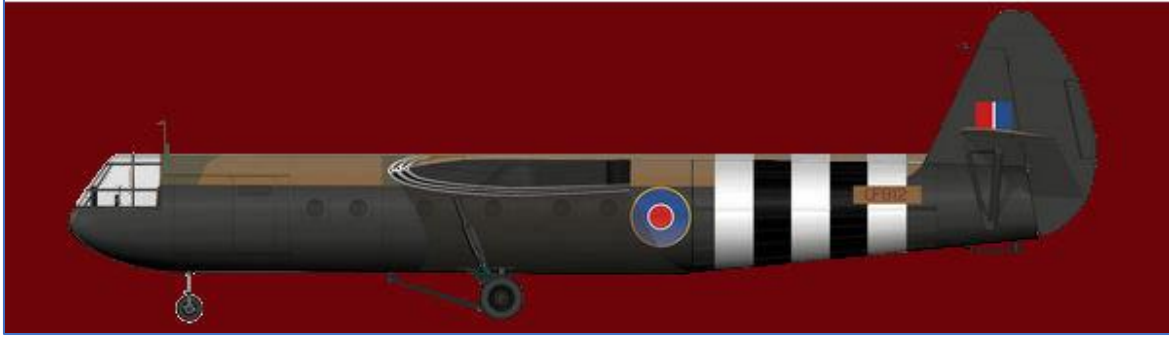




THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



The following articles were originally published in the printed version of the Journal in August 2006, Issue No. 19



The Airborne Engineer

August 2006, Issue No. 19



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Publication Deadline – December 2006 Edition

Members submitting material for publication in the December 2006 edition of the Journal are advised that the closing date will be Friday 7th November. 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

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From the 'Chair'

Mick Humphries

Well, spring has come and gone and summer is finally with us. Since my last ramblings we have had a busy time as an association. The trip to Normandy was attended by many of us, and I have heard many comments about what a great trip it was. It succeeded in achieving all 3 aims, firstly as an opportunity to remember those that fell on D day and the subsequent battle. Secondly as an opportunity to educate those that attended about the battle, and last but not least another great social event. I understand that we managed to partake of that great Norman tradition of drinking vast quantities of wine. A very big thank you to John Smith for organising a great event.

Chris and I were invited to the Yorkshire Branch Dinner this spring, an opportunity for us to reacquaint ourselves with the Ripon Mafia, and drink a few pints of Theakston's. We had a great weekend and were treated like royalty by the Yorkshire branch, a big thank you to Bill and all his team.

Your committee have had an interesting time since the spring discussing many topics. At every meeting that I have attended since the last journal, members have told me that they are pleased with the decision made about membership. It is amazing how many people can get excited about doing nothing. This year's AGM should be less controversial and a lot quieter. We don't have a lot to discuss, however we will be changing some of the committee members and the details are published separately in the journal. The good news is that we have found a volunteer for the secretary's job. Mick Leather has volunteered and subject to your confirmation at the AGM will take over from Fergie on 1st Jan 2007. Mick and I served together in the Sqn at the beginning of the 80's and he will make an excellent secretary. The committee is beginning to look like a 2 troop reunion.

By the time you read this, some lucky person will have won the World cup raffle that has been organised by Ray Coleman. We have had a fantastic response to this and have raised £2,370, that has gone into our funds. I would like to thank Ray for all of the hard work and effort he has put into this. I am sure you would all agree that the money raised is a magnificent effort for one person.

On the subject of raising money, can I mention the reunion weekend. In recent years the profits from these weekends have stayed with the branch that organised the event. Last year Birmingham branch raised £340 that they have donated to central funds... Thank you. This year the committee have decided that we should use the money raised to help those less fortunate than ourselves, and also fulfil our aim to raise some money for benevolence. Recent events in 9 Sqn have highlighted the work of BLESMA, and so the committee have unanimously decided that this year's AGM raffle profits will be donated to this worthy cause. Can I remind you all that the raffle is reliant on people donating prizes, please remember to be as generous as you usually are.

The bookings are coming in thick and fast for Southampton. By the time you read this the cut off will be days away so please support Aldershot branch and get your booking in. Next year's AGM/reunion weekend has been confirmed. The event will be organised by Yorkshire Branch and will take place at The Cairn Hotel in Harrogate on weekend of 3rd November 2007.

Sadly a few weeks ago we saw what may be the last military parachute drop in Hampshire when 9 Para Sqn dropped onto Hankley Common signalling the end of a great era. The Sqn are now at Woodbridge and looking forward to the start of a new era. Good luck for the future, Aldershot will miss you. Onwards and upwards for Airborne Sappers.

AGM 2006- Propositions

The 2006 AGM will take place at 1000 hours on Saturday 23rd October 2006 at the Novotel Hotel Southampton.

At this meeting we will be propose changing several members of the committee and asking the membership to approve a couple of minor amendments to the constitution.

Proposals for constitution amendments are as follows;

All officers of the Association elected at the AGM commence their duties on 1st January of the following year.

That the shop manager (currently Ray Coleman) be a member of the advisory committee.

That an IT member be elected to the advisory committee.

Proposals for committee members:

Bunny Brown as Vice president

John Lee as Vice president

Mick Leather as Secretary

Dave Pace as IT Member

Any member who has any business for the AGM must notify the secretary by Friday 1st September. All of the above will be confirmed at the committee meeting on 3rd September. Each of the above proposals and nominations for committee will be proposed and seconded and published in detail before 10th September.

A full agenda, proposals and nominations will be sent to each branch representative for onward transmission to branches. Every member on arrival in Southampton will receive a printed agenda prior to the meeting.

During the AGM you will be presented with reports from executive committee members and via the Chair have the opportunity to discuss any issues that you may have.

Members are reminded that an Ordinary General Meeting will be held after the AGM.

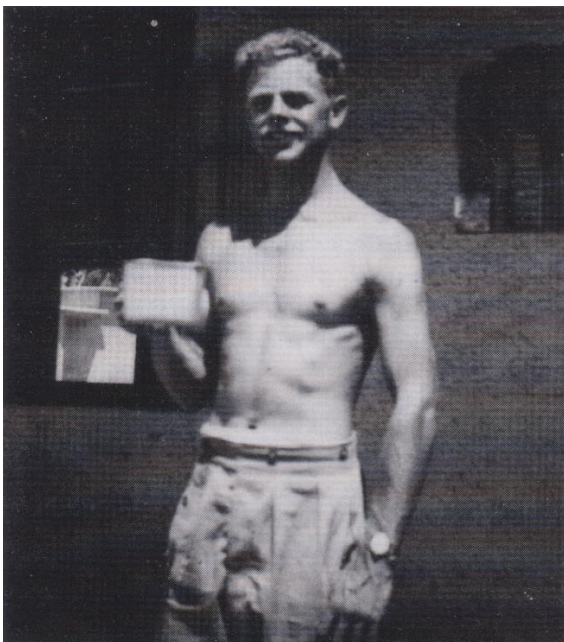
Rogues Gallery



Jeff Langford & Keith King - May 2005



Jon (Bing) Crosby during the early years of the 9 Para Sqn Northern Ireland tours



Yaka Nurse -1954



Tom McNeeney (3 Para Sqn 1946-48 and Peter (Johnny) Johnson (1 Para Sqn, 9 AB 1944-48) at Tom's house at Xaghra, Gozo. They recently met when Peter visited on vacation. Anyone wishing to contact Tom can do so via Peter's e-mail:- [REDACTED]



Signals Wing were well represented for the final descent onto Hankley Common DZ prior to the Sqn move to Rock Barracks in Woodbridge.

Spr McManus, Spr Hess,
LCpl Struthers, LCpl Williams, Cpl
Heywood and kneeling:
Mac McElwee

World Cup Football Draw – Results

Ray Coleman

Listed below are successful supporters who drew teams in our World Cup Football Draw.

At the time of going to press, the championship final had not taken place - but the lucky winners will by now have received their well-deserved prizes.

COSTA RICA	SID BURRELL	Alicante, Spain
ECUADOR	JOE CHAMBERLAIN	Sittingbourne, Kent
GERMANY	STAN JONES	Churchdown, Gloucestershire
POLAND	JON CROSBIE	Ilfracombe, Devon
ENGLAND	JOE BATTY	Ferryhill, Co Durham
PARAGUAY	PATRICIA MacMILLAN	Inverness, Scotland
SWEDEN	PAUL BAWDEN	Manchester, Lancs
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	PETE GUERIN	Cranwell, Lincs
ARGENTINA	B S HITCHINGS	Cardiff, Wales
HOLLAND	SIMON CARNELL	23 Engr Regt, Waterbeach
IVORY COAST	W. RUFFELL	Hailsham, Sussex
SERBIA & MONTENEGRO	Mrs P KNOTT	Fareham, Hampshire
ANGOLA	BILL COX	Warwick, Warks
IRAN	ZAK NEEDHAM	9 Para Sqn RE
MEXICO	LCPL SHEPHERD	9 Para Sqn RE
PORTUGAL	JAIME KERR	Norwich, Norfolk
CZECH REPUBLIC	RUTH PATIENCE	Slough, Bucks
GHANA	J. THOMPSON	Alderney, Channel Islands
ITALY	PAUL COLEMAN	RFA Fort Austin, B.F.P.O.
UNITED STATES	B. SOMERSET	Tonbridge, Kent
AUSTRALIA	MICK WALKER	Dunfermline, Scotland
BRAZIL	MICK DOBBIN	Ripon, North Yorkshire
CROATIA	ONY GILBERT	Tilehurst, Berkshire
JAPAN	DANNY GREEN	Hull, Yorkshire
FRANCE	R. S. FAHEY	Bolton, Lancs
SOUTH KOREA	K. PANTON	Edinburgh, Scotland
SWITZERLAND	F. H. CLEVERLEY	Abbeywood, London
TOGO	DAVE DAVIS	Hebburn, Tyne & Wear
SAUDI ARABIA	DON LAY	Melton Mowbray, Leics
SPAIN	J. SMITH	Scunthorpe, Lincs
TUNISIA	STAN HEAD	Grays, Essex
UKRAINE	K. NESBITT	Morecombe, Lancs

The draw took place on Sunday 4 June 2006 at the British Legion Club, Hayling Island with the kind permission of the management. The draw was made by Mr Colin Marston, (ex-Royal Navy), Mr Ray Endersby, (ex RASC), Mr Bill Josey, (ex-Royal Navy) and Mr Del Davison.

A most sincere thank you to everyone who supported the Association World Cup Football Draw, with your generosity we made a profit of £2,370-00 which will be used in support of worthy and charitable causes.

AGM/Reunion in Southampton 20-22 October 2006

Have you booked your accommodation for the above event? The discount price organised by your entertainment's committee with the Ibis and Novotel expires with affect 28th August. After this date, accommodation charges will revert to normal standard (more expensive) rate.

If you've lost or misplaced the application form which was enclosed in the April edition of our publication, simply contact Joe Stoddart on [REDACTED] or e-mail: [REDACTED] or Dave Rutter on [REDACTED] or e-mail: [REDACTED]

9 Para Sqn RE

Fred Gray

July 2006 will see the end of fifty-seven years of the Squadron's association with the Garrison Town of Aldershot, also known as the "Home Of The British Army" or simply "The Shot"

9 Airborne Squadron first descended on Aldershot on 30 August 1949 after its formation in 1947 at Hameln West Germany, followed by an emergency tour to Palestine. They were the only surviving airborne squadron of the five parachute squadrons (1st 2nd 3rd 4th and 591), two glider borne field companies (9 & 249), two glider borne field park companies (261 & 286) and the four Indian Army Engineer Parachute Squadrons of the Second World War. They were the Engineer Squadron of the recently formed 16 Independent Parachute Brigade. For a very short time they were housed in Talavera Barracks at the bottom of Hospital Hill until they moved to the hatted accommodation in Malta Barracks situated very close to the Basingstoke Canal on the Farnham Road.

In 1951 the whole squadron, less a small rear party, departed Aldershot for Cyprus and the Canal Zone (Egypt). On their return in 1954 they took up residence in Waterloo Barracks (east) situated at the bottom of Gun Hill, built in 1854 to house the returning army from the Crimea. Waterloo Barracks were built for a Cavalry Regiment and a full complement of horses. The soldiers accommodation was in two blocks, one either side of the Officer Mess. 2 Troop and 3 Troop shared one of the blocks and HQ, Plant and 1 Troop shared the other. The sleeping quarters were situated above the stables and consisted of six twelve-man rooms in each block with one single lavatory situated at the end of the room but shared with the adjoining room (Six rooms with three lavatories). Heating was provided by a coke burning stove, each room being rationed to one bucket of coke a night. Washing facilities consisted of three small wash houses outside on the veranda, which ran the full length of the building. Each wash house had three basins and at the time when the Squadron took up residence a gas geyser provided the hot water. Those not in the first three or four soldiers to get to the wash house before the rest of the troop only had cold water to wash and shave. Baths and showers were non-existent in the block. If any soldier wanted to have a bath he had to go down a flight of iron stairs, walk in front of the Officers Mess and then to the second block that accommodated HQ and 1 Troop. The "bath house" was located in this building. It consisted of three old-fashioned iron baths standing on the cobbled floor of a stable. A wooden duck board covered the floor by the side of each bath and there was a small folding chair to put clothes on. Corrugated sheeting to give some form of privacy surrounded the bath. There was no heating in the stable so having a bath in the winter months was not something to endure every night. The only entertainment was the NAAFI Club, the local pubs and dancing on a Tuesday and Friday night. (Tuesday being the "Grab a Granny" night) The Squadron had three favourite pubs, the "Rat Pit" (so called because in Victorian times dogs and rats fought in a pit in the back room), the Exchange and the Crimea. The Exchange and the Rat Pit have now been replaced by new developments. The NAAFI Club was very conveniently situated at the bottom of Gun Hill just opposite the Squadron Guardroom. "Gun Hill" was named after the cannon situated at the top of the hill that used to be fired at noon each day. The large window of the NAAFI Club bar was a quick escape route back to the barracks when it was raided by the RMP as fights broke out amongst the hundreds of soldiers of all units who were packed into the bar area. It took no more than twenty seconds to get out of the window and into the barracks to disappear into the gloom of Waterloo (east). There was no Squadron Bar, no Corporals Club and certainly no Wives Club. No televisions or mobile phones and only a small number of the squadron personnel were married, mainly the Officers and S/NCOs. It was every man for himself when it came to entertainment. There were probably no more than three car owners and the same number of motorbike owners in the Squadron in 1956.



