



# THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



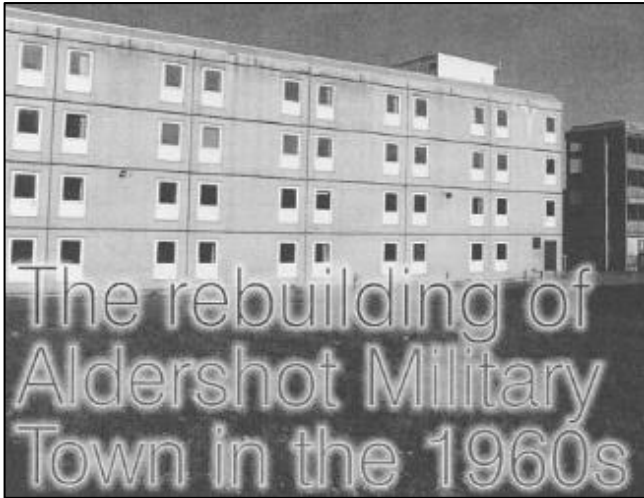
The following articles were originally published in the printed version of the Journal in June 2019, Issue No. 52

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## Rebuilding Aldershot Military Town in the 1960s

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The method of building using prefabricated panels during the construction of one of the accommodation blocks Montgomery Lines c. 1965 Soldier's accommodation blocks in Buller barracks

Speaking in May 1957, Major-General Bramwell-Davis, General Officer Commanding in Aldershot, was optimistic about the garrison's future. "Although Aldershot will have to take a big share in the cuts in the armed forces decided by the government, it will still be the home of the British Army", he declared. There was a need to modernise and rebuild barracks and married quarters in Aldershot, and plans were being drawn up which would cost several millions. This was the beginning of a huge project to sweep away the Victorian barracks and replace them with a new military town.

In Wellington Lines, the barracks had been erected in the 1850s and General Bramwell-Davis thought they were "completely useless" and in an "appalling state". Stanhope Lines and Marlborough Lines dated from the 1890s and the authorities believed that the only solution was to demolish them all and build completely new accommodation across the whole of the Camp. The cost was estimated at £17.5 million (around £350 million in present day value). Owing to the reduction in Army numbers after the Second World War, some of the old barracks would no longer be needed. Warburg Cavalry Barracks was the first area given up, which was bought by Aldershot Borough Council in 1959 for £39,000. Later Beaumont Barracks was also handed over to the local authority for civilian housing.

Work was soon underway on rebuilding the garrison. The first barracks to be demolished was Waterloo Barracks East in 1958, followed the next year by Waterloo Barracks West and Talavera Barracks. The first new building to be formally handed over to the Army was a new Sergeants' Mess in Lille Barracks, officially opened on 27 November 1959 and said to be "the best-equipped sergeants' mess anywhere in Britain". By January 1960 the Colonel AQMG was reporting that plans were in hand for rebuilding Lille Barracks, Hammersley Barracks, and four barracks in Stanhope Lines.

One of the most pressing needs was to replace the old married quarters, which were described as "deplorable, as bad as and a good deal worse than barrack accommodation". In August 1959 work began on building 222 new married quarters on the old Waterloo Barracks East site, and two more parks of 300 quarters each were soon under construction. The new quarters in Waterloo Park were completed in 1962, and those in Talavera Park in 1963-64.

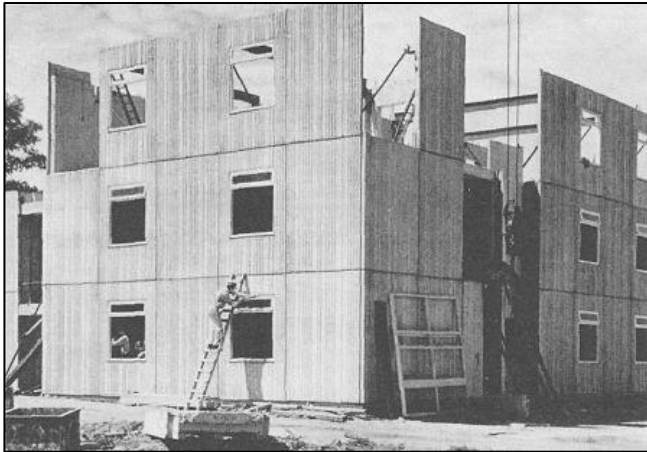
As there was so much work underway, it is surprising that it was not until January 1961 that the Quarter Master General decided that "We have now reached the stage in planning for the redevelopment of Aldershot where the Director General of Works can put in hand the preparation of a comprehensive plan for the accommodation required". He wanted a plan that "that takes account of the latest thought and ideas on town planning, the grouping of buildings and facilities, and so on. Moreover, Aldershot is the home of the Army and it is important that our re-planning should be first class."

A consultant architect suggested that the new barracks should overturn the "traditional" layout and have clear distinctions between working and living areas, with much greater centralisation and sharing of common facilities. However, many Commanding Officers feared these proposals would erode the "family atmosphere" and "unit identities" which were essential for regimental spirit and morale. Eventually compromise principles were agreed, which stated that the planning must foster the family spirit of each major unit but there could be sharing of facilities such as kitchens, education rooms and instruction sheds. There should be a clear distinction between working and living areas, but they should not be separated by any great distance (not more than a quarter of a mile or five minutes' walk). Married quarters would be adjacent to, but not integrated with, the living areas of major units, and there should be community buildings for use of soldiers, wives, and families.

Meanwhile, in Aldershot the building work continued. In March 1961 it was announced that Hammersley Barracks would be rebuilt at a cost of £300,000, and Lille Barracks at £550,000. "Envy today's soldier", opined the Aldershot News, "now work is about to start on palatial new barracks". Demolition of Hammersley was completed in 1962, along with Stanhope Lines West and the Badajos/Salamanca Barracks site. In 1963 two historic buildings were lost. The Royal Pavilion was demolished to make way for a

new training centre for Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, and the Royal Engineers' Balloon Shed in Gibraltar Barracks was cleared to make way for the new Browning Barracks for the Airborne Forces.

For speed and economy, the new barracks were built using pre-fabricated standard-sized panels, promoted at the time as a fine example of the use of modern methods. However, there were some significant problems. On the Stanhope Lines West site (which would become Montgomery Lines), four new Officers' Messes were built along Pennefather's Road. These were nearing completion when, on 21 July 1963, one of them collapsed. Fearing for the remaining three buildings, orders were given for them to be demolished, but before this could be done a second one also collapsed. An enquiry identified a failure in some vital beam joints which had not been of sufficient strength. With some embarrassment, and extra cost, the contractor had to begin construction of these messes again.



Although work on the ground in Aldershot was well underway, the overall master plan was not finally approved by the Quarter Master General and Works announced "a plan for rebuilding Aldershot Military Camp". This was greeted with a mixture of incredulity and derision in Aldershot, where the extensive new barracks of Montgomery Lines had been opened a few months earlier on 7 April.

An editorial in the Aldershot News was scathing:

"The Ministry perpetrated one of the biggest bluffs it was possible to imagine. On Wednesday morning all the national dailies published accounts of the big new plans for the town. None appeared to know that the rebuilding had been in operation since 1959, that the Parachute Regiment has been safely housed in new headquarters; in fact, at least a third of the work has been completed ... One salient fact did emerge, however, and that was the cost of the whole scheme. When it was first introduced the total figure was said to be £ 17M. This has been increased to £20M and then £27M, but on Tuesday it had leapt to £30M."

The main principle of the master plan was the development of a "crescent town", using the crescent-shaped ridge which starts at the west end of Knollys Road and continues east along the line of Hospital Road before turning north up the eastern side of the garrison. The master plan proposed that the new military town would be formed of distinctive bands radiating out from the open spaces of Queen's Parade in the centre, to the working areas of major units, beyond these to the soldiers' living accommodation, and Farnborough to the north.

The living and working areas would be further differentiated by landscaping, while the parts of the crescent town would be linked by making Alli-son's Road into a dual carriageway which turned north at St Omer Barracks, and would continue in a long arc across the canal to re-join Queen's Avenue in the north of the garrison.

The publication of the master plan gave renewed impetus to the overall project, and in 1966 work began on the rebuilding of Buller Barracks, St Omer Barracks, and married quarters in Ramilles Park, Salamanca Park, and Willems Park. Such was the volume of work that the contractors, Gilbert-Ash Limited, opened an on-site factory between Ordnance Road and Government Road to manufacture the building panels.



Although the factory building methods allowed new barracks to be constructed quickly, the results were not wholly satisfactory. In August 1968, the Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works (MPBW) wrote of the "melancholy story" of Montgomery Lines, starting with the collapse of the mess buildings in 1963, and then issues with defective ceiling panels in the messes, leaking roofs and the failure of plasterwork in 24 barrack blocks, leaking roofs in four technical stores, and other failures

elsewhere. Immediate remedial work had to be undertaken at a cost of £203,000 (around £3 million in present day value). More problems were experienced in the new married quarters which suffered from damp, draughts, cross indeed

Central to the crescent town concept had been the demolition of the Cambridge and Louise Margaret hospitals and the construction of a new hospital in North Camp. After many delays and arguments this plan was abandoned (see Aldershot Garrison Herald no. 15, August/ September 2017), and the dual-carriageway of the extended Allison's Road was not built beyond St Omer Barracks. Even so, the project resulted in the demolition of nearly all the Victorian Camp, with the new Browning and Duchess of Kent Barracks opened in 1968, Buller Barracks in 1970, and St Omer Barracks in 1971.



