place on Friday 19th November at Bobbing Crematorium with our branch Padre Bernard Foulger conducting the service. The branch members responded to Elsie's request for the best possible military send off.

David will be missed by all of his family and friends.

Mel Winton

Melville "Mel" Winton passed away in February 2005. He was born in Leith in 1931. This is an important point, as anyone local will tell you as Leith is Leith and has a proud history and is not just a suburb of Edinburgh. Mel attended the primary and secondary sections of Leith Academy before leaving at 14 to join that prolific recruiting ground of the TA Airborne Engineers in Edinburgh otherwise known as the Post Office Telegraph Messengers.

Before leaving school Mel had joined the Boys' Brigade and had a lifelong association with them, particularly the 4th Leith Company where as an officer in later years his main interests were in taking the lads at football, first aid, cross country and drill. Mel's efforts were well rewarded when under his leadership the 4th Leith won the Battalion drill championship 11 years in succession. In the months before his death Mel's interest did not flag and he was the principal organiser for the BB's 2005 cross-country championship for Scotland.

After National Service in the REs, which included service in Austria, Mel joined 2 Troop 300 Para Sqn. 131 Para Engineer Regt TA. While taking a full part in the engineering activities of the Troop he was also our medic and this was not just a "classroom" activity. When an off road mine blew the front wheels and most of the engine off a 3 tonner in Aden I witnessed Mel sprint to the scene with complete disregard for his own safety to tend to the casualties.

Like a lot of us Mel was scunnered by the downsizing of the Regiment in the late 60s and transferred to the RAMC where he rose to Warrant Officer before age caught up with him and he left to concentrate his energies on the BBs, the Church and other voluntary activities. He stayed with the Post Office all his working life and got early retirement in his mid-50s which left him time for his many and varied interests, principal amongst which was his family of wife, son and daughter.

The Association Branch in Edinburgh had been going a few years before Mel found us (or we found him). Once in the Branch he was a regular attendee at meetings where he was a popular contributor to formal and informal discussion and even once temporarily discharged himself from hospital to attend.

The attendance at Warriston Crematorium where the main chapel was full and the service was broadcast to those outside unable to gain admittance bears testament to the regard in which Mel was held.

We shall miss him..

Last Post

Bill Deakins - 17 November 2004

Martin White - 2 December 2004 1956-57

Col A.J Poynder MC - 28 November 2004

Lt Col John Hill - March 2005

"We will remember them"