Major Frazer Ross - the last OC in Aldershot

The Squadron has had four different titles since it arrived in Aldershot in 1949. It arrived as 9 Independent Airborne Squadron RE. In 1955 it became 9 Independent Parachute Field Squadron RE. A further change occurred when the "Field" was dropped from the title in 1958. The last change was in 1977 when 16 Independent Parachute Brigade was disbanded. As a result the Squadron then lost its own independence and came under command of 36 Engr Regt RE as 9 Parachute Squadron RE. A convenient buffer zone of about 90 miles separated the Squadron from the HQ unit (and the RSM) who were located in Maidstone Kent. The Squadron has also come under command of five different brigade titles:

16 Indep Para Brigade (1947-1977), 6 Field Force (1977-82) 5 Infantry Brigade (1982-83), 5 Airborne Brigade (1983-1999) and 16 Air Assault Brigade. (Formed 1st September 1999 by the amalgamation of 24 Air-Mobile Brigade, 5 AB Bde and 9 Regt AAC)

The first OC of the Squadron in Aldershot was Major DA Smith RE. (There had been four previous OCs but they had been in command in Germany and Palestine). Major Smith was also the captain of the very successful Squadron Rugby Team that reached the final of the Army Cup in 1948. An incredible feat for a minor unit of less than two hundred and fifty officers and men when the strength of the Army stood at over 350 thousand and still maintained most of its wartime Regiments and Corps.



WOII (SSM) Billy Baugh

The last OC of the Aldershot based Squadron is Major Frazer Ross RE. The first SSM was WO2 David Doherty; a wartime soldier who served with the 3rd Parachute Squadron RE and WO2 Billy Baugh will be the last SSM in Aldershot.

The Sappers of today would be horrified if they were issued with some of the clothing and equipment that was the norm in 1950-60. Boots were the standard issue ammunition boot of WW2; they had leather soles with a regulation number of studs. Parade dress was the Battle-Dress, a two-piece uniform with a tight fitting blouse and trousers tucked into anklets. (Not gaiters). A 37 Pattern belt was worn around the waist all topped off by the Red Beret. The Red Beret is just about the only item that has survived to date. Even the RE badge is different as up until 1952 the badge had the Imperial crown. This changed on the death of King George 6th when the Edward Crown was introduced. The standard dress for training was boots, denim trousers, shirt, beret and the para smock, probably the most recognisable and envied piece of clothing in the Army.

Items that have passed into history since 1949 include: the para barra, a two wheeled frame with a canvas covering to carry kit on long marches, the toggle rope, the heavy steel para helmet, the DPM denim jumping

smock, cobbly wobbly boots, blanco, studded boots, battle dress, the 37 pattern belt, 44 pattern equipment, 56 Pattern equipment, the twenty-eight foot X-Type parachute, the No 4 Lee-Enfield rifle, the .303 Mk 1 Bren Gun, the Stirling submachine gun, the Self Loading Rifle, the 2inch mortar, the Energa Grenade attachment for the Lee Enfield and SLR rifle and probably the worst item of clothing ever issued to any soldier in the Army, a brown rolled neck jersey pullover with brown patches on each shoulder. It was thought to be a left over from the Camel Corps when they were part of the British Army. Not only was it very uncomfortable to wear with the roll neck and it's constant irritation to the skin but it made the Squadron a laughing stock amongst other units of the Brigade as they were they only unit to be issued with it. This was in response to the Squadrons constant plea for a heavy duty pullover, that some of the other units of the brigade already had. This was a way to silence the Squadron, and it did. In 1960 the sleeping bag made a welcome appearance and it was a great improvement on the lightweight blanket and poncho that most members of 16 Brigade had when they parachuted into Norway 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle in November 1959 on Ex Barfrost. Rubber soled boots had replaced the old ammunition boots and puttees replaced anklets. The last item to disappear that connected the present Squadron to that which arrived in 1949, and one of the most recognisable formation signs in the world is the Pegasus. Gone and now replaced by the formation badge of 16 Air Assault Brigade.

When National Service finished in 1962 more money became available to spend on the military and a gradual improvement in pay, conditions and equipment was made over the next four decades. Those who fought in the Second World War and many of those who came later can only stare in wonder at the clothing and equipment now enjoyed, not only by the Squadron but by the other services and envy the pay scales and pensions of all ranks.

Until 1955 parachute jumps were made without reserves. They were introduced sometime late in that year. (They were discarded for the operational jump at Suez). One of the aircraft used for jumping was the single door Valetta that carried 20 jumpers and a dispatcher. Not a popular aircraft as those men at the rear of the stick had to step over a boom about ten inches in height before they could reach the door. On exit the jumper dropped down into the slipstream which caused a number of problems for the inexperienced. The second aircraft was the more used two-door Hastings that carried two sticks of 15 and two dispatchers. Also used, but mainly by the Territorial Army units was the American Fairchild C119 known as the "Boxcar". In March 1955 the Beverley freighter became the workhorse for the RAF. This was a two deck aircraft with two sticks of twenty on the lower deck and a single stick of thirty on the top deck that exited through a floor aperture, probably the best way to exit as the jumpers dropped down into the slipstream without having to turn through 90 degrees. The Beverley was replaced ten years later by the twin boomed Argosy and then by the C130 that is still in use today.

During the Squadrons fifty-seven years in Aldershot it has left the town on numerous occasions for foreign parts. At times to extremely dangerous places in the world but on others for much more friendly and agreeable locations. Three times they have gone to real shooting wars. November 5th 1956 was the last time that a troop (3 Troop, Capt Brazier RE) actually dropped in action when they were part of the 3 Para Battalion group that had dropped on El Gamel Airport in an operation to recapture the Suez Canal. The remainder of the Squadron joined them the following day. The Falklands War (OC Major Chris Davies RE) in 1982 was probably the most demanding period as a well-prepared enemy, winter conditions and very difficult terrain made life extremely unpleasant. They also suffered more casualties including four killed and twelve wounded. The third time that the Squadron was involved in an invasion was the Gulf war in 2003 under command of Major Paul Fountain RE. Iraq has remained a dangerous and unpleasant duty for the Squadron that only recently completed a six-month tour under command of Maj Frazer Ross RE. There is now the added danger of a six month tour in Afghanistan (April-September 2006) where 3 Troop has deployed in support of 16 Air-Assault Brigade. Other notable hot spots have been Cyprus and Egypt 1951—54, Cyprus & Bahrain, (1962), Kuwait and Jordan (1958- 1964), Aden and the Radfan, 1964 -65), Borneo, (1965) British Guiana & Anguilla (1964-1969), Rwanda (1994), The Gambia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, (2001) The Balkans (1998-9 & 2001), and seven tours in Northern Ireland. More pleasant tours at either squadron or troop level, on exercise or work related included Belize, Kenya, (1964 & 1971), Hong Kong, Rhodesia, Singapore, Malta, Denmark, America, Canada, Libya, Germany, France and Norway.

Since that day 57 years ago the lot of the sappers has changed dramatically. No longer do they have the Saturday morning parade and inspection three times a month. It was a nightmare experience standing on the square for

three hours whilst the OC and the SSM looked for the slightest imperfection in the soldiers dress. The brasses of the 37-pattern belt had to be highly polished and the anklets had to be blanched to perfection. Trousers were stiffened with soap on the inside and then ironed to give a razor sharp crease weighted down with either rolled up newspaper or a light chain on the inside of the trousers after being tucked into the anklets. After hours of applying the blanco and polishing the brasses it was heartbreaking when the SSM wrote on your belt "parade at 1300 hrs" with his biro pen. He would also scribble over the anklets just to make sure everything had to be done again. After the parade it was then the room inspection with all its pitfalls. Any indiscretion was rewarded by a number of extra guard duties or another inspection by the Orderly Officer and Sergeant in the afternoon. For those not on duties, the fourth weekend of the month was a 48-hour weekend privilege. All the junior NCOs and Sappers had to collect a pass from the SSM. Queuing up by troops for this much sort after piece of paper also had its problems as everyone had to donate a shilling to the SSM's favourite charity. If anyone refused to pay he would stamp the pass "Get Stuffed" with the stamp that was well known throughout 16 Brigade.

Also gone is the Pay Parade. It was only when National Service finished that the Army started paying junior ranks pay directly into the bank. Before that the Troop Officer and Sergeant would pay out the money on a weekly basis. Each soldier would approach the table when his name was called, halt, salute and then take his pay. He would check that the amount was correct knowing that one shilling had been deducted for barrack room damages and losses, and a further seven shillings had been put into

"credits," a compulsory savings account from which the soldiers could draw money when they required it for leave or other personal reasons (but only after three to four weeks advance notice had been given to the pay office).

Guard duties were to be avoided at all costs. The guard consisted of seven Sappers and a Corporal. Dress was as for the Saturday morning parade with the addition of ammo pouches and backpack. Of the seven Sappers, the best-turned out man became the "stickman" and went off duty immediately. Lucky was the man who did not attract extra duties from the Orderly Officer for the slightest imperfection. Only after the inspection were the guard then able to remove the pouches and backpack and put on their para smocks to do their first of two-hour stags on duty followed by four off. The guard was from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. followed by normal duties.

During fifty-seven years in the Aldershot Garrison the Squadron occupied a number of barracks, mainly those that had been condemned and due for demolition. In 1957 they moved from Waterloo Bks (east) to Malplaquet Bks on Queens Avenue. (The ACC had moved out to their new accommodation in St Omer Bks). Three years later they moved to Cove and occupied the "Spiders" in one half of the old 3 Training Regiment RE. These were no longer required because of the end of National Service. From there they moved to the Victorian era Gibraltar Bks (formally 4 TRRE) on Queens Avenue opposite the two Garrison Churches. By 1963 they had moved once again to Queen Elizabeth Barracks, part of the barracks complex at Church Crookham.

By 1966 they had moved again to Haig Lines the old Medical Corps Bks at Crookham cross roads. Finally in 1972 they moved into Rhine Barracks at the top end of The Queens Avenue. This has been their longest stay in any one location in their history. Even now in 2006 the Squadron is divided with HQ in Rhine and the Sappers accommodation in Buller Barracks.

For the first time 9 Parachute Squadron can look forward to a permanent home in the newly built Rock Barracks at Woodbridge in Suffolk. Whether this will suite the character and the reputation of the Squadron remains to be seen. Being in the same barracks with a Colonel and an RSM may prove difficult to start with. Sharing facilities with a major unit is something entirely new to the Squadron and they will have to adapt to having Officers and S/NCOs not tuned in to doing things the way the Squadron do.

I'm sure those thousands of 'all ranks' who have had the honour and pleasure of serving in a unique unit of the Royal Engineers over the last sixty years would like to wish "The Squadron" our very best wishes when they start a new chapter in their history and depart from Aldershot for the last time in July 2006.

It will be a sad day when they leave and we will all miss them.

The Reunion- As I Recall

Jim Harrower



It was a really good weekend at the 9 Para Sqn reunion. On the Friday night Clog (Cloughton) and I meet several of the former Sqn lads, not sure how many really, not even sure how the pair of us got our dose bags from the car which was parked up at the Gatehouse some 400yds away; before making our way back to the 5 star Sqn tent. The only thing we can both agree on is that it was light when we got back to the tent.

Jugsy Unsing, Tony Manley, Keith King, Clog Cloughton, Jim Harrower & Fennymore Fleck
Kneeling: Ginge Shipway, Ed., Louie & Snowy Adams

I woke about 1200hrs I was shivering for some reason, I couldn't make it out as my sleeping bag was a new one, I was sure I brought it with me from the car. When I got the strength to open my eyes, 'shock horror' I was not in it, looked over to my best buddy (or as I thought) he was in MY bag snug as a bug in a rug still snoring away. I had the last laugh because Clog's rib's hurt him like hell. Not too sure as to how this happened, he later found out he had broken 2 ribs, ha ha.

Any way the Saturday night was also good Ginge Shipway (three sheets to the wind) was doing what he does best and that was Hoovering any scraps of food off any plate he could find and at the same time trying to stand in one place long enough to have a conversation with us.

Keith King was the star of the show, he was up on the stage singing and plucking away at a guitar with Wally Cliff singing as a backing group. The funny thing was the real group couldn't get the pair of them off the stage. Well done to Dave Rutter and Tony Manley who went straight on to a coach from the Sqn bar heading for Normandy - (day light was upon us)

Sunday: We were woken up by such a cracking noise to find that one of the Sqn lads was being egged on to run straight through the wooden fence panels surrounding the tented area. This happened 3 times until 3 x 6ft fence panels lay on the ground. In the end, the lad staggered away to the Sqn block, (is this what Clog was attempting to do when he broke his ribs, who knows?)