Despite the many issues with the 1960s barracks, they remained in use for some 40 years. The fundamental problems with both their design and construction meant that maintenance costs were high, and living conditions deteriorated rapidly. Before the end of the twentieth century the sub-standard married quarters were demolished and new houses built in a more traditional style, but it was not until the beginning of the twenty first century and Project Allenby Connaught that the single soldiers could leave the 1960s barracks for modern accommodation suitable for the Army of today.

**'C' block part of the Sqn's accommodation - as it was.**

**Same view - as it is now!**

With the Wellesley housing development the last remaining parts of the concrete camp have been removed, as this chapter of the story of Aldershot Garrison passes into history.

The whole of Montgomery Lines have now been completely demolished - to be replaced with a massive building complex of civilian housing, school and shops!



## A Nostalgic Return to Scotland

By Fred Gray

In August of last year I decided to visit the small picturesque fishing village of Mallaig situated on the west coast of Scotland about fifty miles west of Fort William.

It was there in 1961 that two officers and twenty men of 1 Troop had taken the five hundred and eighty mile journey by Bedford three-ton trucks to the village in response to a request by the Highland Authorities to complete a narrow mountain road which connected the village and the MacDonald family living in an isolated croft to the north of the village.



A huge outcrop of rock blocked the track which also had a broken culvert which needed repair.

The task was accepted and the troop, after their long journey were made most welcome by the people of Mallaig. In a few hours a tented camp was established less than one hundred yards from the start of the exist-ing track and close to the shore line. Work was to begin the following day. The two main tasks were to remove most of the large outcrop of rock by using explosives and a D4 bulldozer operated by Sapper Ivor Slane, and repair the culvert.

After about three weeks the rock face had been removed and the culvert repaired. The experience of the work and the friendliness of the villagers made a lasting impression on many of the troop and a few have returned over the intervening fifty seven years.

I had made arrangements to meet with Ron McCartan (one of the Bedford truck drivers at the time) at the home of the local historian Ian MacPhie. After coffee and biscuits kindly provided by Mrs MacPhie, we climbed the track and walked for about twenty minutes before we came to the culvert and then the rock face a further fifty yards away. Very conveniently, just as I was taking a few photographs a 4 x 4 Land Rover, driven by the American owner of the original croft, came up the track to prove it was still in use. The original rock face extended to where Ron McCartan is standing in the above photograph.

Those employed on the rock face were; Bob Vary, Joe Stoddart, Fred Gray, John McKenna, Danny Hart, Tom Cleary, Andy Andrus and Andy Andrews.

Those on the culvert were Cpl 'Big Doc' Doherty, Ridley, McBain, Wall, Bowen, Fisher, Tonna, Lowther and Fred Robson. The Troop Seniors were Paddy Smyth MM, and Sgt 'Punchy' Mowett, (the only man in the Squadron who was entitled to wear three different coloured berets: red for the Para Bde, green for the RM Cdo Bde and the beige of the SAS. Captain Bill Marks was the Troop Commander and Lt Graham Owens was the Troop officer.

I had been into the village previously, to meeting with Ron but I was extremely disappointed to see how much it had grown since those memorable days when we first arrived there in 1961. From a small picturesque fishing village it had grown into a major ferry terminal taking holidaymakers to the Isle of Skye, Rum, Eigg and other small islands in the Inner Hebrides. The village square had become a parking lot full of cars, caravans and mobile homes. Thousands of 'backpackers' swarmed around the sandwich bars, and souvenir shops. The magic of the village and harbour had gone but I was still pleased with my decision to see the road again and to see how well it had stood up to fifty-seven years of wear and tear.



My next destination was Aviemore. I met up with Tam Robertson (a member of the successful Squadron X-country team of 1959) at his home in Newtonmore where his wife Celina, provided tea, biscuits and cake before we set off for Aviemore about twenty miles away. Tam had already done a recce on the area and had warned me that things had changed quite dramatically since I was there with 3 Troop in September/October 1957. True enough it was unrecognisable from what I could remember. The area of the Army ski lodge had been turned into youth hostels, camp sites for 'backpackers' and car parks. What had been open country was now a forest. Thousands of trees had been planted and had now reached maturity. The Glen Moor Lodge Hotel where most of our young lady guests had accepted our invitation to join us around a camp fire on our first night was no longer there.

After a walk of about two/three miles we eventually came to the 'Green Loch' which was close to our original campsite. Walking for another two to three hundred yards we came out into open scrub land. It was unrecognisable and I could not find the waterfall we used as our shower or the burn (small stream) with a foot bridge. After we had studied the ground and surrounding area we both agreed it was the area of the camp but due to the changing terrain it was not possible to pinpoint an accurate position. Later, back at Tam's home he enlarged a small photograph I had taken sixty years ago from the high ground above the tents and we could see the track we had earlier walked on and were convinced we had found the campsite although dramatically changed.

The next morning I departed Fort William heading for the home of Bob Varey. I finally found him but it was late in the afternoon and I could only stay for an hour. We sat and talked about the 'good old days' and he told me he had also visited Mallaig in recent years.

Bob is not in the best of health but he gets on with his life with regular visits by his daughter and son who is a professional boxer standing six feet nine inches tall! He also attends reunions of the SAS Regiment of which he was a member both before and after his time in the Squadron. It was my intention to visit Geordie McCarthy who lives in the same area as Bob, but due to Satnav problems I ran out of time.

After a round trip of seventeen hundred miles I arrived back home in Fleet with mixed feelings. Disappointed in some respect but pleased in others. I had met up with Ron McCartan and his wife Annetta, Tam Robertson and his wife Ce-lina, and Bob Varey. There is an old adage advising 'never look back', I have done looking back. Memories are too precious to be wiped out by reality.

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## By Parachute from Asia to Europe- First Intercontinental Parachute Flight

By Capt. B.C.A. Lee (Recently enrolled as the 1,500th member of the AEA)

At 0945 hours on 2 October 1973 Capt. Clive Lee of 16 Parachute Brigade, successfully completed an inter-continental parachute flight from Asia to Europe across the Dardanelles in Turkey. The flight was made following a large NATO Airborne exercise held in Northern Turkey.

The team consisted of Capt. Lee, who made the flight, Capt John Mulvany, as flight controller, Cpl Strickleton and Spr Higginson as launch team, and Spr Chamberlain at the DZ. The towing craft, a 17-foot fibre glass dory fitted with 115 hp. outboard engine belonging to 1st Raiding Squadron Royal Marine Commandos, was crewed by Marines Jappy and Pratley.

Communication between Capt. Lee and Capt Mulvany was maintained by a radio link kindly loaned by Pye Electronics. After a delay due to high winds the attempt went ahead on 2nd October. The journey from Gallipoli to Cardak on the Asian side took only five minutes, and after twenty minutes preparation and final briefing on the beach at Cardak, with the wind rising minute by minute, the craft took up the slack on the 300 yard towrope and the flight began. The red, white and blue Para Commander parachute with Capt Lee firmly strapped in the harness and festooned with life jacket, radio set, camera and 500 commemorative postal covers inside his jump suit, rose rapidly into the 20 knot wind.

The boat settled down to a steady 7-10 knots in a fairly rough sea on the 56 mile course to the DZ on the beach north of Gallipoli and the flight was uneventful until shortly after halfway when the engine failed due to a blockage in the fuel line. Rapid changing by the crew of the fuel tanks and leads averted a crisis and Capt. Lee descended only to about 200 feet and he was soon back up to 600 feet, feeling relieved to be under tow again. The next scare was the sudden appearance of a Turkish Naval submarine bearing down on the craft. Capt. Lee saw it long before the Marines, who were concentrating on keeping the boat on course, but there was little he could do. However, when the sub got closer it realised what was going on, changed course and headed out to mid-channel with some of the crew waving enthusiastically from the bridge.

Very soon Capt. Lee was 600 feet above the coastline of Gallipoli and with about half a mile to go to the DZ, manned by Spr. Chamberlain, the craft cut its speed. A little height was lost but at about 550 feet over the target Capt. Lee released from the rope and 30 seconds later was down, landing 20 feet from the pre-selected spot, which greatly impressed the large crowd of Turks who had followed the flight over the town to the beach. The landing in a 20 knot wind was not so impressive, but after 45 minutes in the harness Capt. Lee was taking no chances. Having picked himself up and untangled himself from the rigging lines he was congratulated by the Turkish General Commanding the Army Corps based in Gallipoli.

This flight was the culmination of several years of attempting such a flight. In 1969 plans for a flight between Morocco and Gibraltar were scrapped due to diplomatic difficulties.

So ended the first ever intercontinental parachute flight with the whole team drinking Turkish coffee and then being recovered by the Royal Marine craft.

An idea conceived by Capt Lee as far back as 1969 had been realised.



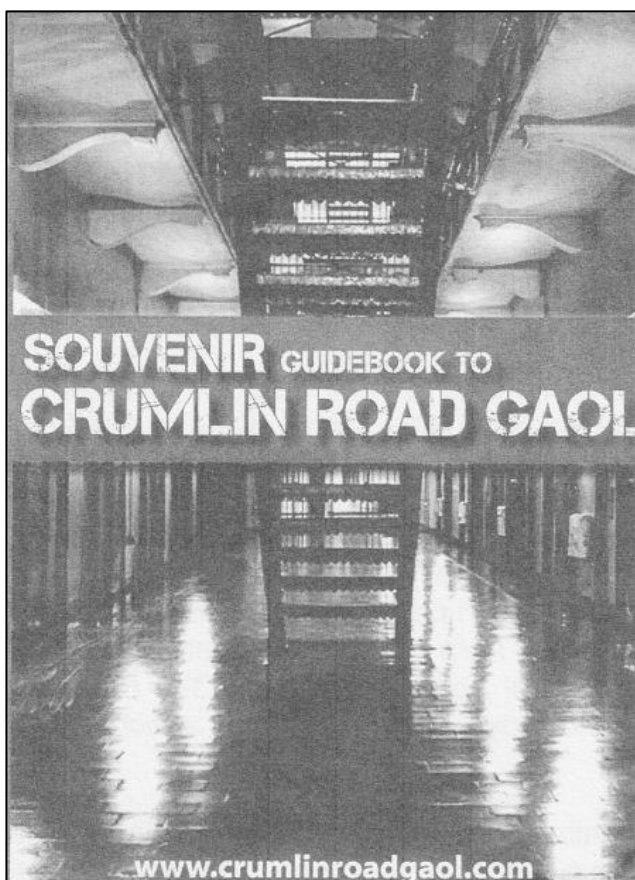
A first day cover was produced by the RE Philatelic Officer to commemorate this historic event

A keen eye will notice the postal cost for a 2nd class letter back in 1973



## Crumlin Road Gaol (The Crum) Belfast Northern Ireland

A Return Visit by Peter Kershaw in November 2018



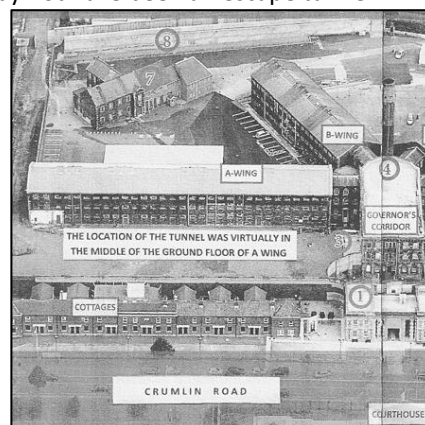
On a recent trip to Ulster to visit my friend Dougie, an ex RUC man, I was told that in recent times big changes had taken place at "The Crum." I was aware that the gaol had been closed as a nick since 1996, however it has now reopened its doors as a Visitor Centre and Conference & Events Venue. There is also a top class restaurant appropriately named "Cuffs."

We duly booked the guided tour which brings me back to heading above "A Return Visit!" Previously, during "The Troubles" 9 Squadron completed 6 or 7 tours in NI, the first 3 based in Antrim, the remainder in Castle Dillon,

County Armagh. It was during the 3rd Tour in 1973 that the Sqn's Search Teams were tasked on at least 2 occasions to carry out operations in the Gaol. On the last one we were "invited" to carry out a planned search of A Wing on 12/13 May, which was home to Republican remand prisoners. Our Unit Search Advisor, Sgt. Maj Dave Edmonds did his recce and gave his orders and in we went, entering the gaol from Girdwood Park SF Base, via the back gate. Our OC, Maj Mike Addison also accompanied us on the operation, it is assumed to make sure that we didn't get any grief from the Military Governor, a Royal Marine Captain who had us removed a couple of weeks earlier for apparently "annoying" his prisoners. To cut a long story short, a hole was located on the ground floor of 'A' Wing (see photo below) which apparently may or may not have been an escape tunnel.

However judging by the amount of spoil found as we searched each cell, the prisoners were obviously "up to no good." (Was it one of the 3 Tp teams that made the find?) The tame Royal Marine did tell us at the end, (through gritted teeth) that we were the most professional soldiers he had ever come across!

The photo below shows an assorted group of us about to board one of the 4 Tonners in Girdwood Park to return to Antrim at around 0730 on Sunday morning the 14th of May 1973, knackered, but quite pleased with ourselves after a long and successful 10 hour search.



With advice from members of the 9 Sqn Old & Bold Facebook site, the "best shot" of their names are:

L to R - Ginge Shipway, Dave Edmonds, Pete Kershaw. Mike Addison RIP, Paddy (RAMC Sqn medic), Paul Mills, Dick Courtier, Chips Curry RIP , Jock Beaully, Eddie Carnegie, Geordie Lightowler & Jock Mawhinnie sat on the truck.

Apologies to anyone whose name I got wrong!

Footnote: This same group of men found an escape tunnel in the Republican Compound of Long Kesh Internment Camp the day before. If memory serves I believe that the 2 Tp Teams may have the full story on its location. This search was also commanded by Dave Edmonds.

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## Presentation of GSM with South Arabia Clasp

**Presentation of General Service Medal with South Arabia clasp – 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**To Captain Eoghann Maclachlainn**

**By Major General Mike Riddell-Webster CBE DSO Governor of Edinburgh Castle**



Captain Eoghann Maclachlainn was deployed to Aden on 1st April 1965 as part of 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment (TA), tasked with making road improvements to the main supply route running from Aden to Dhala in the North. Captain Maclachlainn was serving in 300 Para Sqn RE (the Scottish Squadron), numbering around 90 strong at this time.

In the early hours of Monday 12 April 1965, while based in a camp near the village of Al Milah, along with 24 Field Sqn, Royal Engineers, 300 and 24 Sqn came under prolonged and accurate small arms and mortar fire from a nearby ridge.

The dissidents were eventually driven off by a combination of Browning machine guns mounted on Ferret armoured cars and by individuals firing from the camp sangers. During this firefight, Sergeant Major John Lonergan of 300 Para. Sqn and Sergeant Atfield, Royal Army Pay Corps attached to 24 Sqn, were killed.

Captain Maclachlainn and Sergeant George Gibson Earl, both from 300 Para Sqn, were among 5 others seriously wounded.

Whilst those serving in 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment were not in theatre long enough to be awarded the GSM with South Arabia clasp, Captain Maclachlainn's injury under these circumstances means he qualifies to be presented with the medal, as has now been recognised by the MOD Medal Office.





## Arnhem – In Thanksgiving

By Bartje Boelman Pace

Sunday April 29, 1945 was the beginning of the final days of the Second World War. We were celebrating the birthday of a good friend of my mother who had been bombed by a V1 gone astray (The rockets were shot up behind our house - destination London. Every night we could tell by the noise it made if it would go right - good for us, but bad for London.)

The goodies for her birthday consisted of my mother's special recipe of tulip-bulb-pie with a lot of celery leaves, to hide the hideous taste of the bulbs, and patties made out of the pulp of sugar beets which we cooked on a makeshift tiny stove (a large tin which was fed with a tablespoon or anything we could find) on top of the regular stove.

Her only presents were flowers, but this birthday became the most memorable one for her and for the Dutch town The Hague, as on that afternoon the planes of the Allied Forces dropped food packages instead of bombs. The Germans, knowing they had lost the war (The Hague was the last town to be liberated in Europe on the 5th of May) allowed the Allied Forces, through the Red Cross, to drop packages of food in designated areas. Everyone who could went on the rooftops to be as close to the low flying planes which tipped their wings. We could see the pilots in their cockpits.

I remember one girl who stood on one leg the whole afternoon on a chimneypot. What a wonderful day it was for us,, but, now that I am older and stand on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean I realize what a magnificent day it must have been for those who manned the planes for they must have seen the joy of liberation when they flew over us and knew that their work was not in vain and they could go home safely.

I was barely ten years old and could not understand why my mother suddenly started to cry while we were hanging out of the attic window. "Mother, why are you crying, the war is over?" My Mother had been a rock in the five long years of the war. My Father was taken hostage in June 1940. We were evacuated to Arnhem and took my father's mother and nanny with us as my grandmother's other son was taken to Natzwiler concentration camp. He had been active as a physician in the underground.

All my "Grandmother's children were in concentration camps. Her daughter died in a Japanese concentration camp and only my father came back. When he returned unexpectedly in January 1944 and my mother showed him the beautiful view overlooking the Rhine River and "The Bridge" my father's comment was, "We have to move because this is where I believe the invasion will take place." How right he was. Six months after we moved to The Hague the ill-fated Battle of Arnhem took place and when my brothers and I made a sentimental journey to Arnhem in September 1994 commemo-rating the battle the view was still there, but other houses had been built on the ruins of ours. We would not have survived.

This is in thanksgiving for all the fathers, husbands and sons this nation sacrificed so others could live.

Bartje Boelman Pace

5 May 1945 Den Haag  
The Netherlands

5 May 1995  
Greenville, NC, USA

## A Chance Meeting

By John (Geordie) Smith, formerly 1 & 2 Troop

For a few years now, in November, I have travelled up north to attend the Remembrance parade and service in Monkton village. The village is near Jarrow where I was born. Airborne Engineers are represented each year in good numbers. Following the ceremony we all meet up in the village hostelry, The Lord Nelson'.

Whilst the majority of the former Squadron members dressed very smart in ties, shirts and suits I would prefer to wear my "Independent" sweatshirt.

A gentleman sitting on his own called me over and told me how proud he had been as a member of 9 Indep Para Sqn RE. His name was Derek Wagstaffe. Derek was living in Hebburn with his wife Isobel and family.