Anyway, that was what I recall of the Sqn reunion, same typical characters but different faces.



?, Al Pearson,?, & Al Grace

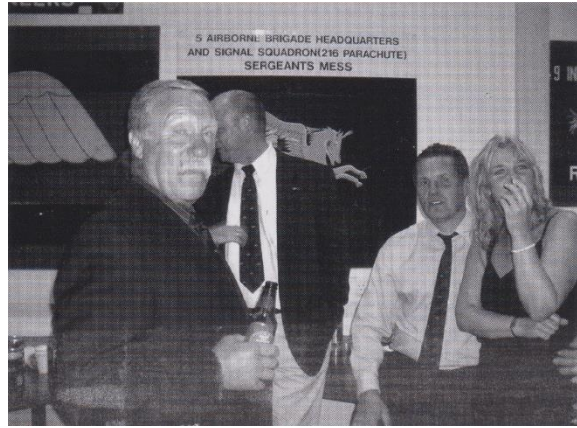


Cheers Quarter Master!

Saturday Night – Reunion



LCpl 'Leemo' Leeming & Cpl Ginge Milson



Satch McVetis with Jim Doubtfire & friend



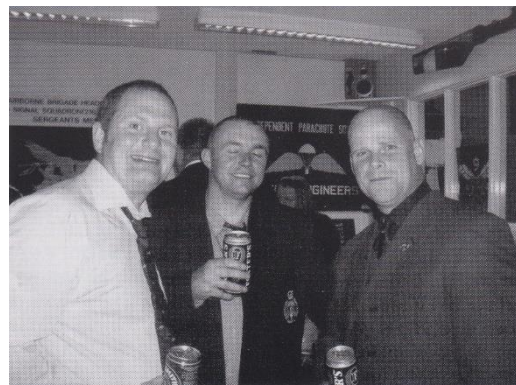
Come back Freddy Mercury



Spr Drummond, At Atkinson, Russ Mellish & Capt Price



Mr 'Smoothie' aka Bob Kennedy trips the light fantastic



The beer obviously tastes better out of a can!!

Hankley Common DZ- the Final Jump

Joe Stoddart MBE

Where do I start? Many of the old and bold have differing memories of Hankley Common. It was the nearest DZ to the barracks and consequently it was frequently used. The downside was that once you had landed on Hankley inevitably you marched back to barracks.



9 Para Sqn RE decided that this was to be the location for their last jump in the area and decided to make a day of it. The Aldershot Branch of the AEA as well as others were invited. This resulted in families, girlfriends, AEA members and grandchildren arriving at Hankley DZ for what proved to be a great day.



LCpl Stokes with the WMIK (weapon mounted installation kit)

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the OC Major Frazer Ross and SSM Billy Baugh for the invitation to join them on this final farewell and I hope that as we have always regarded 9 Para Sqn as ours; that the bond will hold and that we have a close liaison when they move to Woodbridge.

The Squadron have always played a big part in our lives and we wish them well for the future in their new location. As AEA members long may we support these Para's as well we all remember, the hardship and determination needed to gain the converted 'wings' and 'red' beret. Just remember, these young men; together with the newly formed 51 Para Sqn are the future of our Association.

The Squadron put on a marvellous display of their skills, there were static display boards, weapons and equipment and this was followed by a parachute display from a Hercules (C130) aircraft. Ten sticks of five were dropped followed by the usual fly past by the RAF. It was a great event.

Everything for the spectators went to plan which included a superb BBQ. It really was a day to remember. The day had a tinge of sadness due to the fact that the Squadron would soon be leaving Aldershot for their new permanent base in Rock Barracks at Woodbridge, Suffolk.



Lt Col Ian Hutchinson, Commanding Officer 23 Engr Regt (Air Assault) with Capt John Wilson 2ic 9 Para Sqn RE

A Farewell to Aldershot

Lt Wendover for Officer Commanding

The recent 9 Squadron function held on Saturday 3 June will be the last time that the famous 'Sea of Maroon' will occupy Aldershot. The last paratroopers, as well as being the longest continually serving in-role fighting unit in Britain's Airborne Forces, are leaving with the prospect of co-locating with the new Air Assault Engineer Regiment in Woodbridge, Suffolk. Thus, our departure closes quite a chapter in Aldershot and Hampshire's military history.

9 Para Sqn RE ("The Squadron") have been located in Aldershot since September 1949. The move, while sad for those in the unit and local community who have long been associated with Airborne Forces, sees the Squadron become fully integrated into its parent regiment, 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault). Once in East Anglia The Squadron will be in a much better position to give intimate engineer support to 16 Air Assault Brigade, formerly The 5 Airborne Brigade, now based in Colchester.

Aldershot once housed a fusion of various parachute trained cap badges and to that end is still recognised as being the home and birthplace of British Airborne Forces.

From Aldershot, The Squadron has trained for and deployed on Operations including, (to name but a few) Suez, Cyprus, Jordan, The Falklands, Rwanda, The Balkans, Iraq and currently Afghanistan.

Aldershot and its population can be proud of its elite history and enormous reputation as the birthplace of some of the fiercest and most determined soldiers of the British Army.

Our brand new camp boasts to be at the forefront of Army barracks in the country as 23 Engineer Regiment prepares for the unquestionably busy future. The move will unite two parachute field squadrons, a support squadron and regimental headquarters.

We wish all at Aldershot Garrison the very best in their future and hope for their safe return from deployments. We are most grateful to the citizens of Aldershot for the history we have enjoyed together. We will never forget the true home of the 'Airborne brotherhood.'

Flash Back to Recent Tours/Training



“Yes, I’d like two large Pizzas and two cans of ‘coke please”



“Brothers in Arms”



It’s amazing just how many guys can get on one Land Rover!

Remember RSM Britain?

Harry Barnsley

Whatever has happened to the British Army since the end of the 39-45 war? The conduct of some modern squaddies is enough to make old sweats like us shudder and when I let my mind go back to the days of Blanco, Brasso, box sleeves, burnished toe caps, gleaming cap badges and trousers with knife edged creases neatly folded over webbing anklets, the beret with the badge directly over the left eye, the sweatband one inch above the right eye and parallel on the forehead, the crown drawn over the right ear; a squadron on parade was a sight to put pride in any soldier's heart.

Compare some of the old photographs with more recent ones and at once it becomes obvious that pride is a thing of the past. The beret has become "customised," with the crown tortured into the most queer and fantastic shapes, the badge is worn anywhere between the bridge of the nose and the back of the head. Look through our Journal No. 16 and you see a photograph on the top of page 7, note the position of the badge and the rake of the crown is almost identical, then take another look at the photographs of the ex-servicemen!

Is the word discipline now a dirty word or are those in command unaware of something called "KRR's"? All discipline starts with self-discipline and the definition of that word in the dictionary states - a practice of imposing a structure of behaviour, to produce uniformity - but the way the beret is worn today borders on the ridiculous, maybe the wearers think it looks more macho.

From what I read in the media some NCOs are chosen for varying grades of schizophrenia and I don't think that television programmes such as "Bad Boys Army" does recruitment any good, maybe that is where NCOs got their sadistic ideas. I went through my early infantry training during the last war but I never witnessed any of the things that those National Servicemen were supposed to have undergone. Bawling and shouting is normal but physical contact is not allowed.

I have stood before an irate drill sergeant for making the usual mistakes, when he has called me all the Welsh mountain climbing, coal shovelling, leek gobbling, illegitimate clowns, until he ran out of breath, but we took all that. Once we got off the square we had a good laugh about it but it kept us on our toes. Just think of today! I could have sued him for racial discrimination.

We often used some quite flowery language to describe the bull...., which prevailed, but it proved its worth during hostilities. Starting with Dunkirk and going on to the desert war, the Malayan campaign and later the Normandy landings etc., all required that magic word discipline.

A week or two ago I attended a service at the Memorial Ack Ack Gun at Swansea to remember the men of the Royal Artillery who defended that city during the devastating air-raids which completely flattened the heart of the place. I noticed one person wearing his khaki beret drawn down completely covering his right eye, all he needed was a parrot on his left shoulder to complete the ensemble.

Rowing for England (well, the local rugby club)

Bob Kennedy

After a belly full of Guinness one night in the rugby club, I was asked if I would like to do a sponsored Row for charity. Well the Guinness piped up, "YES, NO PROBLEM." Weeks later I got a phone call telling me to be at Walton Skiff club for a bit of a practice. Well, the only skiff I knew was the one on the end of Taff Shingler's finger!

The day came and I joined several others on the Thames for an hours rowing. I can only say that I was not the only one who was a bit worried at the end of the training. I also found out that it was a 50-mile row over two days!

D-day arrived and there was supposed to be 4 crews for 2 boats meeting at Reading. Two crews arrived on time and had to set off leaving the safety boat floundering behind with a duff engine.

Off we went and it was 5 miles and two locks later that we found out that you had to sit either side of the boat to row not all in the middle leaning sideways trying to row like demented hunchbacks.

15 miles later with the safety boat and replacement crews nowhere to be seen a major decision was made." Stop at the next pub." Several pints later the replacement crews caught up and the rowing continued to Maidenhead where the half way point was reached.



A stag do was the entertainment for the Saturday night of which all I can say was it hurt like hell the next morning.

Sunday morning we continued to take turns rowing and running along the bank collecting money for the charity. 8 hours later we reached Walton to a crowd of wives and friends. Lots of throwing of blokes into the river was followed by more beers and a BBQ.

I know that we collected over 700 quid in the collecting tins. With sore hands and butt we all went back to work. The collecting continues and the final result looks like being close to 5 grand for "Rugby for Children's Cancer."

Iechyd Da POB YN (Good Health to All)

Harry Barnsley

Whilst in the process of giving my wardrobe a much needed (crumb out) I found a long forgotten item among the debris which might be of interest to our loyal members who are not too mean to subscribe to our journal, but no drooling please. I unearthed this lovely bottle of beer (photographs enclosed) and I swear with my hand on an army form blank that it is still Virgo Intacto.

But first let me explain how I came by it. During 1996 we were celebrating the centenary of the granting of the title Double Royal on the Monmouthshire Regiment, and as I am a life member of the Royal Engineers, we hold our meetings at the Mons barracks at Swansea which is known as CHARD (VC) House (Rorkes Drift) and all that, and the beer was brewed especially for it and I quote from the label on the reverse side of the bottle:- DOUBLE ROYAL ALE



ROYAL MONMOUTHSHIRE ROYAL ENGINEERS (MILITIA) IS THE SENIOR RESERVE REGIMENT OF THE BRITISH ARMY, IT WAS RAISED IN 1539 AND BECAME AN ENGINEER CORPS UNIT IN 1877, IT WAS GRANTED ITS PRESENT TITLE IN 1896, ITS DOUBLE ROYAL TITLE IS UNIQUE AS ARE THE TWO

CROWNS IN THE CAP BADGE. DURING 1996 THE REGIMENT CELEBRATES THE CENTENARY YEAR OF THE DOUBLE ROYAL.

So the bottle has stood in my wardrobe for around seventeen years and by now must be highly volatile, and if one did drink it and then broke wind he would be orbiting Saturn in twenty seconds.

Putting the Record Straight

Fred Gray

To lower the blood pressure of a few of our wartime veterans who served in 1st Parachute Squadron RE I must correct a mistake in the article published in the April edition titled "Brief History of 9 Parachute Squadron."

It is not my intention to nit-pick as I found a lot of very helpful dates and places within the article but there was an error that has upset one or two of the "Old and Bold"

9 Field Company (Airborne) RE did not fight in the schoolhouse at the Arnhem road bridge. That fell solely to HQ Troop (Maj C Murray RE) and A & B Troops of the 1st Parachute Squadron RE under command of Captain Eric MacKay. About fifty men from C Company 3 Para Bn under command of Lt Len Wright also reached the schoolhouse. This Company did arrive with a full strength of 105 men but within minutes lost almost the whole of 7 and 9 platoons leaving them a fighting strength of approximately fifty.

9 Company were on the right hand side of the bridge in a house made famous by David Shepherd in his painting of the road bridge showing a section of infantry in a defensive position on the left side approach ramp and a house on fire in the middle distance. That house was the first of three positions occupied by 25 men of 2 Platoon, 9 Field Company (Airborne) RE under command of Captain Eric O'Callaghan RE.

After three days of intense close quarter fighting all those in defence of the bridge and the schoolhouse were out of ammunition, food and water and were forced to surrender.

The number of men at the bridge never exceeded 700 at any one time. Although 766 men actually reached the bridge they did not all arrive at the same time.

The units who fought there:

2 nd Bn Para Regt	364
C Coy 3 Bn	105
1 Para Sqn RE	80
Bde HQ	75 (Sigs & Defence platoon)
1 A/T Bty	30
2 Pl 9 Fd Coy RE	25
1 AB Recce Sqn	10
Others	30

(This figure includes Medics, Glider Pilots, a Forward Observation Unit, 6 men of the 1st AB Ord Fd Pk, men of the Dutch resistance, a war correspondent and American from the Jedburgh team.

9 Field Company (Airborne) RE did have the distinction of having the highest percentage of deaths (22.7%) of any unit who flew to Arnhem. Of the 194 men of 9 Company that left the UK on 17 Sept 1944 forty-four lost their lives, that included 21 Sappers in the glider that blew up over Somerset. Of the Engineer units involved five Hundred and nineteen all ranks left for the battle and eighty-seven lost their lives. Two hundred and sixty-seven were taken prisoner, many of them wounded, and 153 returned to the UK.