He never actually attended the service or watched the parade but preferred to go into the pub and sink a couple of warmers into the bank ahead of us. With his SAS beret and medals on the table Derek would talk of his time in the Sqn during which time he mentioned Derek Taylor. Living about 15 miles from my home in Scunthorpe Derek Taylor and I have kept in touch.



**Derek & John outside the Lord Nelson pub in Monkton**

Each time I met Derek Wagstaffe I would pass on Derek Taylor's details. He never did make contact.

The photo of Derek was taken in 2017 on the one occasion I thought I would be a bit smarter, Derek insisted on the photo being taken.

Due to hospital appointments I was unable to attend the 2018 commemorations. My sister, who lives in the same town as Derek Wagstaffe phoned to say that he had died on 5th December 2018, and that his funeral was held on 13th December. My sister Liz with her son and his family attended the funeral service. It is a small world really. My sister's daughter in law knew Derek and his family when she was young and only realised who he was when I talked about him.

Derek was born in 1939 (18th September) in Widnes. He left the army with the rank of Warrant Officer and worked with the scouting organisation for many years as a civilian.

Derek had a foot removed some months ago (diabetes) but insisted on attending the Remembrance get together in the Lord Nelson. His family organised a taxi to get him there. Sadly I did not get up north to see him.

My reason for writing is to ask those of you who knew him in the 'Sqn' to add a few anecdotes about serving with him.

For a couple of months Derek borrowed my copy of 'Airborne Engineers' by Fred Gray. Upon returning it he said that he enjoyed it immensely and knew some of the members mentioned.

Derek Taylor and I agree that Derek seemed to be wearing more than just campaign medals. Had he been given an award at some time, does anyone know?

Naturally he was secretive about his time with the SAS, however, his pride about serving with 9 Sqn shone through whenever we met. He was a proud and stoic man suffering illness and many operations during these last few years.

He still pushed on, a true Airborne Warrior to the end

## AEA Golf Tour 2019

By Mick Leather



**Chris Lunn, Barry Richardson, Colin Birkenshaw, Jimmy Hill, Andy Milsom, Dean Sykes, Phil Hill, Mick Leather, Tony Hogan, Jeff Barlow, Tom Dolan, Dave Rutter, Mick Wallis, Ian Leather, Robbie Burns, Billy Morris, Jon Nichols & Ian McGill**

It wasn't until we actually got to Staverton, that I was made aware that we had not done this little trip for 5 years and I can only apologise for that. I thought it had only been 3 at the most - doesn't time fly when you're waiting for God!

I had let this trip lapse, but for one reason only - I was not getting the response from the members and it was starting to cost me to organise it. With that in mind, but still determined to get the trip off and running again, I announced that the AEA Golf Trip was back on and I'm glad I did.

I advertised it out by word of mouth and through the journal, allowing friends and family of members to attend this year just in case there was a shortage of members scrambling for the places. I didn't need to worry, I had 19 interested parties from a wide time line and only 3 guests. We chose the De Vere Staverton Golf and Country Club as it was quite central and made it easier for all those travelling. We even got enquiries from the Regiment and to that end I want to thank Andy Milsom for coming. He was great company and fitted in a treat.

The usual package of 3 rounds of golf and half board accommodation was retained and apart from the cost of drinks, I personally found it good value. The golf facilities were superb with golf buggies available, driving range and course that was in good order.

Don't let anyone tell you that this trip is just about mates getting together and playing a little golf in the process. This fine gathering of sappers had only one thing on their minds and that was to win. However, some performances on the practice ground left us in no doubts that some had expectations above abilities, but do not worry Jon Nicol as I could see that you were in 2 minds as you were still wearing your screwfix handyman trousers and therefore not fully concentrating, but worrying about your day job. The only other one who was not overly fussed if he won the trophy was Tom Dolan who had won the trophy 5 years earlier and his good lady wife had to clean and dust it every week thereafter. As luck would have it, He just missed out which worked out for him as he took home Whisky instead, but more about that later.

So, to the golf. I changed the format so that by the 3rd day, the majority were still mathematically in with a chance of winning. The format was an eclectic Stableford card from the 3 days golf; there were some amongst the group who couldn't understand it or even spell it but as these were former "Fieldies1 it was felt this was the norm and we carried on regardless.

There was some good golf which to be fair was not reflected in the scores. The selection of playing partners was left to random selection on the 1st day and a draw for the remainder which I felt was as good a way to do it. I don't think that anyone was unhappy with the company they kept. There were people I had not seen for years, for example Robbie Burns, and didn't get a chance to play with, but I think we all more than made up for this in the socialising.

After the 1st Day, no one was running away with it but contenders emerged, Colin Birkenshaw, Tom Dolan, Ian Leather to name a few. Tony Hogan was expected to be there but his diversion into the bar between the 9th and 10th hole sent shock waves through his wallet as it cost him £48 for 4 double Gin and Tonics!!!! No one else bought a round after that!! After the golf, we all went back to our rooms to tidy them up, shower and shave and make long dutiful calls to our loved ones and then Did we hell!

Straight to the bar after the prize giving and then quick change parade and down for dinner and more wine. Whilst the food was OK, it was a buffet format and this prompted a call for a curry house the following night which as duly done. I'm not sure if it is an age thing or whether it has been done by him in the past, but halfway through the meal at the Indian, Geoff Barlow fell asleep. It was a proper nodding dog. I for one am embarrassed to say that he was support troop.

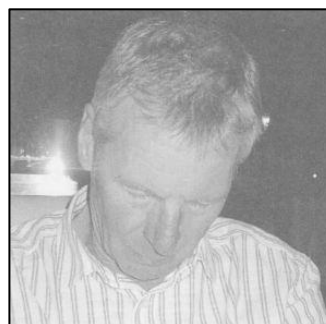
2nd Days golf was much more of the same with the 2 main contenders now being Colin and Tom Dolan with other people placed at least 4 points back. But as I said at the beginning, the format was geared to everyone a chance and so it was to prove. The final days golf saw one of the guests emerge and pip Tom Dolan and Colin Birkenshaw to the Trophy, and this is where the embarrassment comes, it was my Brother Ian who won on 49 points. To be fair he had consistently picked up trophies and prizes over the 3 days. He now holds this trophy that has to be wrestled from his grip next year. Winners over the trip were:

Day 1	
Overall Winner	Colin Birkenshaw
Nearest the Pin	Jimmy Hill
Longest Drive	Ian Leather
Day 2	
Overall Winner	Tom Dolan (On count back with Colin)
Nearest the Pin	Ian McGill
Longest Drive	Tony Hogan
Day 3	
Overall Winner	Ian leather
Nearest the Pin	Billy Morris
Longest Drive	Tom Dolan
Champion Golfer	Ian Leather



We have already started looking at next year and we are looking at Breadsall Priory near Derby which is a Marriott with 2 courses, but this of course is subject to cost. The time will be similar to this year, late April / Early May. The one thing I do know is that this was resurrected at one of the several funerals that we unfortunately attend these days. Don't be the person who wishes they had signed up but never found the time. It was a great trip where old bonds were renewed - a very important ethos of why we are part of the AEA.

It was a great trip and I look forward to seeing you all next year for more of the same. Thanks go to you all, especially the 'civvies' Phil, Barry and Ian who we hope to see next year.



**The excitement during the curry dinner in a local Indian restaurant on our last night, was just too much for Jeff Barlow**

# Disposing of Big Boys Toys

By Sean McCargo



Boasting of my B3 Combat Engineer qualifications, and most importantly being a former member of 3 Troop 9 Indep Para Sqn RE, it probably comes as no surprise that for the past 30 years I was employed in transport, logistics, equipment repairs and fabrications. This array of past experiences opened the door to my most challenging employment working for a company (Bechtel International USA) award-ed the contract by the USA Government to dismantle and dispose of a number of military installations throughout certain location in the Ukraine. The company employs some 7,000 personnel in 56 countries.

The project which proved most challenging was, “How to Move Inter-Continental Missiles”

Many companies around the world specialise in heavy load transport, but few moves are as complex or potentially unnerving as that undertaken in Ukraine by a team of expatriates and local staff in the decade following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Their task was to move Ukraine’s silo-mounted nuclear arsenal to a pre-arranged site for decommissioning and disposal.

The company was awarded a contract by the USA Government to dismantle, and dispose of a number of military army installations throughout certain of Ukraine locations. During the Cold War and prior to the decommissioning of its silo mounted nuclear arsenal in the 1990s Ukraine was a part of the strategic defence structure of the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the 1990s, Ukraine agreed to make its silo mounted inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) arsenal redundant, and international assistance was proved both to undertake the removal and destruction of the rockets in accordance with treaty agreements. This resulted in a collection of foreigners from all over the world becoming involved in the removal of the Soviet era strategic rocket systems that Ukraine has agreed to decommission with the country’s move to independence.



Sean (4th from the right) with some of the team

## Key Player

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly independent Ukraine found itself in possession of the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world. The total count was 176 operational ICBMs, consisting of 130 UR ICON (NATO SS-19 Stiletto) ICBMs, and 46 RT-23 UTTKh (NATO SS-24 Scalpel) ICBMs, together with another 14 RT-23 UTTKh rockets which were on Ukrainian territory but not operationally deployed.