Ed: Observations concerning the said article were raised by a telephone conversation from Ron (Pinky) White in California, plus written observations from Mr Norman Swift and from Mr Peter Stainforth. Sincere apologies are extended to all concerned for the errors contained within the write-up.

The Making of a Red Devil

David Jewell

In 1942, I was a young sapper stationed in Chatham, Kent, finishing my trade training in the School of Military Engineering. I was 17 years of age, yearning for some action and excitement, too young to get married, but old enough to fight a War.

An Army bulletin was circulating asking for volunteers to be trained as Paratroopers to augment the strength of an Engineer Squadron being formed. I was interested and, after some thought and deliberation, put my name forward. The incentives were parachutist wings, a red beret and an extra 2 shillings a day pay. My application was accepted and in a very short time I was on my way to a small village in Derbyshire call Doe Lea. On arrival, I was picked up with several other volunteers and taken to a camp some three miles from the railway station.

Once at the camp, we were mustered and told that walking on the camp was prohibited, we must run between buildings. We were also told that the reason we were there was to undergo a three week intensive battle training course to ascertain our physical suitability for becoming Paratroopers.

The next three weeks were a nightmare. I underwent some training, which all but killed me. It was dangerous, hard and pitiless. I had never experienced such pain and anguish; it stretched human endurance to the full. If it had not been for my pride and youthfulness, I would have filtered and failed. The course culminated in a 7-mile forced march in full battle order to be completed in fifty minutes. Many failed this devastating course and were returned to their units. I suppose the rewards drove me on and I survived.

The physical torture was over. Now we were bound for Ringway, Manchester, for the mental trauma of learning to parachute.

The course, we were told, consisted of 8 parachute jumps before acceptance to the elite, they were:

Two balloon drops (day)

One balloon drop (night) Five plane drops (varied)

First of all, we had to learn the art of falling without breaking arms, legs, necks or any other bone in our bodies. The training was concentrated and demanding, we jumped from towers and platforms, from lorries and mock planes, landing forwards, backwards and sideways. We were trained like acrobats, until in the end everything came naturally. Your body and its muscles were now supple and strong and your mind was intent on doing the right thing. We were mentally and physically fit, we were ready.

The day for our first balloon drop dawned. I was full of courage and confidence until I arrived at the dropping zone and put on my parachute prior to climbing into the balloon basket. Now I was anxious and apprehensive. In fact, I was terrified and frightened. It occurred to me that I was crazy. I was going to do the most unnatural act. Too late, we were moving up, the balloon basket was loaded with four jumpers and an instructor. My grip got tighter on the cage as mother earth receded. -

The wind started to whistle through the rigging, no-one was laughing, no-one looked at one another, the accent stopped, the instructor looked at me and said 'You first, hook up and sit down, feet in the hole.' I automatically did as I was told, then the order 'Go' was given. I went, screaming down to earth and 'whack my parachute opened and I was drifting down. Then a barrage of instructions from the ground, 'Keep your knees bent, feet and knees together, steer your chute, remember what you were taught.' The ground was racing up to me and I was swinging too much. I managed to milk the chute, steadied my swing and drift, then 'wallop' I was down.

The ground was hard and unforgiving. I lay still for a minute and gathered my thoughts - everything was okay. I got up, dusted myself down, released the chute, gathered it in and got back to the rendezvous point. It was exhilarating, exciting, and it did something for my ego. This experience was repeated once more during the day and once more at night. The drops never lost their magic; the thrill of the danger actually got worse as you realised what you were really doing. The fun jumps were over, now for the actual real purpose of our training.

Five plane jumps, a little different from the balloon. The slipstream can do an awful lot of tricks with your body and chute. It's much more traumatic, it feels more dangerous and you cannot go back for a second chance if your parachute does not open. Your chute opens quicker and getting out of the plane is hazardous. The dropping heights are about 600 feet. You have to gather your thoughts quickly and respond faster. Trees, buildings and fences can cause you an awful lot of grief. Uneven ground endangers landing and water is a potential killer.

We are ready for the final plane jump. We arrive at the airfield and don our parachutes, are checked and we climb aboard. The whole atmosphere is electric, not much conversation. The engines roar and away we go. The wind is rushing through the open jump hole it is cold and unfriendly. We don't fly for long and suddenly the instructor stands up and moves to the exit. He shouts 'Stand up and hook up.' We do just that and check each other's 'hook up.' 'Now sit down and move to the exit.' Nobody speaks, the tension is awful. We were sweating and I am thinking 'For goodness sake, let's go quickly.' 'Red light on standby' shouts the instructor. A few seconds later, 'Green light on Go.' We are shuffling towards the hole on our backsides, then, all too soon, feet in the hole and I am away.

The slipstream grabs me. I am hurtling through the air and 'whack' my parachute opens right in front of me. I swing underneath it, I am floating on air, excited. The adrenaline is flowing, surging through my body. I am on top of the world. The experience is over quickly, mother earth is harder than my body, crash and I'm down. It's a bit breezy and I am being dragged along. I must collapse my parachute and release it before I am dragged through a fence, hedge or ditch. All is well, I get up, gather my chute, the exercise is over but must be repeated four more times in order for me to qualify.

The thrill and excitement never diminishes, neither does the trauma. I loved every second of the experience and was rewarded with my wings and "Red Beret" and, of course, the 2 shillings extra pay per day.

My colleagues and I are comrades having endured torture and privation to win our wings and red beret. It was to prove a bond, which was never broken - my back would be safe.

World War II

Leading the D Day Invasion Paratroops

D A Jewell (aged 19 years) Royal Engineers, 6th Airborne Division

This narration is my personal account of the story of my baptism to War.

At last, we were on our way to war, D Day 6th June 1944. We were aboard a plane to France. It all came too soon for worry or anxiety, anti-aircraft fire greeted us, we were not worried. The order came to "Stand Up and Hook Up," the red light come on and we were pushing to get out. 'Go' and we were gone.

It was about 0100 hours, dark and ominously quiet, I lowered my kit bag, it hit the ground. I did the same a few seconds later. We were off target of our rendezvous, but knew our position. We soon got moving towards the appointed rendezvous.

We completed all our initial duties (that's another story) and moved to our allotted position, a farm house in Ranville, and were told to "dig in." We did not need any second invitation and got straight down to digging a trench under the trees. We were in an orchard adjoining the farmhouse. This was to be our home for the time being.

I cannot recall exactly what happened the next day, but I do remember it was very soon, things were quiet and we were on edge waiting for action. A plane appeared and flew over our position. It was German, flying low, slow and obviously a spotter. Why didn't we lie 'doggo'? Someone fired his rifle at the plane, it turned and came back. We all started firing at the aircraft, it did another circle and cleared off. Little did we know but we had given away our position and were about to pay the penalty.

I should think it was about an hour later that the first mortar bomb hit us. We scuttled into our trenches to take cover. The Germans satisfied that they were on target decided to teach us our first lesson. Mortars and shells started to rain down on us. We had no overhead covers to our trenches.

The missiles were exploding in the apple trees above us, we were helpless. A phosphorous mortar bomb exploded above us. I cannot describe the panic that caused, the fumes were overpowering and the smell was acrid, the burning phosphorous was everywhere. We could do nothing except keep our heads down and pray to God. We were sitting ducks unable to move or get away. The bombardment lasted for about half an hour.

Afterwards, everything was still and quiet, there was a cry for help, and I stood up. The scene was one of hell. There were calls of distress, help was needed fast, it soon arrived and the wounded and dead were taken away.

I wasn't the only one to learn a valuable lesson. The atmosphere was one of deep regret, three dead, one with severe phosphorous burns. This was war, kill or be killed, no time for recrimination. We picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves down and got on with the war. I never did feel quite as enthusiastic again.

That was my introduction to war, not to be recommended under any circumstances.

Going Back- D Day 50th Anniversary- June 1994

It is 1994, the 50th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings in Normandy. I have received an invitation to go to Caen Women's Cathedral and be presented with a medal from the French nation to all the D-Day Normandy Landings Veterans marking the 50th Anniversary of the epic event.

My wife and I decided to accept the invitation and attend the ceremony, also to spend a few days visiting the beaches and other battlefields of the Second World War.

We boarded the ferry at Dover and crossed the Channel to Calais. From there, we boarded a bus to Deauville, our starting point and home for the next seven days. The journey was uneventful. The countryside is much the same as England, except for the pitiful sight of all the War Graves. This is Flanders, World War I Cemeteries, where so many young men died, repeated by World War II, won't we ever learn.

Onward to Albert (pronounced Albieve) similar to our own towns, then to Amiens, the countryside changes to low-lying hills and woodlands. We pass the huge 'Gothic' Cathedral, which was badly damaged in both wars. The roads are straight like Roman roads and lined with tall poplars. Then on to Rouen, the capital of Normandy. The Cathedral is huge, a truly imposing sight. The interior is also magnificent, it's the resting place of Richard the Lionheart, and has an effigy of 'Joan of Arc,' Patron Saint of France and, of course, the River Seine flows through the City.

We continue to Deauville. This Spa town was built by Napoleon's brother for the Aristocracy. It is really beautiful and picturesque. The buildings were all decorated and adorned with the flags of France, Britain and the USA, flying side by side, and there are 'Welcome' posters everywhere saying 'Welcome to our Liberators.' We are at our destination.

Tomorrow, we are off to Caen to attend the presentation of the Medals of Honour to the D Day Veterans.

The day dawns and we are off to Caen for the ceremony. It is very moving and brings back a lot of memories, there are several more veterans in attendance and we are all treated with respect and kindness. The service over, my wife and I take a taxi to Ranville to see all the places I had described to her when talking of the War, the cemetery, the Church, the orchard in which I dug in and occupied a trench. I find the graves of my comrades and officer. They were all tall, young and eager and full of life. Why did they have to die? Sadly, we then leave for the Pegasus Bridge.

The original bridge has been dismantled, a splendid new one erected with the famous Pegasus in place. We cross the bridge to the cafe' and souvenir shop and sit down at a table in the forecourt.

A tall distinguished looking gentleman in civilian clothes approached me. 'It is an honour to shake the hand of a British Paratrooper' he said and presented me with a medallion for excellence. He was Lt General Schroder of the United States Army. An honour indeed, he had recognised the Red Beret I was wearing that day.

We stayed awhile during which time I spoke with many veterans. We said our goodbyes and then headed back to Caen to pick up the coach back to Deauville. Whilst waiting for the coach, a young French girl approached me, about 16 years of age. She studied my medals and beret, and said 'Were you there?' I replied 'Yes, young lady,' she replied 'then I want to say thank you for my mother and father,' and she was gone. So they did care, they had not forgotten. It was then time for our coach back to Deauville.

We spent a few lovely days in Deauville and then we were off again for a visit to the Normandy benches and Memorials from Sword Beach right up to Bayeaux. The scars are still there, including Mulberry, the memorials are splendid, flags fly proudly. The enemy has gone. The people are happy and grateful for their deliverance. Then on to Bayeaux to see the famous tapestry depicting Edward the Confessor, his cousin William and brother in law Harold, the throne of England and the Battle of Hastings. The tapestry tells the full story in words and pictures.

The holiday was at an end - back home we go. Was it all worth it? I think so. We were fighting for our own existence as well.

Take care you boys and girls of today. Take care of your freedom, which your grandfathers fought for. Make us proud of you and I hope you are proud of us.

Thank You

John Mason (6 ABRE)

A Big Thank You to all who took up the challenge and this year took part in the Pilgrimage to mark the 62nd Anniversary of D-Day 6 June 1944, and the 60th Anniversary of the First Pilgrimage, which was made in June 1946.

We hope you found something of value and interest in the ceremonies you attended, the people you met, the places you visited and trust we did not weary you too much by seeking to share with you some of our experiences in 1944.

We were delighted by how pleased the Normans were to welcome you and how greatly they appreciated your company.

6ABRE too greatly appreciated your support and company.

Long may we remember to say thank you to all those who gave their lives that Normandy, France and all the other occupied countries might regain and enjoy their 'Liberty.'

Long may the friendship between the Normans and Great Britain flourish.

UK Armed Forces Veteran Lapel Badge

Extended Qualification Dates

John Mason

The Veterans Agency have announced that if you served between 1 January 1955 and 31 December 1959 you will be entitled to a badge with effect from 27 June 2006.

If in the light of this further extension of the qualification period you think you are now eligible then you may apply by

Writing to - [REDACTED]

Telephoning - Free: [REDACTED] (UK only) or Free: [REDACTED] (Minicom)

Email: - [REDACTED]

Fax: - [REDACTED] (UK Only)

Journal Subscription- Renewal

Once again it's time to remind our readers that the annual subscription fees are due. However, please note that those individuals whose subscription are due will have a reminder attached to this current issue. In other words if you don't receive a reminder then your account is either in credit or you have made a previous arrangement to pay by Standing Order.

Well over a quarter of the membership have opted to pay by Standing Order; this saves me a considerable amount of time and also saves you the payee the cost of postage, envelope and the peace of mind by knowing that the bank has taken care of your subscription payment.

If you would like to pay future subscription charges by Standing Order, simply call me on: [REDACTED] or e-mail: [REDACTED] or drop me a line at: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Normandy Pilgrimage – 2006

Tony Murphy

My father and I joined the Aldershot, Chatham and Birmingham branches members on the Normandy Pilgrimage; it was a first for both of us. The 0530 hrs departure at Aldershot was a bit too early so we opted for the Chatham departure at 0730 hrs, though it meant a night in the King Charles Hotel a few minutes' walk from RMSE Brompton Barracks. We met the coach on time and after a slight hitch with a suit bag, we were off.