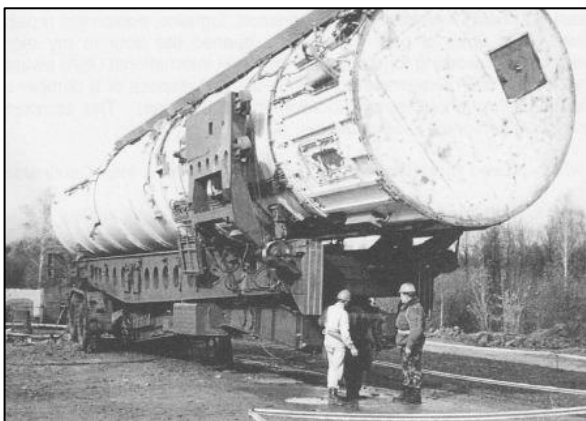
In accordance with the Ukrainian Declaration of Independence, signed on 16 July 1990, the country agreed to revoke its nuclear power status. Arrangements were made to voluntarily disband its nuclear arsenal and send the warheads to Russia for decommissioning. The formal agreement relating to the destruction of Ukrainian nuclear weapons was signed between the US, Ukraine and the Russian Federation on 14 January 1994, with a commitment to transfer all the decommissioned warheads to the Russian Federation within a ten-month period.

Ukraine's silo-emplaced ICBM arsenal in 1990 consisted as noted above of a combination of UR-100N (SS-19) and RT-23 Molodets (SS-24) ICBMs. The UR-100N was a fourth-generation, two-stage ICBM which had entered operational service from 1979 as a replacement for the UR-100 (NATO SS-11). Depending on its configuration the two-stage UR-100N had a launch weight of 103-1056 tonnes and a range of 9500-10,000km with either a single or six independently targetable warheads. The rockets were absolutely massive, with a length of 24.0-24.3m depending on variant and a diameter of 2.50m.



The first UR-100N regiment went operational at the Ukrainian ICBM base at Pervomaisk in 1975, with 180 silo-mounted systems ultimately deployed. From 1987, some UR-1 OON rockets were phased out of service and replaced by RT-23 (SS-24) rockets. They became subject to the START-1 treaty signed in 1991 at which time there were 300 UR-1 DON UTKh rockets deployed in Russia and Ukraine.

Having gained political independence from the Soviet Union. US led multinational negotiations resulted in Ukraine agreeing to scrap its arsenal of Soviet era rockets, starting with the older systems. The 130 UR-1 DON silos located in Ukraine were decommissioned by 1999, with the warheads removed to Russia for destruction under Russian control. In return for disarming its nuclear arsenal, the 1994 Budapest Agreement (agreed initially by the United States, Russia and Great Britain) guaranteed Ukraine's sovereignty. At the time nobody could have imagined that exactly 20 years later, in May 2014, eastern Ukraine would be in a state of civil war. Russian tank units would be poised on the Ukrainian border (and well over it according to unconfirmed reports) and Western relations with the Russian Federation would have deteriorated to Cold War levels.



### Two Decommissioning Stages

Within months of Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1990, the international company Bechtel was given the contract to dismantle the 130 UR-100N (SS-19) rockets deployed in Ukraine. The SS-19s were decommissioned by May 1994, and the warheads removed from Ukrainian territory, with all subsequent de-fuelling and destruction work on the rocket bodies completed by 1999. The SS-19s were particularly dangerous to decommission, due to the large quantities of highly toxic dimethyl hydrazine (heptyl) used in the liquid fuel system, which required special transfer and storage conditions.

The later and cold launched RT-23 Molodets (SS-24) was developed by rocket engineers based in Ukraine, to replace the UR-1 DON (SS-19). It was originally developed in silo mounted, rail mobile and road mobile versions; however the planned road mobile versions, mounted on the 16x16 MAZ-7906 and even larger 24x24 7907 (the largest all-wheel drive vehicles ever built by MAZ) were not operationally deployed. The massive 104.5 tonne launch weight missile was some 23.4-23.8m in length depending on variant, and 2.4m in diameter. The rocket had ten independently targetable 550kT nuclear warheads and a range of up to 11,000km.

Deployment of the RT-23 Molodets (SS-24) ICBM began in 1988, with a total of 90 RT-23 systems deployed in the Soviet Union, of which the first 56 were deployed at Tatishchevo in Russia and 46 at Pervomaisk in Ukraine. The Ukrainian ICBM production facility near Dnipropetrovsk was formerly closed in 1995, and in May 1997 Ukraine agreed to also destroy its remaining RT-23 Molodets (SS-24) rockets in addition to its UR-1 DON (SS-19) systems. The 46 operational rockets located in Ukraine were to be disarmed, and the warheads as before shipped to Russia for disposal with the rocket systems themselves decommissioned at a later date.



The agreed withdrawal from service of Ukraine's RT-23 Molodets (SS-24) rockets began on 1 July 1998, with Bechtel contracted on 23 July 1998 to decommission the 46 silo mounted RT-23 Molodets (SS-24) solid fuel ICBM rockets located at the Pervomaisk rocket base in Ukraine, dispose of the fuel and transport the rocket assemblies for dismantling at the Pavlograd facility near Dnipropetrovsk before ultimate decommissioning. The work was planned for completion in December 2002.

### Practical Considerations

One of the issues faced by Bechtel was the need to recommission the fleet of MAZ-537 8x8 tractors and specialised TU transporter- installer trailers used to install and remove rockets from their silos after long-term storage. The vehicles and trailers were in a rather dilapidated state when discovered, and the first task was to rebuild the wheeled MAZ tractor vehicles with their de-rated V-12 tank diesel engines. That having been accomplished, moving the very large rockets to their disassembly site was also far from a minor undertaking. Once clear of their military launch zones, located some distance from main roads, the rockets

had to be moved in convoy and under escort along relatively narrow and poorly paved country roads on their huge trailers, round tight corners and under railway bridges. The route was on paper at least, relatively straightforward but in reality quite a task considering the size of the vehicles and columns involved.

### **In Permanent Memory**

With the Bechtel contract completed, the rocket systems moved to the decommissioning depot at Pavlograd and the warheads shipped to the Russian Federation for disposal some of the vehicles used in the exercise were driven back to the original launch site at Pervomaisk, where a small collection of vehicles was established as part of a permanent open air museum collection at the abandoned base. The collection was assembled with the help of some of the expatriates and local crews that had worked on the move project, with some of the photographs now on display within the museum taken by the move team at the time of the project.

### **End of Days**

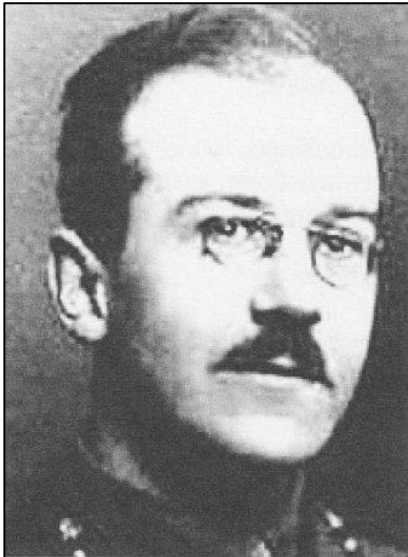
The last Ukrainian silo mounted RT-23 (RT-23 UTTKh) rocket system was dismantled and removed to storage on 22 February 2002. A few months later, on 20 August 2002, the Ukrainian 43rd Rocket Army, which had control over all strategic ballistic rockets on Ukrainian territory, was disbanded, and Ukraine's era as a nuclear superpower came to a voluntary end. Which considering the events that unravelled in Ukraine in 2014, is perhaps fortuitous.



Message from the company: We'd like to thank John Sean McCargo who worked for Bechtel in Ukraine during these projects and kindly provided some of the fascinating photographs.

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## The Last VC Awarded in the 1st World War to a Royal Engineer Officer



Many readers may have come across the name of Brett Cloutman VC. There are numerous buildings within Royal Engineer barracks named after this gentleman. One in particular is an accommodation block in Minley barracks home of 1 & 3 Training Regiments, in Cove. But how many actually know the full history of this courageous officer.

On the 6th November 1918, Major Brett Cloutman VC led 59 Field Company at Pont sur Sambre during the assault on the Sambre canal, that had already seen three VCs awarded for Royal Engineers.

Major Cloutman's VC was the last to be won in the war, and is held in the Royal Engineers Museum.

Major Cloutman is also memorialised in Golders Green Cemetery, as one of the 14 VC recipients cremated there.

A plaque commemorating Lt Col Sir Brett Cloutman MC VC KC will be unveiled at 11 am on Tuesday 06 Nov 2018 at Hornsey Local War Memorial Chapel, 151 Park Road N8 8JD. Opened 1921 Hornsey War Memorial is located in Park Road, Hornsey, in London, in front of the Hornsey Central Hospital, formerly the Hornsey Memorial Hospital. The memorial commemorates the men of the borough who died in the First World War and is in the form of a small red brick chapel with Portland stone dressings



Today all is tranquil and peaceful on the River Sambre in northern France. Trout swim in the water, wild duck fly overhead and the only noise, other than birdsong and church bells, comes from the occasional vehicle that rumbles over Quartes Bridge.

It could hardly be a greater contrast to the events a century ago when, amidst an atmosphere of apprehension and danger, Major Brett Cloutman RE risked his life under heavy fire to take part in what was to become the last Victoria Cross action of the Great War.

For Cloutman realised that, with the Germans in retreat, they were planning to blow up Quartes Bridge as the Third Army pushed forwards and he wanted to give the Allies the chance to secure it before it was destroyed. So, in bitterly cold temperatures, he swam out into the river in order to cut the "leads" that were attached to the charges. Not only could he have been shot as he tried to achieve this, but the charges could have been detonated at any moment, blowing him to pieces.

Brett Mackay Cloutman was born in Muswell Hill, north London, on November 7, 1891. He was the youngest of three sons of Alfred Cloutman, the director of a furniture company, and his wife Jane. After school he went to London University where he read modern languages.

In 1913, aged 22, Cloutman was employed by his father's furniture firm Maples. But just a month into the Great War, he enlisted in the 12th Battalion, London Regiment, on September 2, 1914. He was originally refused a commission on the grounds of his poor eyesight.

However, on March 3, 1915, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant into the Kent (Fortress) Royal Engineers at Gillingham and on July 2 he was elevated to temporary captain.

During 1917, he was present at several of the major battles, notably y Ridge in France, and, later, Passchendaele in Belgium.

In December of that year, he was moved to Italy with 59 Field Company, Royal Engineers, where he spent the winter on the Piave with the Italian Army. In the spring of 1918, he was transferred first to Belgium and then to France.

It was in August, after the Battle of Amiens, that he was involved in the advance of the Third Army from the Somme to the Sambre.

On September 30, he took part in an action at Banteux for which he was later awarded the Military Cross (MC). Under heavy machine-gun fire, he made a reconnaissance on foot to assess the possibility of bridging the Canal de l'Escaut. By early November, the Allies were closing in on victory after well over four years of war. On the night of 5-6 November, the Third Army established a bridgehead across the River Sambre, north-east of Maubeuge.

As no artillery had yet crossed the river, it was important to secure this and other nearby bridges. Quartes Bridge was a single span crossing on stone abutments on the outskirts of the small town of Pont-sur-Sambre.

The citation for his VC takes up the story: "Maj. Cloutman, after reconnoitring the river crossings, found the Quartes Bridge almost intact but prepared for demolition. Leaving his party under cover he went forward alone, swam across the river, and, having cut the 'leads' from the charges, returned the same way, despite the fact that the bridge and approaches thereto were swept by enemy shells and machine-gun fire at close range".

"Although the bridge was blown up later in the day by other means, the abutments remained intact."

The enemy soldiers, concealed along the riverbank, had concentrated their fire on the section of the river where they knew he had to return. It meant that, having been in service for all but the first few days of the war, Cloutman was almost killed just five days before the hostilities ended.

Despite being unable to save Quartes Bridge, the Third Army managed to push forward until Armistice Day on 11 November.

Cloutman survived the Great War and his VC was announced in The London Gazette on 31 January 1919. His MC was announced in the same official newspaper just a day later on February 1. He received his gallantry medals from George V at an investiture at Buckingham Palace on 13 February.

He had married Margaret Hunter in Chiswick, West London, in February 1916 and the couple went on to have daughters, Mary and Jill.

When Cloutman returned to work at Maples, he was presented with writing tables in recognition of his war effort. However, he later took up law and joined Gray's Inn, London, before being called to the Bar in 1926.

Fluent in Spanish, French and German as a result of his university degree, he also served in the Second World War when he was appointed as second-in-command of 26 Field Company, Royal Engineers.

He saw action in Syria before commanding the Royal Engineers training depot in Egypt. His final wartime role was as Chief Engineer in the Levant Engineer Battalion. He retired as lieutenant-colonel, having been Mentioned in Dispatches for "gallant and Distinguished services" in the Middle East.

Cloutman survived the Second World War and in June 1946 attended the victory parade. Later, he became a divorce commissioner and was Senior Chairman of the War Pensions (Special Review) Tribunals.

In 1957, he became a judge and was knighted, and, the following year he attended the inaugural meeting of the Victoria Cross and George Cross Association.

In 1970, Cloutman gifted his gallantry and service medals to the Royal Engineers. He died at his home in Highgate Village, north London, on 15 August 1971, aged 79.

After being cremated at Golders Green, Barnet, on August 17, his ashes were taken to France where they were placed on the grave of his elder brother, Lieutenant Wilfred Cloutman, at Norfolk Cemetery, near Albert in Somme.

His brother, who also served with the Royal Engineers (178th Tunnelling Company), had died from gas poisoning in August 1915, after attempting to rescue a sergeant who was trapped in a mining operation to plant explosives.

His medal group remains, quite rightly, at the Royal Engineers Museum, Gillingham, Kent.

However, the story does not end there. Various presentations under the heading the 'Cloutman Awards' are still current today.

It was back in 1969/70 era while serving with 59 Field Squadron based in Singapore, in Cloutman Lines, Gillman Barracks that the Officer Commanding introduced The Cloutman Award'. It was to be awarded to the most outstanding JNCO in 59 Fd Sqn.



The first recipient of this award was Lcpl Michael Ellery (left).

The trophy at that time was a pewter tankard inscribed with the details of Sir Brett Cloutman VC. Sadly this treasured award was mislaid/lost during the many postings over the following years.

The award ceremony continues to this day , though the design of the trophy may vary from year to year. It was on 16th November 2017 that Fort William hosted the first Cloutman Commando dinner in Scotland.

The then OC 59 Cdo Sqn RE Major Stefan Siemieniuch RE presented the coveted Cloutman Award to Lance Corporal William Clark (below)



## Wales 2019

By Chris (Poncho) O'Donovan

### Routes logged:

Y Grybin Ridge, grade 3 scramble, 700 metres.

Bristly Ridge, grade 1 scramble, 700 metres.

Conwy Mountain Walk, 200 metres.

Lon Eifion - Caernarfen cycle route, 25 miles.

Aber Falls, a very pleasant and picturesque five mile walk.

Total height gained: 1700 metres.

Average age of participants (estimated) 70 years.

### Raffle receipts raised for charity (BLESMA) £305.00

The weather forecast was dire, to the extent that extra warm clothing was thrown into the vehicle at the last minute. We picked up our minstrel, Martin, at Dublin Port and we were on our way. We enjoyed the usual courteous reception from the security staff at the guardroom of Indefatigable and the Airborne Engineers Weekend was game on and the sun started to shine.

The bar was stocked and on Friday afternoon the blokes started to filter in. One of the most pleasant parts of the weekend is the meet and greet in the boat club. Old friends not seen for many years, regulars who are as familiar as if they lived around the corner all meet, have a few beers, insult each other and savour the view of the Menai from the boat club balcony. Menai Bridge, Britannia Bridge, Plas Newydd our neighbouring stately home, the wooded rolling hills leading to a magnificent view of the Snowdonia Mountain range.

We had a record attendance this year, forty two in total so our meal together at the Pen Rhos Inn in the village of Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch was a very enjoyable event. Old friendships were cemented still further and good fun was had by all.

On the Saturday Barney Rooney lead a sizable group on the less demanding Conwy Mountain route which was agreed by all to be quite spectacular with views of the sea, mountains and the ancient city of Conwy itself.

Phil Poulton had organised two superb routes for us in the hills as well as arranging the minibus/taxi hire. We were picked up from 'Indy' at 0830hr and dropped off at Ogwen Cottage where we met up with old Sqn boy Phil Chatterley and his lady Maxi. Phil wanted to have another go at Bristly Ridge and I wanted to join him. The main party were going to do Y Gribin lead by Phil Poulton. Both are quite challenging classic routes in their own way, the final RV was the renowned Pen Y Gwryd Hotel. It was a tired, aching and thirsty bunch who arrived there after the climb. The driver, "Dave with two 'f's", had redeemed his reputation by arriving on time to take us home and we all enjoyed the scenic ride back in the minibus with limbs stiffening up nicely.

A hot shower, an Ibuprofen for the leg and knee pains and it was back down to the boat club for the evening's jollification. Tony did an epic and plentiful curry, Lindsey organised the raffle and everybody moaned about the barman's choice of beer. Musical entertainment was provided by our resident minstrel, Martin who was joined by our very own lovely and talented Nina Grimbley. She also supplied the PA system with the assistance of her roadie dad Dave. The quality of the sound and singing surpassed anything that we ever had before. Two very talented musicians who you would think had been performing together all of their lives. The raffle and bar surplus raised in excess of five hundred pounds which we decided would go to the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association. Pete Kershaw will administer the donation.

Having emptied both the bar and their own energy reserves 42 tired but happy little bunnies made their way up to bed.

Sunday was to be a much more relaxing day with the only vigorous activity being the Lon Eifion - Caernarfen cycling trek lead by Lindsey Watson and Froth Beer. While not exactly being the Tour de France', more than a couple of the participants were reminded how rusty their cycling skills had become and how unfamiliar their muscles had were with sustained uphill cycling.

Quite a few of the crew had to bail out on the Sunday due to work and other family commitments so it was a much reduced party who sat down to eat at the Ty Gwen pub in the village on the Sunday night.

Monday was the morning of goodbyes, waving off old and treasured friends. Last lingering brews were enjoyed around the tables with conversation ranging from such eclectic topics as middle-eastern falconry and catching flying fish in the Southern Oceans - where else could you get it?