After a smooth ride down to Dover, with no traffic nor passport control, we were allocated an earlier ferry crossing, 75 minutes later we were in France. Calais to Caen, 6 hours! The time flew and the traffic was kind to us, We swept in to Normandy over the magnificent Pont du Normandie bridge and a little later arrived, de-bused and after freshening up, dinner and then relaxing evening in Caen.

John Mason & 'Smokie' Gibson on the 'Original' bridge

Early the next day we started the pilgrimage by visiting Pegasus Bridge where the curator, Mark Worthington, received us and went on to give an excellent briefing on the museum and the capture of the bridge. We then spent some time to looking round the museum, a replica Horsa glider, which is a new addition and the bridge itself.

From the museum we went to the first memorial service at Le Mesnil commemorating the 3 Parachute Brigade, 1 Canadian Parachute Battalion and it's commander, Brigadier Hill. Rev Iain Jenkins speeches made took the service, wreaths were laid and the last post played. All very dignified with due reverence.



Bob Sullivan MBE relates the events and mishaps of the demolition task carried out by Maj Tim Roseveare's party

Afterwards we went on to the visit the bridges of Samson, Robehomme, and Bures Sur Dives. Samson is where Major Tim Roseveare took the initiative and after a hair raising drive through the town of Troarn, plus a few 'volunteers' attacked the bridge that had yet to be blown. He succeeded; the bridge is now named after him and the sappers of 3 Parachute Sqn RE.

At Robehomme, Bob Sullivan gave a highly informative account of how they blew this bridge and somewhat amusing account of how he escaped afterwards! There was a formal march across this bridge where a wreath was laid at the memorial.



The AEA Standard is 'Piped' across the bridge at Robehomme

Bures Sur Dives is where the bridge dedicated to Captain Jukes MC is to be found. Here a more formal service was held. Again, the local mayor made a speech of welcome; the response was by Major (ret'd) John Mason 591 (Antrim) Sqn. RE. Wreaths were laid with due reverence.

We then returned to Troarn, again a formal memorial service was conducted. Afterwards, the mayor invited us to the local Marie (Town Hall) for a Vin du Honneur (local wines, cider, apple juice and Calvados). The hospitality was second to none, no one went without a glass in hand or two or three

Finally we returned to Caen for dinner then a relaxing evening.

Tuesday 6 June, we started with a visit to the DZ Nan and Sqn. HQ of 591 (Antrim) Parachute Sqn. RE, at Ranville. This was the first village in France to be liberated in the early hours of the 6 June. We assembled at the 13 Parachute Battalion Plaque, where the Mayor of Ranville welcomed us. Again a short service was held prior to Mass at the parish church of Ranville.

At this service the new Standard of the Parachute Association was dedicated, a Service of Remembrance in Ranville Military Cemetery followed this. Here the children of the town were encouraged to sit in the front, so that they could hear what was said and join in the service.

Afterwards, the mayor invited us to the local Marie for a Vin du Honneur.

Off to Courselles and a visit to the new Canadian Centre at Juno Beach, where we had a briefing and tour of the museum. Afterwards at the Canadian D-day Ceremony, we heard of the bravery and sacrifice of the Canadians who took part in the D-day landings.

From here we travelled a few kilometres up the road to Arromanches to visit the Musee du Debarquement. Here we had a film show and conducted tour of the museum. There was a relief model of the breaches, showing the Mulberry harbour as it was. There is also a scale model of the harbour showing a typical operation of how the beaches were supplied. Today you can still see the remains parts of this harbour as you approach Arromanches. This is a remarkable tribute to the engineering and ingenuity of the time.

As this was part the main celebrations of D-Day, a march pass of D-Day veterans and memorial service was the highlight of the day, to this end one of our party, Smokie Gibson was 'kidnapped' and ended up in the D-Day Veterans Parade complete with Wheelchair! As it was time for us to leave, he had to be rescued, and a squaddie was duly dispatched. Eventually Smokie returned and we set off back to the Hotel.



The following morning we set off to Grangues, picking up Maj. John Mason enroute. Here a Service of Remembrance was held for those who lost their lives, when two Sterling bombers and their accompanying gliders were shot down. It was also a poignant memorial to 7 Sappers of 591 (Antrim) Sqn who were murdered by the SS. Again, the local mayor made a speech of welcome; the response was by Maj. (retd) John Mason 591 (Antrim) Sqn.RE.

Wreaths were laid with due reverence by John Lee and Bill Dickson. Afterwards, the mayor invited us to a Vin du Honneur.

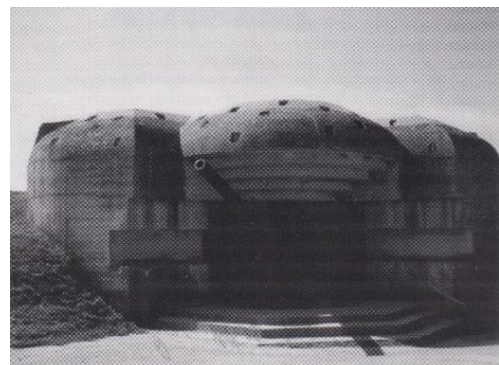
Our next stop was to Dives Sur Mer, where we had an opportunity to visit the parish church which was built on the orders of William the Conqueror and has a panel on the west wall giving the names of the knights who followed him on the invasion of England - 1066 and all that!

Later we visited the Merville Battery complex and had a guided tour and briefing on what took place by Michael Strong REME. Our final destination for the day was Oistreham, for wine and shopping in the Supermarche.

So ended our pilgrimage, as on the Thursday we left for home. I would like to thank John Smith as OC Coach ably assisted by his 2IC Glenda, who kept us and our fellow travellers fed and watered during the days. It was a good tour.

In conclusion: We have all read the many books about Normandy and watched the many TV programmes, but until you have 'walked the walk' and listened to those who took part; the sheer

bravery, heroism, luck and sometime tragedy, that took place during the early hours and days which the invasion was on tender hooks, brought home how close it was. I salute you all.



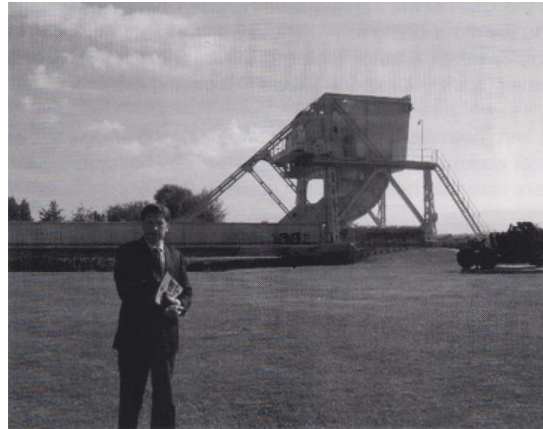
It was a privilege to have been with a few veterans of 3 Parachute Sqn and 591 (Antrim) Sqn RE who took part.



The Normandy party at the Troarn bridge memorial



Our three veterans - Smokie Gibson, Bob Sullivan and Bill Dickson with our Standard Bearer John Parker in the background



Mark Worthington (museum curator) with the original "Pegasus" bridge in the background



Steve Stephenson & John Lee hear firsthand from Smokie Gibson of his part in the operation

Snowdonia Weekend (In the Rain)

Ed:

Like the summoning to the bugle call (in this particular case an e-mail) the Snowdon 'die hards,' accompanied by their partners and children, assembled for the annual sortie in the Snowdonia National Park at the Joint Mountain Training Centre in Anglesey. As the guys and gals began to arrive from the far flung reaches of Montrose, Dublin, Yorkshire, Somerset, Lancashire, Kent and Hampshire, word quickly spread of the absence of our 'Master Chef' Tony Manley. Alarm and consternation was soon calmed when 'volunteer' chef - step forward Dave Davies - agreed to provide the culinary delights. Not to be outdone, Dave's wife Margaret offered to assist with the serving of the breakfast and preparation of the pack lunch meals. Having taken account of the current weather situation and predicted heavy rains, a stampede erupted for the coveted position of DRO (dining room orderly). Using a slight weight advantage over the other contenders, Yorkie Davies claimed the title.

With Poncho O'Donovan, Mike Ellery and Barney Rooney casting their expert eyes over the local maps and making final adjustments to routes, timings and admin arrangements, the remainder of the party busied themselves renewing old acquaintances and generally getting in the way of Dave and Margaret Davies.

With the early evening fast approaching a quick shower, change of clothes; and it was off to sample the ale at the local tavern. The usual entertainment had in the past been a local duo offering renditions of country and western and 60's and 70's favourites. Unfortunately, it would seem that Karaoke has reared its ugly head even in these remote parts and we were treated to some extremely painful (on the ear) attempts by various individuals to emulate their pop hero. Fortunately we came well prepared by having in our company the Rooney brothers Chris and Martin who with eager prompting from elder brother Barney, brought a form of professionalism with their duets which were greeted with rapturous applause from the crowded bar room.

With the knowledge of the hard climbs or walks the following morning the majority of the party opted for a reasonably early night - well somewhere around midnight.

With the smell of the traditional 'full English' breakfast wafting through the corridors, our party of 37 gradually made their way to the main dining room. There was a slight reluctance by some individuals to leave their cosy sleeping bag - they'd obviously taken a quick look out of the bedroom window to observe that yet again we were in for a wet weekend! However, spirits were soon lifted as each and every one of us settled down to a 'Dave Davies special breakfast.'

With zero hour (0900 hrs) fast approaching we sorted ourselves out into three teams, the hill walkers, cyclists and the coastal walkers. With the superior numbers being in the latter teams the hill walkers opted to use private cars/Range Rovers to reach their start point while the larger contingent made use of the civilian coach.

Having joined the hill walking party I can only relate the odd incident that the coastal party encountered and the following was given by one of their members: The party consisting of several 'brave' chaps and several ladies. "On entering a field we noticed there were a small head of rather large bullocks - "fear not, said the intrepid leader (Barney), they won't hurt you." But on reaching the midway point through the field the bullocks decided to take a closer look at these intruders, and galloped across for a closer inspection. With the odd scream and a shout of "Run for the gate," the party split in two. One would imagine that chivalry would take the upper hand - no chance. The 'brave' men, less Dave Goodfellow, fled for safety leaving our shining knight Dave doing his matador act to protect the ladies. When challenged about this incident the men strongly denied any such action but the ladies are quite positive of exactly what happened. I know whom I believe!

After a 45-minute drive, the hill walkers reached the small car park, which was to be our start and finish point. The location was situated down a long narrow lane in the middle of nowhere. With a steady rain falling; water proofs were quickly donned, GPS (global positioning system) adjusted and a final check on the map to confirm our exact location - and we were off.

**Mike Ellery, Ty Harrop, Jim Narrower,
Bob Watts, Mike Robertson,
Phil Paulton, Dennis Healey,
Fennymore Fleck,
Kneeling: Dave Grimbley, Pete Kershaw
& Poncho O'Donovan**

In our haste to get started, nobody noticed that Poncho had 'deliberately' arranged a mini command task for our return by leaving the lights on his Range Rover to totally flatten the battery. Knowing that it's impossible to bump start an automatic vehicle he obviously wanted to assess the ABI (airborne initiative) of a tired and wet bunch of individuals.



Governed by the degree of individual fitness, within 15-minutes of our hike the party had split into 3 separate groups as we climbed and at times scrambled onwards and upward. The rain fell steadily throughout the day and few lingered long enough to attempt to view the surrounding countryside - rather pointless anyway - visibility wasn't exactly perfect and the body temperature dropped rather quickly even for short rest periods.

With the estimated 5-hour route completed in under 4-hours we were once again back at the car park. With the dreaded sound of 'clunk' as Poncho attempted to start his Range Rover. It was left to Mike Robertson who quickly took command of the situation as sprinted/hobbled off to a nearby farm for assistance. He soon returned with a local farmer who was carrying a set of jump leads. With engines running it was off to a nearby 'watering hole' for a quick pint and a change into dry clothing before returning to base to prepare for the evening BBQ.

Poncho jump starts his Range Rover





Willy Lawrence renews acquaintances with late arrivals, Tony Hogan, Bob Kennedy and Billy Morris (Ty Harrop in background)

3 volunteer chefs prepared the BBQ that was held near the JSMTYC yacht club. The bar having previously been organised by Poncho and Marilyn was now being manned by the younger generation, Nina, Leanne and Ty. Chris and Martin Rooney were soon providing the evening's entertainment. The two brothers had a tremendous repertoire of songs providing their own backing with superb guitar and mandolin playing and soon had the whole party joining in with the singing. Not to be outdone, Nina Grimbley stole a major part of the

limelight with some wonderful singing and she also provided her own guitar accompaniment. Our party numbers were swelled by other AEA members who were spending an 'adventure' weekend at a pursuit centre run by Matt Wells, a former member of 9 Para Sqn. At some stage during the early hours it was time to retire and recharge the energy levels for the Sunday 'strolls.'



Dave & Margaret Davies with Bob Watts (centre)



Christine Grimbley, Brenda Davies & Lorraine Dunk

No church parades for us this Sunday morning - following a full English breakfast and armed with our pack lunches the hill walkers made use of the coach and were transported off to the start point for yet another hike across the hillsides.



One or two absentees were noted from the previous days venture - but no names or pack drill. Anyway, they probably had more sense having seen the typical Welsh weather awaiting us! Why does it always rain in Wales?

Location check: Bob Watts, Editor & Dave Grimbley

Our route was to take us over some fairly undulating ground with one or two fairly strenuous climbs. Once again, with the relentless rain/drizzle and a cold wind, rest stops were kept to a minimum. As we reached the latter of the high points we could just make out the pub/pick up point way in the

distance. It was amazing how the pace quickened which towards the last 800 metres resembled something of a race. As on our previous hike we achieved our aim in completing the hike well under the estimated time, so much

so that the coach company were requested to bring forward the pickup time. Changed into dry clothing, sat in front of an open fire with a pint of local ale in one hand, the aches and pains were soon forgotten and the conversation was soon relating to something from "All our yesterdays."



Cross section of Barney's coastal walking party:

Marilyn, Barney, Margaret, Mick Fisher & Dave Goodfellow - taken before the stampede!

Where did that sunshine come from?

Showered and changed into respectable civilian attire (but not everyone) the whole party descended on the local hotel for a well-earned 3-course evening dinner and several pints of the local brew. With each pint the volume of conversation appeared to get ever louder. Someone did mention that Barney had provided a rather testing day for the coastal walkers that day, but that Marilyn had retained

sufficient stamina to sprint to the finishing point (pub) ahead of everyone else.

Kitchen/dining room and accommodation cleaned and handed over it was time to bomb burst to our respective home locations. Sincere promises to return next year - with some adding that they intended to be fitter for the 2007 venture, it was time for farewells and the drive home.



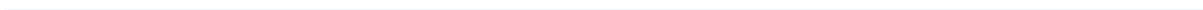
There are of course the odd 'hairy' moments!

Snowdonia 2006 was a great success and with each year it gets better and better. Everyone in some form or other deserves some praise - some for just being there, others for actually doing the real backbone of the administration - that accolade goes to Marilyn and Chris O'Donovan. Our thanks to Barney, Chris and Martin Rooney for the provision of excellent entertainment. (Wayne couldn't attend due to the World cup). To Mike Ellery for plotting and sorting out the hill walking routes and finally to Dave and Margaret Davies who in the moment of crisis stepped in to provide the superb breakfasts and packed

lunches. Dave's final comment, "You can tell Tony Manley that's the first and last time I take on his commitments - I'm absolutely knackered."

Finally, during the Saturday BBQ a raffle was held which raised the sum of £325, it was agreed by those attending that the full sum be donated to the Airborne Sapper Portrait Fund.

Great weekend see you all in May 2007!



Remembering Alan (Taff) Brice

Tony (Geordie) Ridgway

For the few years that I knew Taff in the Sqn I found him to have bags of ingenuity, initiative, a master at talking himself out of trouble, and a wicked practical joker. (Look at his letter in issue 8 Page 6 (The Matelot Story))

Sometime in the early 60's Taff bought an old London taxi, which was the focal point of many an escapade, including getting tanked up one night in Weymouth. Trying to get back to bridging camp we got lost and decided to park up, sleep it off, and find our way back in the morning. Taff found a flat spot, parked and we all fell asleep. In the morning we were woken by the gentle rocking of the taxi and sea water sloshing round our ankles. Taff had only parked on the hard and the tide had come in. Much longer and we would have been floating out to sea!

We were in the Aldershot NAAFI club and Taff had parked the taxi about 100yds away in a narrow alley off the main street. Come closing time 3 or 4 of us made our way back to the taxi only to find that a mini had parked in front of the lane, blocking our exit. Taff ran back to the club and rounded up a few bodies, and then we bodily lifted the mini out of the way. Taff then drove the taxi out and you might think that would be the end of it. No way. At Taff's instigation we all got round the mini again, carried it into the alley and gently set it down sideways! There was about 3" clearance between the walls and the mini's front and rear bumpers.

Our section was travelling upriver to Kalibakan in Borneo accompanied by a dozen marines. The marines were all on the monkey island (the flat deck above the wheelhouse) and had set up their machine gun and us Sqn lads were on the lower deck. I think it was an old shallow water landing craft. The river was quite wide and we were travelling in mid-stream, and Taff and I decided to break the monotony by taking a few pot shots at the monkeys in the trees on the riverbank. We got off a few shots each then all hell broke loose. First there was rifle fire from up top and then the machine gun joined in spraying tracer bullets everywhere along the riverbank. This went on for a few minutes, during which time Taff and I started to frantically clean our weapons. When the machine gun stopped, a furious marine officer came hurtling down below screaming, "Who started firing? Who started firing?" As Taff and I were the only ones cleaning weapons, he rounded on us and shouted, "Did you start firing?" Taff immediately replied "No Sir, we heard the gunner open up, thought we were being attacked, so started firing in the direction of the tracers." After a few expletives, the officer went back up top and the section had a good old laugh about it (out of earshot of the officer)

While in Borneo we met some SAS lads and when we got back to Aldershot, Taff and I both applied for the selection course. (I couldn't even get past our Sqn gates, even tho' I applied twice) but Taff was accepted. Now at the time, Taff had almost as many entries on his Regimental and Company conduct sheet as I had. And that I can tell you was an awful lot. So prior to leaving for his SAS course Sid Rooth (OC at the time) called Taff into his office to wish him good luck. (Actually his words were, "Well Brice, I hope you pass the SAS selection course, because I don't want you back in this Sqn.") Fortunately Taff did pass.

From here apart from an aborted attempt to get to Taff's wedding and a brief crossing of paths in Nairobi, 67/68 I did not hear from Taff again until he joined the AEA which I believe was the result of a chance meeting with Cliff Joy on a New Zealand rugby tour.

Taff's most recent visit back to the UK was during the AGM/Reunion at Coventry in 2004. Here he was able to renew acquaintances with several of his former 9 Sqn colleagues, these included Ken Turk, Ian McLellan, Tom Downey and Paddy Fulton.

Settling down in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, he set up and ran an extremely successful business. He could be summed up as one that worked hard, played hard and could drink for the Springboks!

There are few real characters left in today's modern army, but Taff Brice will long be remembered as one of the truly greats. I suspect that former SSMs and OCs may have differing viewpoints!

News from the Branches

Aldershot

Joe Stoddart MBE

From the Aldershot Branch I would like to say thank you to two friends we met from North Manley, Australia. They were excellent company throughout the trip and Bill Dickson being a veteran of Normandy was an inspiration. His wife Sheenah was a diamond, except if you called her Sheila. Both are welcome in Aldershot at any time, and they in turn have extended an invitation to our members if holidaying in Sydney.

New branch premises: - We have yet to find new premises to hold our meetings, but as always for sappers; we have a standby location if only temporary.

We were saddened that Major John Shave MC RE who was due to go on the Normandy trip with us was advised by his doctor not to attend. However, as soon as he is fit again he will be welcome to attend our summer BBQ or other functions. We look forward to seeing him.

Dakota Photo Day: This was a day, which looked as if it had been rehearsed. The photo session went well and all was fine until Ron Day tripped and fell, however by the time the ambulance arrived he was fine and worrying more about other people than himself.

Southampton 2006: I can report that the applications for the AGM reunion are going well. Most of the regulars have already booked, so once again it looks like being a grand do. Kindly remember that the closing date closing date for applications is 28th August 2006.

Normandy Visit 4-8 June: Everything had gone exceptionally well thanks to careful planning excellent tour guides, good presentation and anecdotal stories especially by the following personnel:

John & Glenda Smith, Mark Worthington, Major John Mason and Bob Sullivan MBE.

With words of thanks to Mark our driver from Catteralls, Frank Menzies-Hearn our piper and John Parker our standard bearer for their input into our tour. Special thanks are also directed to Major John Shave MC, who assisted with the organisation of the trip but was unable to attend. An article on the trip is published elsewhere in this edition.

Birmingham

Bunny Brown

Greetings from the Birmingham Branch. Sorry about missing the last Journal. The Branch has been busy as usual since I last wrote. The Christmas dinner dance, was once again held at the Birmingham Airport Hotel. The function was attended by almost 100, mostly Branch members and their good Ladies, OC 131 was asked to be Guest of Honour, but due to other commitments was unable to attend. We also had ten Yorkshire friends down from Hull, always a pleasure to see you guys. Again thanks go to Roger Howies and wife Kay for their mastery of planning and organization, thanks also to all others who assisted with running the event.

This year started fairly slowly not getting started until St Valentines dinner dance at the Busc. The night started at a quiet pace even with the DJ doing his Elvis impressions, until the raffle was drawn, then a member who I shall not name, won a thong (very small undies) who with a bit of encouragement from some of the guests was forced to don them, not as one would have imagined over his clothing, but as they are intended. This man is known intimately by most of the ladies, who smile, and give sympathy and understanding to his wife. Well done to Brian Care for a well organised function.

The usual crowd of 'Brummies' invaded Ripon on the 1st April for the annual Yorkshire branch dinner. Thanks Bill, we will keep coming until you say stop. All had a great time.

Monday the 3rd April saw some of the Branch attending Andy Dixon's funeral, a sad loss to all, he being so young.

April also brought us St George's day and the annual Dinner Dance which once again was held at the Britannia Hotel in the centre of Birmingham. Brian Care our organiser only managed to get one happy hour this year, from 1830hrs to 2300hrs. It was well attended and helped off to a good start by Rip Kirby's happy family attending. Again well done to Brian.

In May, twenty of our members including wives and girlfriends visited Treganna Castle Hotel, St Ives, Cornwall, as guests of John and Ron Mason. A very nice two-day break was had by all who attended, but after a 300 mile drive we all needed another weekend break.

Thanks John and Ron we will find some way to repay the honour, hopefully by more than the presentation of two second hand ties.

Also in May we attended the RRF at Swynerton, where we had the chance to shoot the SA80 full bore on a 25 metre range. Some guilt was felt by those who attended that we did not donate anything toward the day, so discussion took place and an Inter Unit Trophy was arranged. Judging by previous years RRF should win easily, but on the day it rained, so we presented RRF with the Trophy to present to the winners, the AEA.

June saw us in Normandy attending a superbly well-organized trip by John and Glenda Smith. A great time made all the better by having Maj John Mason, Bob Sullivan MBE and Smokie Gibson on the ground to give us an insight as to what actually happened. If we go again John I will take a Standard!

On return from Normandy it was empty one suitcase fill another and off to Duxford Air Museum. A weekend with overnight stay in a hotel arranged by the Branch Chairman Brian Care, a two-day trip around Duxford (yes it is that big) and a visit to the American Cemetery at Cambridge on our way back.

We all look forward to seeing you at Southampton in October; don't forget not attending is a crime!

Chatham

Eric Blenkinsop

Well this has been a quiet period for the branch except of course for the monthly meetings, which are always lively and well supported by our ladies.

There have been genuine attempts to organise a couple of branch functions with only a modicum of success.

In the meantime, several of us took part in the Normandy Pilgrimage organised this year by the Aldershot branch. Once again it was a most meaningful and pleasant experience and unlike our two previous pilgrimages, which focused solely on the 6 Airborne Division Zone of activity, this one embraced some of the sea borne landings at Courselles and Arromanches.

Unfortunately the writer was incapacitated for that particular visit but I have it on good authority that our Smokey Gibson was jiving in the main street of Arromanches with a "poupee oiseau." You cannot hold a good man down.

We had Bill & Sheenha Dickson with us once again from Australia and they truly seem to get younger each year. Unfortunately Major John Shave was unable to travel this year due to failing health. Harry and Barbara Moslem opted to travel this time with the NVA door to door by coach, but they would all have been pleased by this representation of Airborne Engineers.

So our heartfelt thanks go out to the Aldershot branch and John & Glenda Smith in particular for the invitation to join them.

Well now! What about this Hi Tech branch at Chatham?

Thank you Dave Pace. For those of you who have not had a to shufti adjust to click on to the AEA website. Thanks also to our official branch photographer Don Lay for the picture gallery.

Also thank you Steve Collins for continuing to make such an input to the branch despite your serious setback in health.

Finally at our June branch meeting it was a joy to have with us once again now that the lighter evenings are with us, our branch President, John Grosvenor with Sue all the way from Bexhill on Sea.

Must sign off now as the deadline has been brought forward for economic reasons.

Yorkshire

Bill Rudd MBE

I write these notes after coming down to earth from a very busy period of our Yorkshire Branch. Our Branch Annual Dinner was briefly mentioned in the last issue of the journal, was a tremendous success with a final count of 104 sitting down to a superb five-course meal with much wine to drink. It certainly is becoming a well-attended function from members from all parts of UK. It was a pleasure to welcome our new Chairman and his wife Chris who also met many old friends from the time he served in Ripon in the early eighties. New faces are always welcome and it was nice to see Mick and Sisi Leather. Dancing continued into the early hours and breakfast was served in the Regiment's new restaurant under the new system of pay as you dine. Book early for next year, the first weekend in April 2007

Our next venture was our visit to Wales by kind permission of Chris O' Donovan. Sixteen members and wife's attended to enjoy the various pursuits that were arranged over the three-day weekend. Yorkie Davies did not quite make the top of Snowdon as rumours suggest - perhaps next year.

On behalf of the York's Branch many thanks to Chris and Marilyn for the excellent organisation for such happy weekend among friends. Incidentally Chris you forgot to book the weather again; does it always rain in Wales?

Our next move was to Normandy with an overnight stay in Chatham by kind permission of Lt Col Baz Bassett prior to moving to Dover for the Ferry to Calais and then onto Caen. A very busy and exciting five days where we met up with John Smith and a super bunch of AEA members and wives. The weather was also very kind to all with five days of sunshine. One can read all the books and watch the films on the Normandy Landings, but one has to be on the ground to appreciate the near impossible task that the boys had in June 1944, especially the beach landings. It most certainly left us all feeling very humbled and more than thankful for the sacrifice that was made for our behalf.