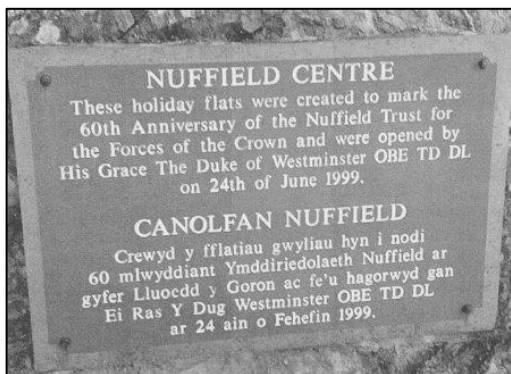
We did realise that we have reached maximum capacity now and that we will probably have to cap numbers in future at about thirty five. That being said, there is not one bloke who attended this weekend that I would turn away.

The Nuffield Centre at Indefatigable have happily accepted our provisional booking for 2020 for 15th - 18th May. Dave Rutter who administered the bookings for the past few years and has now passed the baton on to Baz Basset who will be circulating details of the event and taking bookings as the time approaches.

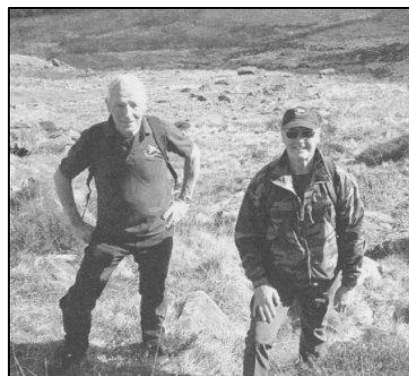
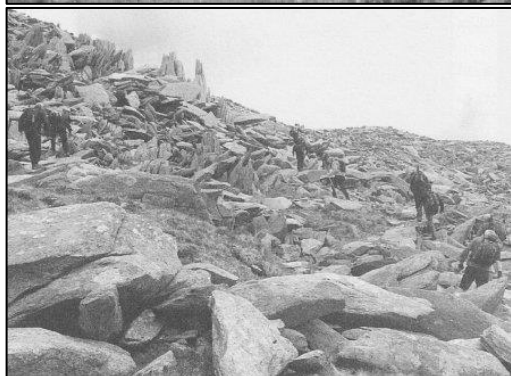
Thanks, as usual, to the many who contributed to make the weekend such a success: Tony Manley for organizing the rations, the packed lunches and the curry; that's one shed-load of work. Dave Rutter for doing the administration of the accommodation. Phil Poulton for expertly organizing the routes and transportation. Barney Rooney for organizing and leading the low level routes. Martin Rooney and Nina Grimbley for providing us with such superb entertainment. Finally, every one of the blokes and ladies who attended, it is the people who make this the event that it is.

### Post Script

There has been discussion regarding whether this year would have been the twentieth anniversary of the Wales weekend. I couldn't find any documentary evidence in my files to prove it one way or the other. The ball of cotton wool in my skull, which serves for a brain these days, could offer me nothing but I had a feeling that our first event was in the year 2000. Then Detective Inspector Marilyn O'Donovan pointed out this to me, see picture below. Enough said, "carved in stone" as the say. Next year will be our twentieth anniversary. Let's make it a great one.



So you the reader will be wondering, "What did this band of hill walking, mountain scrambling, coastal rambblers, beer swilling characters get up to during their adventurous weekend at the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre on Anglesey".

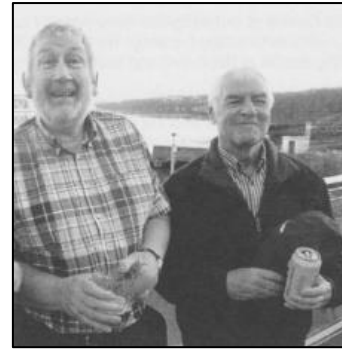


Dave & Bob Take the Easier Option





**Pete Lacey sets the pace - keep up you lot!**



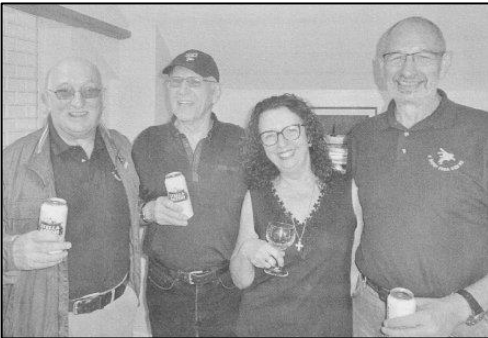
**Froth Beer (very apt name) and Peter Kershaw**



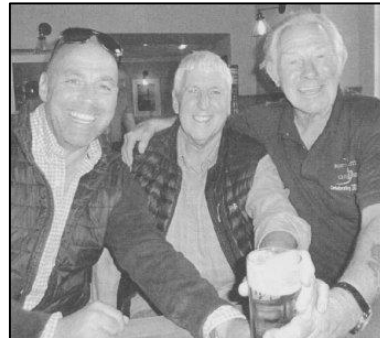
**Sunday lunch break at the Black Buoy**



**Bob Watts, Mike Blackmore & Alan Lindsay**



**Don Moroney, Mike Ellery, Anastasia Kostuch & Richard Fleck**



**Jim Neal, Phil Poulton and Harry Lockwood**



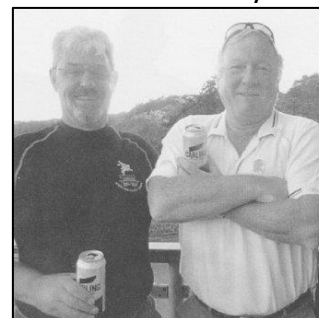
**Richard, Jeff, Don & Anastasia - on the coastal walk**



**Saturday night entertainment - Nina & Dave Grimbley with guitar backing from Martin Rooney**

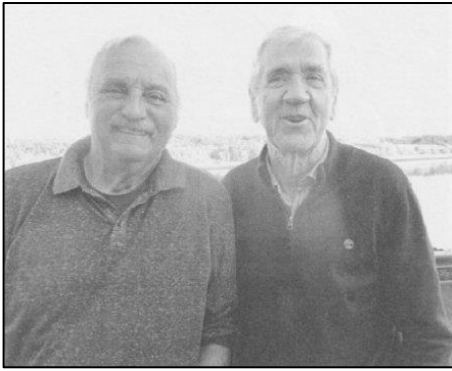


**Gerry Bonner, Phil Poulton & Angus Morrison**

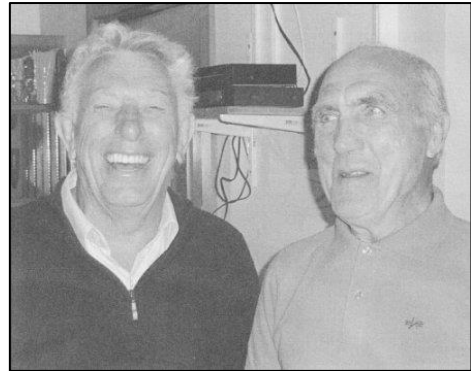


**John Askey & Mick Leather**





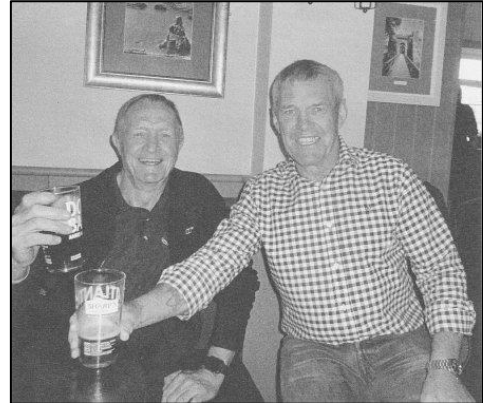
**Jeff Langford & Cyril Knowles**



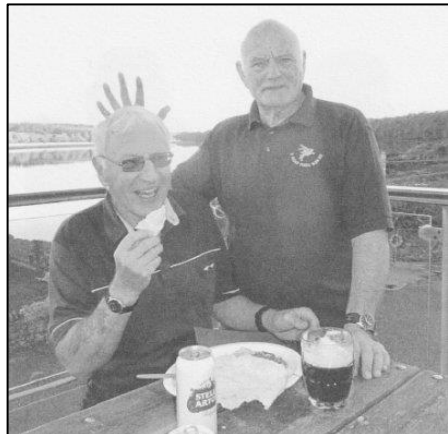
**Peter Bates & Paddy Denning**



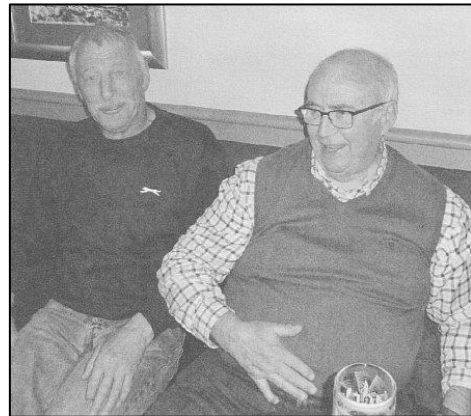
**Sunday Stroll - Chris, Baz, Marilyn, Jim, Barney, Bob & Dave**