Lastly Yorkshire Branch apology with regards the absent standard on the Wednesday morning; suffice to say as I explained to John Smith, the lines of communication failed.

The following weekend the 200th Anniversary of 11 Fd Sqn RE took place in Ripon with many Association members attending, this also coincided with our OGM held in the WOs & Sgts Mess and sponsored by the York's Branch. We were delighted to host the event and would like to offer our services for June 2007.

To finish off a very busy period the gathering of the clans met yet again at the 50th Anniversary of Bob and Sheila Prosser's golden wedding. Such a good party, many congratulations to you both and thanks for a super day.

We now look forward to a quiet period!

Your AEA Standard

John Parker

A slightly hurtful remark was heard during the Normandy pilgrimage, quote: "Ah our illusive AEA Standard." May I inform our readers that our Standard is far from illusive; it's probably because you've not been present to see it on parade. You may be surprised to learn that I have carried our Standard on no less than 89 occasions over the past 2 years, these include:

2005: The Ripon Reunion, Beating Retreat at Blackpool, 41 funerals, approx. 10 Veterans parades, several shows at the Blackpool Grand Theatre and Winter Gardens, Hebden remembrance parade, the annual association AGM/Reunion and the Preston and Ripon Freedom parade in Blackpool.

2006: To date 20 funerals, parades of the Submariners, Naval and Merchant Navy, the Burma Star Dinner, Ripon weekend, National Veterans Day and at all but one of the recent parades/memorials in Normandy.



My diary is filling steadily with requests for attendance at the Beating Retreat in Blackpool, the Somme Remembrance parade and The Veterans Dinner evening. The AEA Standard was also chosen to be the National Standard for Airborne Forces Day (North) at Eden Camp on 24th June.

I rest my case.

AEA Sports Club Running Section

Billy Morris

Fleet Half Marathon-19 March 06

The first race of 2006 was to be the Pre London Fleet Half Marathon, held in Fleet just up the road from Aldershot, a good flat fast local race. We ran this one last year so both Bob Chatterton and myself had personal best's to beat as well as each other.

About 2,000 runners from around the UK use the Fleet as a warmer for the London Marathon it is also part of the Army championships, so it's good to see how we compete still against the regular and TA units. If we had two more runners from the AEA we could enter as the AEASC. The race was its usual crowded start in the back road behind Calthorpe Park, we all ran with timing chips strapped through your laces on your trainers. As you pass over the electronic sensor mat at the start, it starts your own race clock. This is a great piece of technology the size of a 50p coin, as it gives you your race time and the official race time at the end when you pass over the finish mat. In some big races it can take you 10 minutes to pass over the start line on a mass start.

The race between Bob and myself was pretty close all the way round, the weather was just right and apart from the start as always crowded with every one trying to get into their rhythm as soon as possible we both managed better times than last year, for me 1 hr 33 min and Bob 1 hr 45 min. Role on next year, any one up for it?

Hamburg Marathon- 24 April 06

Last year I made contact with an old RE mate who I served with in 43 Plant Sqn RE when based in Osnabruck as part of 25 Engr Regt. We used to play golf and Bob was the unit golfer and not the unit runner - no way.

Bob lives and works in Germany near Neinburg and invited me over to run in his second marathon - please take note Kenny Turk that's from Bob Thorburn. Bob wanted to run the Hamburg Marathon in under 4 hours, so using my new GPS running watch from Garmin I programmed in the time of 3hrs 50 minutes. The Garmin gives you a digital readout in the form of a virtual partner, a little running man icon and above it in the screen your actual position in relationship to the icon's preset parameters. The start was manic along with 28,500 other runners; it took us almost 14 km to get into a good pace and to keep up with my virtual partner on my wrist. I managed to push the pace a bit and got us in front of the virtual partner by 500m.

The crowds were amazing, it was the biggest race I had been in, and in typical German style organised to the tee.



Bob Thorburn and Billy Morris after crossing the finish line of the Hamburg Marathon.

With only 3 km to the finish Bob started to suffer with the added pace I had put on him to achieve the goal that he had set, and being a conventional ground trooper I could not offer him any Airborne inspiration and encouragement but only give him a hard time for being a 'hat' etc.

Bob dug in and we both crossed the line in 3hrs 55 minutes. Airborne!

A family party followed which ended a cracking weekend. A flight the next morning, back home and back to work as usual.

Steyning Stinger ½ Marathon Bob Chatterton

The Steyning Stinger was run on Sunday 5th March. This is the second time the Airborne Engineers Association Sports Club (AEASC) has been represented at this race. The Steyning Stinger is a cross-country hill run through

the South Downs between Worthing and Shoreham-by-Sea. There is also a Marathon; however I think we will satisfy ourselves with the lesser distance for now.

Again as in most races entered by the AEASC, it was the usual suspects, Bill Morris and myself. This year saw a more serious and technical approach to last year, there was no pre-race consultation on whether to wear Lycra tights or not (personally I find they chafe in the most awkward to reach places), especially on the longer runs, so I was sticking to shorts. That was the serious bit; the technical bit was me doing some proper training beforehand.

The race was a nice early start on an unusually warm morning for the time of year. I was determined this year to keep Billy in my sights so that I could achieve a more respectable time. Billy was most obliging with this, he was kind enough to be wearing his wife's brightest red gloves. All I could see throughout the race was these flashing beacons as his arms pumped backwards and forwards.

I followed in Billy's wake for the whole race over terrain similar to the South Downs Tab on P Company, as it was when I completed it in the early eighties, nice rolling chalk Hills with plenty of rocks to trip over on the way.

It was a very enjoyable race and I managed to improve on last year's time by over twenty minutes, something I was really pleased with.

The Midsummer Munro ½ Marathon

The Midsummer Munro ½ Marathon took place on Saturday 24th June, on Box Hill near Dorking. This one was undoubtedly our biggest challenge since the Snowdonia Marathon last October. This run was billed as the hardest ½ Marathon in Britain; it has 3000 ft of ascents and 3000 ft of descents, over the 13.1 distance.

The afternoon got off to a good start with a 100% turnout from the AEASC, yes both Billy Morris and myself were running. We were a bit disappointed we didn't have enough for a team; however you never know there's always next year. Bob (the Dog) Kennedy, his daughter, my wife and my Labrador turned out in support and it was most welcome, especially during the later stages. Bob even said he might join us when he gets his new knees.

The field of just over 100 was set off at 16:00 on an extremely hot and sunny afternoon up the steepest start I've seen in a race. My tactics this time was to impress Billy with my increased fitness levels and burn him off at the start. This worked for the first hill but he managed to catch me and overtake on the second. If he was a professional runner, I would insist he was tested, he seemed to be on something, which I'm sure, was stronger than the midway Lucozade drink.

The next two hours or so was a steady grind up and down some of the steepest inclines I have run on. The inclines were so steep they were literally steps cut into the hillside. As soon as we had run and stumbled down the hill it was a quick turnaround and back to the top and on to the next one.

We both put in respectable times for this kind of race. Billy came in around 2hrs 30mins and I was seven minutes behind. Maybe see you next year?

Book review Corner

XD Operations by CCH Brazier

Reviewed by Poncho

The book XD Operations tells the most remarkable story of the men of the company sized TA unit called The Kent Fortress Royal Engineers, of their formation in 1932 to support coastal defences thus relieving regular army personnel, of their bizarre sabotage operations and of their eventual provision of the nucleus of 2 Para Sqn RE at its formation. The story is told by their commanding officer Clifford Brazier who, being a manager of a Blue Circle Cement factory at the time, was tasked with raising and commanding the unit: this he did within forty-eight hours with volunteers from the Blue Circle Cement Company. His draft for the book was edited and further researched by his son P.H. (Jock) Frazier. It is clear from his literary style that neither P.H. nor his dad would see themselves as a modern J.K. Rowling type of author and this serves only to lend precision, objectivity and focus to the work which appeals greatly to anoraks like me.

There are some very good photos in the book (I do like pictures) which include not only breathtaking shots of burning oil installations and evacuations but also of the unit at their routine activities prior to hostilities. It is clear that these are not the TA that I remember with shapeless berets and baggy denims, these guys look sharp and enthusiastic, their kit is perfect, they had their own band and a photo of them building an improvised bridge shows them to be a happy and cohesive unit (one does wonder if there might have been a bit of corporate sponsorship from Blue Circle Cement). The photos of operations are supplemented with on-site sketches by the hand of LCpl Hill the HQ draftsman.

When Hitler invaded neutral Holland in May of 1940 the unit was tasked to form demolition parties to deny the enemy the oil assets at Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The problems that they had to confront were endless, no James Bond style laser-guided rocket-launching fountain pens for these boys, it was heavy crates of gun cotton explosives and G1098 stores, and they presented serious transportation issues. There were technical problems such as getting an oil tank farm to burn, not as straight forward as you might think, and social problems in that that locals, not having quite been invaded yet, were not too happy about these foreigners arriving in their neutral country, setting fire to the oil installations and generally trashing the place. The lads then had to get themselves home, "err no-one thought about that," this in turn resulted in long sea journeys in small open boats. These operations were repeated from Holland to The Bay of Biscay each one with its own particular adrenalin soaked anecdotes, lucky escapes and bewildered, often hostile, local allies. They even had a trip to the Norwegian island of Spitzbergen to deny coal assets and evacuate civilians. The unit was for a period the most highly decorated in the British Army but because nearly all of their activity was shrouded in a cloak of secrecy little was known about them until restrictions were lifted.

The unit was posted to Co Antrim where they were visited by the CRE of the 1st Airborne Division who invited them to volunteer to become parachutists and thus convert the unit to 2 Para Sqn Re. They stepped forward, to a man, though not all were selected.

For a military engineer this is a ripping read which highlights that in a time of scarce resources a huge shortfall can be filled by "Sapper Initiative" and professionalism. It can be bought on-line from the publishers Pen and Sword Books: www.pen-and-sword.co.uk.

British Campaign Medals 1945 – 2005

Mike Ellery

Whilst dusting down my blazer the other day, I found stuffed in the breast pocket, my solitary Campaign medal. It was a 1962 General Service Medal and clasp for Northern Ireland and South Arabia. On reflection I was curious as to how many Campaign medals had been awarded since the end of the 2nd World war. You only have to look at serving soldiers on parade these days to see a cluster of medals on their chests. 30 years ago gaining Campaign medals was a bit of a lottery- you had to be in the right place at the right time and obviously in the right Unit.

Nowadays with so many hot spots throughout the world, it seems that it is only a matter of time before units are rotated through these troubled areas, gaining a well-deserved Campaign medal.

After a piece of research on the net, I came upon an excellent publication, which had just been updated, fulfilling all my requirements.

The book, British Campaign Medals 1914-2005 is A Shire publication priced at £4.99 written by Peter Duckers.

The book gives a potted history of each Campaign medal, along with coloured photos of the medal and its ribbon. This publication is a must for people collecting Military medals. If like me, you are also curious about the origins of some of the Campaign medals then this book will whet your appetite.

'A Sapper at Arnhem'

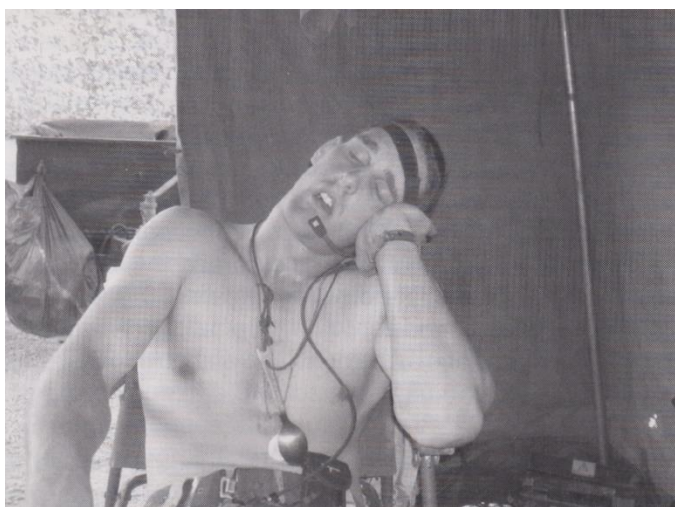
Eric Richards (4th Para Sqn RE)

I have a couple of pieces of information that I hope you might be prepared to mention in your journal

Firstly, a book called 'A Sapper at Arnhem' by (in 1944) Captain Harry Faulkner-Brown. He was a Troop Commander in the 4th Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers, part of the 4th Parachute Brigade. The cost is £12-00 per copy plus £2-00 postage. Another book titled 'Red Beret and Red Crosses' relates the story of the Medical Services in the 1st Airborne Division during World War II. The cost of this book is £18-95 plus £4-80 postage.

These two publications can be obtained through Mr. N. Cherry 3, Church Road, Warton, Lancs PR4 1BD. Tel: 01772 632 764. All profits go to the Airborne Forces charities.

Secondly it is the 60th Anniversary of the Airborne Forces Museum at Aldershot and a special anniversary lecture has been arranged for Thursday 12th October. The talk to be given by the UK representative of the Society of Friends of the Airborne Museum Oosterbeek Holland and author of the book 'Red Berets and Red Crosses-the medical services in the 1st Airborne Division in WW2'. His subjects in a two-part talk are the defence of the Van Limburg Stirum School at the road bridge at Arnhem by the 1st Parachute Squadron RE and the airborne medical services in WW2.



OK - so who's on radio watch?

Airborne Sapper Portrait Fund – Update

Brig. JH. Hooper OBE, DL

Total income to date: £7,270-00

Target is now: £10,000-00

Contribution ranging from £10-00 to £1,000-00 have been received from:

Airborne Engineers Association

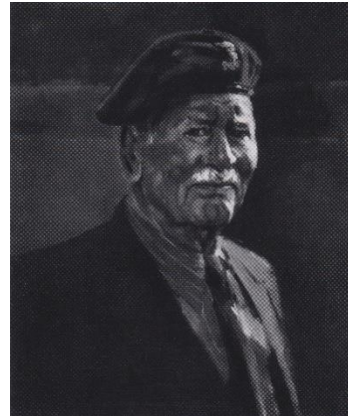
AEA Branches: Birmingham, South West and Yorkshire

The “Snowdonia Climbers & Coastal Walkers” (AEA members)

A total of 50 individual contributions from AEA members Contributions from 13 non AEA individuals

The Corps

The Corps has made a grant of £5,000-00 towards the portraits in two tranches of £2,500-00. One has been paid to 9 Para Sqn and the other will be paid in April 2007.



Progress

The three portraits are complete and the frames have been ordered but will take a month or so to make. The portraits of Johnny Humpries and Eric Mackay are a matched pair both in red beret, blazer, medals and tie, but the portrait of 'Fergie' Semple is slightly larger and he is in uniform (tropical service dress).

Due to a misunderstanding, the Corp has not yet matched us £1 for £1. But I have written to see if this can be sorted out. However, if the worst comes to the worst we only need 273 donations of £10 or 137 at £20 (I could go on!) and we have well over a thousand members of the AEA of which less than a hundred have contributed so it should be no problem.

Regimental Mascot Up On Orders

The Regimental Mascot (Billy the Goat) of the 1st Bn Royal Welsh refused to march and stay in line during the Queen's Birthday parade at the Episkopi garrison in Cyprus. The 6-year old disgraced himself by trying to butt a group of military drummers and threatening to spear their rears with his horns.

Now the Persian goat, also known as Billy, has been demoted and has lost the traditional perks of his rank such as being saluted.

The Queen originally presented Billy to the battalion from a royal herd, which grazes on hills outside Llandudno, North Wales.

His handler, LCpl Dai Davies, aged 22 from Neath, was unable to keep him in line during the 16th June parade which was held at Happy Valley sports fields in front of a number of local dignitaries including ambassadors.

Captain William Rose, an orderly officer with the battalion, said, "I was there and saw what happened and why the commanding officer stripped Billy of his rank. The goat has a full set of horns and was not marching and staying in line but trying to butt the waist and nether regions of the drummers." "Normally it obeys orders and does as it is told but other times it can get out of line and become disruptive." He added that Billy's situation was under review and, as it is traditional for goats to be honorary lance corporals, his disgrace may be short lived.

Unquote ... It could only happen in the British Army!

Directions to the AGM/Reunion Southampton

By Train

Travel to Southampton Central use platform 4 entrance. The hotels are 200 yards from the station.

By Air

Flights into Southampton/Eastleigh airport. The airport is approx. 6 miles from the hotels - suggest taxi or local bus service.

By Road

From North, East & South travelling down the M3 - exit M3 at junction 14 sign posted Bournemouth/Southampton joining the M27 then exit M27 at Junction 3 on to the M271 signposted Southampton Docks. Continue forward until joining A33 sign posted City Centre(for 3 miles). Follow signs for West Quay (this is a Shopping Centre) the Novotel/Ibis hotels are on your left just before the Shopping centre.

From the West travelling along the A31 which then joins the M27 - exit at junction 3 and follow directions as above.

Telephone contact for the Novotel: 023 80 33 0550

Latest Welch Film Releases

972 Leeks

The Lost Boyos

An American Werewolf in Powys

The Wizard of Oswestry

Cool Hand Look-you

Sheepless in Seattle

The Eagle has Llandudno

The Magnificent Severn

Haverfordwest Was Won

The Magic Rhonddabout

Seven Brides from Seven Sisters

The Bridge on the River Wye

Lawrence of Llandybie

The Welsh Patient

The King and Mair

Breakfast at Taffynys

Look You Back in Bangor

A Fishguard Called Rhondda

Where Eagles Aberdare

Dial M For Merthyr

Membership Report

Steve "Billy" Morris MSM-Membership Secretary

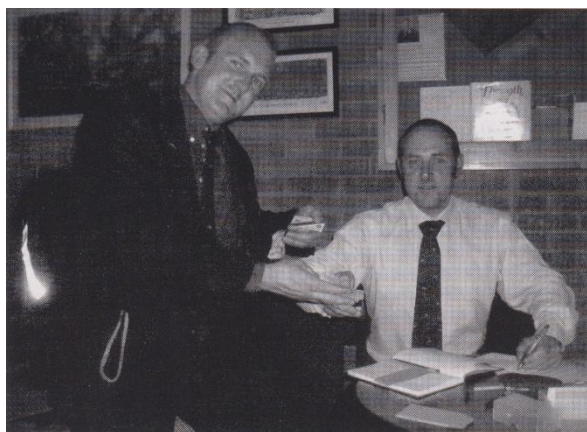
Since taking over the role of Membership Secretary for the Association it has been a promising start and a busy one with our membership now totalling 1,250 former and serving Airborne Engineers. There are still hundreds out there who have yet to be recruited, many of you probably know some of those yet to get the message. In the words of that great leader Delia Smith, "Let's be having Ya!"

Please note change of e-mail address: [REDACTED]

We welcome to the "Airborne Engineers Association" the following new members:

George Morrison	3 Fd Sqn 131 Para Engr Regt (TA)	1957- 1965
Dave Smith	3 Div PCCU (Para) / 9 Indep Para Sqn	1971 - 1976
Karl Simonds SSgt	9 Para Sqn RE	2005 - still serving
Bruce Dickson SSgt	9 Para Sqn RE	1989 - still serving
Andrew Paterson	300 Para Fd Sqn RE	1964- 1967
David Lapping	51 Para Sqn RE / 23 Engr Regt (Air Assault)	2002 - still serving
Jason Wheeler SSgt	9 Para Sqn RE	1989 - still serving
Brian Hubbard	9 Indep Para Sqn	1953- 1956
Stephen Farr Capt	9 Para Sqn RE	2005 - still serving
Anthony Hill	9 Para Sqn RE	1982-90/1994-98
Dean Spratt	9 Para Sqn RE	2004 - still serving
Kurt Knight	9 Para Sqn RE	2002 - still serving
David Gowans	9 Para Sqn RE	1989- 1994
Brian Dudds	9 Para Sqn RE	1997-2004
Aaron Baillie Cpl	9 Para Sqn RE	2003 - still serving
David Mellish	9 Para Sqn RE	2000 - 2004
Dean Eardley	Recce Tp 23 Engr Regt (Air Assault)	2003 - still serving
Eric Borlace	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1959- 1963

Recruiting a new member and socialising with Stan Stanley and Colin Burkinshaw at the 9 Para Sqn Reunion



Association Shop

Ray Coleman

Description	Price	P&P
Ties	£15.00	£1.00
Anniversary Ties (Wings & Pegasus logo)	£15.00	£1.00
9 Para Sqn Ties (Wings logo)	£15.00	£1.00
Bow Ties (Pegasus & wings logo)	£9.50	£1.00
Badges	£14.00	£1.00
Lapel Wings - Blue Enamel S/C	£3.50	£1.00
Clothing	£25.00	£3.10
Association Sweatshirts - Maroon with blue logo - Small/med/large or X large	£16.50	£3.10
Association Polo Shirts - Fred Perry style - Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo - small/med/large or X large	£15.50	£2.50
Association 'T' Shirts - Maroon with logo - small/med/large/X large	£9.00	£1.80
Association Shower proof Maroon Fleece -with embroidered 'Airborne Engineers' logo - Med/Large/X large	£28.00	£3.00
Baseball Cap (in blue or maroon) - with combined Pegasus & Wings crest	£7.00	£1.00
Miscellaneous	£18.00	£1.00
"The 9th " (1787 - 1960) by the late Tom Purves	£7.00	£3.80
Association Cuff Links (slightly smaller than lapel badge)	£8.50	£1.60

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

"Airborne Engineers Association"

Please note that all shop orders should now be sent to:

Ray Coleman [REDACTED] Tel: [REDACTED]

E-Mail: [REDACTED]

Moving House or Quarters?

Where's my Journal you may ask. If you're about to move locations, don't forget to notify the editor of your new address. You can contact me by phone, e-mail or letter-full details are published on page 1 of each edition. The editor will forward details of amended addresses/location to the Association Secretary and the Membership Secretary.

Journal Input

You're never too young too old too junior or too senior in rank to write an article or story for publication in the Journal. Our youngest to date is a 9-year old boy who wrote a poem, and I'm sure he won't mind me mentioning that my dear friend Harry Barnsley who at 91 years, is our eldest and most regular contributor.

A publication is only as good as its contents - so the ball is firmly in your court! I await your response.

Obituaries

Alan (Taff) Brice- 2 April 2006

Alan passed away in his adopted home town of Peitermaritzburg, South Africa barely 12 months after being diagnosed with the big 'C'.

Taff, as he was most commonly known, served in 9 Indep Para Sqn, 22 SAS and the Rhodesian armed forces spanning a full, varied and a very colourful career. Many who served in the 'Sqn' during the early to mid '60's will recall Taff as a charismatic individual with a 'Jack the Lad' attitude. The sad news of his death brought back many memories of him. Here are some that come to mind.

As was the custom before we went on tour, we would gather in the NAAFI Club, at the bottom of Middle Hill. There, we would have a few drinks and a sing-song until closing time. Alfie McLean, who live in the married quarters across the road, would invite us over to his place to carry on the party. During this time, if anyone fell asleep, Alfie, encouraged by Taff, would get the hair clippers out and give them an impromptu haircut - e.g. a Mohican or a Monk's! Before flying out to Borneo, we went for the usual few drinks, followed by the party at Alfie's. This time, it was Taff who fell asleep, and woke up on parade with a Yul Brynner!

One incident whilst in Borneo stands out from the rest - We were there to build helicopter landing-pads along the Indonesian border. A section having been dropped off or brought by boat to the last helipad, we would then tab through the jungle to where we would be building the next one. This involved blowing up trees to make a large clearing, then using the logs to build the platform for the helicopters. After stand-to, we would all go to our allotted tasks. One day, Taff returned early, cradling his arm, and calmly announced that he had a compound fracture. After inspection, his diagnosis was confirmed. He was casivac'd out by stretcher, on the skids of a Scout helicopter. Although in severe pain, he made no fuss. Such was Taff!

We offer our sincere condolences to his widow Lin and sons Michael and Christopher.

John Raymond Clegg 25 May 2006

WO2 John Clegg a former member of 3 Para Sqn RE and 9 Indep Para Sqn RE passed away in his native home in Australia on 25 May 2006. Farewell old comrade - from one of your many friends and colleagues ('Hutch Hutchinson')

Charlie Imrie

Charlie passed away on 2 December 2006. He had been diagnosed with cancer earlier in the year but it was thought to be in remission. Indeed he and his wife had enjoyed a holiday in Canada as recently as October before the cancer returned in a particularly aggressive form and took him from us.

Born and educated in Leith, Charlie served an apprenticeship as printer on leaving school and apart from his time in 9 Sqn remained at that trade until he was made redundant at the age of 57. His dad had died as a young man and Charlie took on responsibly for looking after his family. This was a trait that stayed with him all his life - thinking about and acting for others.

On being made redundant Charlie did not lie back and accept his fate. He felt he had responsibilities so off he went and retrained and became a self-employed as a joiner/handyman, a position he held until his untimely death.

While serving his apprenticeship Charlie joined 2 Troop of 300 Sqn. On being called up he joined 9 Sqn where he was in 1 Troop. He was amongst friends in 9 Sqn - Brian Earl, Theo Henderson and Willie Russell were all serving at that time and were all ex 2 Troop, 300 Sqn men. Charlie rejoined 2 Troop on his discharge and served until the reorganisation of the TA in the late 1960s.

3 members of the Association and 3 from the PRA carried Charlie's coffin at his funeral. This was a humanist funeral and the coffin was cardboard. This was particularly appropriate, as he had been heard to comment in his capacity as a joiner "coffins are a waste of good wood."

His son and daughter both spoke movingly of him and there could be no doubt he was a much-loved man who will be sadly missed.

Charlie leaves his wife, son and daughter behind and our thoughts are with them.

Last Post

Charlie Willbourne April 2006

Roy Welford (former 2nd Para Sqn RE) 18 October 2005

Sapper G. Hackney (A Troop 1st Para Sqn RE) 19 January 2006

Apologies from the Editor

The Royal Mail gave notification that the postal charges would be increased yet again during the month of August. The increase is to take into account both the size and weight of letters. Not having the exact date that this was to come into effect, I amended the deadline for items to be sent in for publication in this current issue. This was to ensure that the August edition didn't fall foul of the new increases. The amended date for receipt of items was the 1st July - unfortunately the company that provides the broadband connection for my e-mails etc, issued a statement on Saturday 1st July informing subscribers that the company had gone out of business.

So if you sent me any info that has not been published in this current issue its simply because I couldn't open, send or receive any e-mails or attachments. Having paid a full year's subscription of £185-00 just 3 months ago, I can assure you that I'm not too chuffed. Serves me right for dealing with a Mickey mouse company I hear one or two of you say.

Hopefully my system will be up and running by the time you receive your August edition.