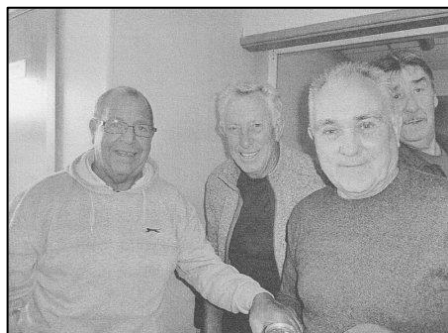
**Mick Blackmore & Chez Sheridan**



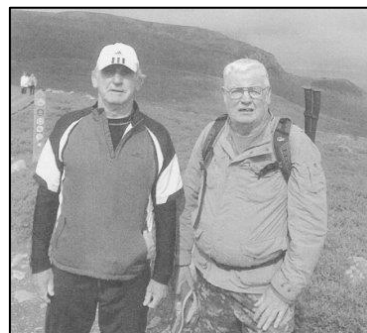
**Saturday night curry - Mick Ellery sampling Tony Manley's excellent evening buffet**



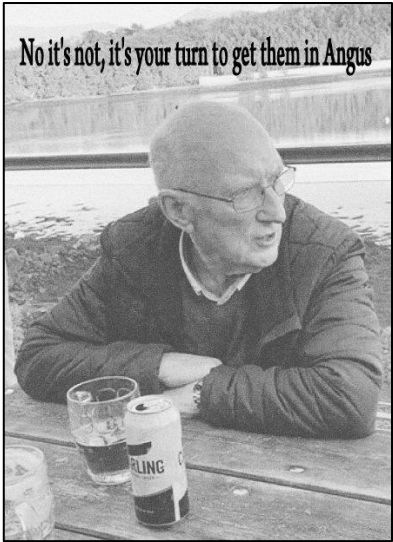
**Looks as though Pat Neal has over done the evening curry**



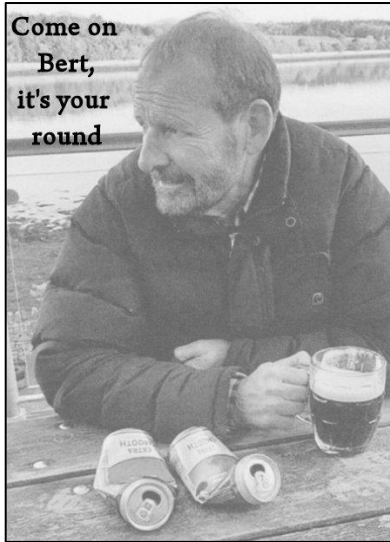
**Colin Brian, Peter Bates, Dave Grimbley & Glyn Davies**



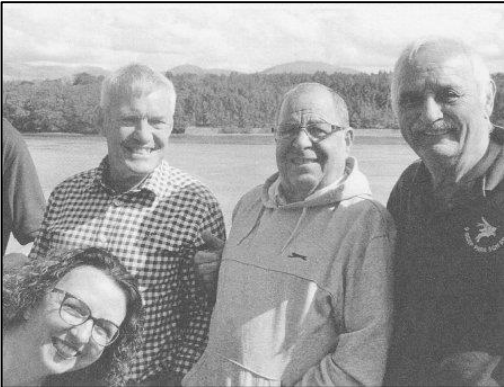
**Alan & Barney on the coastal hike**



No it's not, it's your turn to get them in Angus



Come on Bert, it's your round



Anastasia, Chez, Colin & Jeff



Barney & Lindsey hit the dance floor



Sunday "Ride to the Sun"

# The Lord Kitchener National Memorial Fund

By Baz Bassett



While serving at Brompton Barracks I became involved with Lord Kitchener National Memorial Fund (LKNMF). 2019 celebrates 100 years of the fund being given its charter, "so what" I hear some of you ask and what is it anyway? Lord Kitchener, I am sure evokes some memories to us as a soldier, especially as he was a Sapper. The classic memory of Kitchener is the recruiting picture of him pointing with the statement "Your country needs you" or something similar.

Herbert Horatio Kitchener was born in 1850. He was educated in Switzerland and at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich and commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1871.

As a young officer he was employed on the survey of the Holy Land and of Cyprus before being seconded to the Egyptian Army. Disguised as an Arab, he operated an intelligence service behind enemy lines during General Wolseley's unsuccessful expedition to relieve Khartoum where General Charles Gordon was besieged by the Mahdi. He was the first to meet refugees from that city bearing news of its fall and Gordon's death on 26th January 1885.

In 1896, he led a combined British and Egyptian force whose aim was the re-conquest of the Sudan. At the final battle in Omdurman on 2nd September 1898, his British and Egyptian troops overcame 50,000 dervishes under the Khalifa, and the successor to the Mahdi. He was raised to the peerage and made Governor-General of the Sudan where he laid the foundations of an enlightened civil administration and set up a university in Khartoum, which bore Gordon's name.

During the South African War he was Chief of Staff to Lord Roberts, and later succeeded him as Commander-in-Chief bringing the war to a conclusion in 1902.

On 3rd August 1914 he was summoned to London to become Secretary of State for War, and he was one of the few European statesmen and soldiers who envisaged a world war that could last four years. He alone believed in the possibility of raising a vast volunteer national Army, and at his personal call over three million men came forward to join the colours at the time of their country's need.

On 5th June 1916 Kitchener embarked for Russia on the cruiser HMS Hampshire on a mission designed to strengthen co-operation between the Allies on the Western and Eastern fronts. Shortly after sailing the cruiser struck a mine and was lost with all on board except for a few of the ship's company. This caused a huge outpouring of grief and donations from all parts of the globe were given to mark some form of recognition of this great man.

The LKNMF Fund was established on the 14th June 1916 in response to an Appeal by the Lord Mayor of London to establish a national memorial to the late Field Marshal Lord Kitchener of Khartoum. The Charter of Incorporation of the Fund received the Royal Assent in 1919 with HM Queen Alexandra as its first President, initially set up for 'the relief of disabled officers and men' of the First World War

Also established was a scheme to offer Kitchener University Scholarships to former members of the three Services of a suitable age who were undertaking a course of study leading to a first degree at a university in the United Kingdom. The first of these scholarships was awarded in 1917 and were extended shortly afterwards to the sons, and later daughters, of parents who were serving or who had served in the Armed Services. Since the grant of the first scholarship over 5500 such scholarships have been awarded. At present up to 25 awards are made each year to the value of £1,000.00.

I retired from full time work a short while back and I was asked to take over as the Secretary to the LKNMF. The fund continues to provide a Scholarship to applicants of children of Serving or Retired personnel, for their first degree and for serving forces personnel up to the age of 30. Scholarships are awarded on their academic basis after the completion of a simple form, downloaded from

the web site via the internet. I carry out an initial sift of applicants to reduce numbers down to about 50 and from there coordinate an interview programme for the applicants.

There are about 8 dates spread between July and September for the applicants and each interview last about 20-30 minutes. The panels consists of members of the executive committee and council and a few guest interviewers. As always the very difficult part is the decision of who gets a scholarship. We normally award about 25 a year, 20 from the fund and we have a few sponsors that support the fund making the numbers up. There is a scoring system and as always it is easy to spot the few stars and the few that have not made the grade but the great difficulty are the ones in the middle and drawing the cut off line. It reminds me of confidential reports and gradings on cadres and a lot of angst between the staff in getting their star to be recognised.

Having been part of the interview process for 2 years I am amazed at the ability of our young boys and girls, their skills and what they have achieved at such an early age. I am amazed at how much they can fit in and the range of effort they put in, not forgetting the commitment by the parents who support them. However, it is not all academic based, the interview process is a key element and is a good leveller in assisting the panel.



As always we need to ensure we are fit for purpose and are currently reviewing our mission in line with the Charter to ensure we are assisting the children of forces personnel in the best manner. Factors that need to be considered is the reduction in the size of our HM Forces, the changes to the continuity element for the education system, many forces children not now attending boarding school and are we reaching out to as many schools as possible. There is of course a knock on effect to the number of applicants to the fund. Is the scholarship of £1000.00 sufficient when you consider the cost of a degree these days, do we increase and if so will this reduce the number of applicants who obtain a grant? These are nice problems to have but we feel with a bit of planning we hope to continue to give of our best to forces children.

**The Lady Emma Kitchener - Chairman of the LKNMF - presenting a Scholarship Certificate to a recipient at the annual dinner.**

One of my aims to take this forward is to try to inform parents and pupils about the fund. It is of course more difficult as GDPR has thrown up a few barriers, so getting through to schools requires me to jump through a few more hoops. However, word of mouth helps and in your travels and as you meet a number of forces personnel at the various events, if they fit the category contact the fund.

I was not made aware of this for my children or my nephews and they all went to the Duke of York's Military School so there is a lack of communication. What can you do, well the first thing is to think of families who are serving or ex forces who have children who fit the category. Get them to visit the LKNMF web site (Google it) and take it from there. Any problems email me at: [secretary@LKNMF.com](mailto:secretary@LKNMF.com)

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## History Lesson

There is an old Hotel/Pub in Marble Arch, London, which used to have gallows adjacent to it. Prisoners were taken to the gallows (after a fair trial of course) to be hanged. The horse drawn dray, carting the prisoner, was accompanied by an armed guard, who would stop the dray outside the pub and ask the prisoner if he would like "ONE LAST DRINK".

If he said YES, it was referred to as ONE FOR THE ROAD.

If he declined, that prisoner was ON THE WAGON.

They used to use urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot and then once a day it was taken and sold to the tannery. If you had to do this to survive you were "piss poor", but worse than that were the really poor folk, who couldn't even afford to buy a pot, they "Didn't have a pot to piss in" and were the lowest of the low.

Most people got married in June, because they took their yearly bath in May and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning and death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or "The Upper Crust"

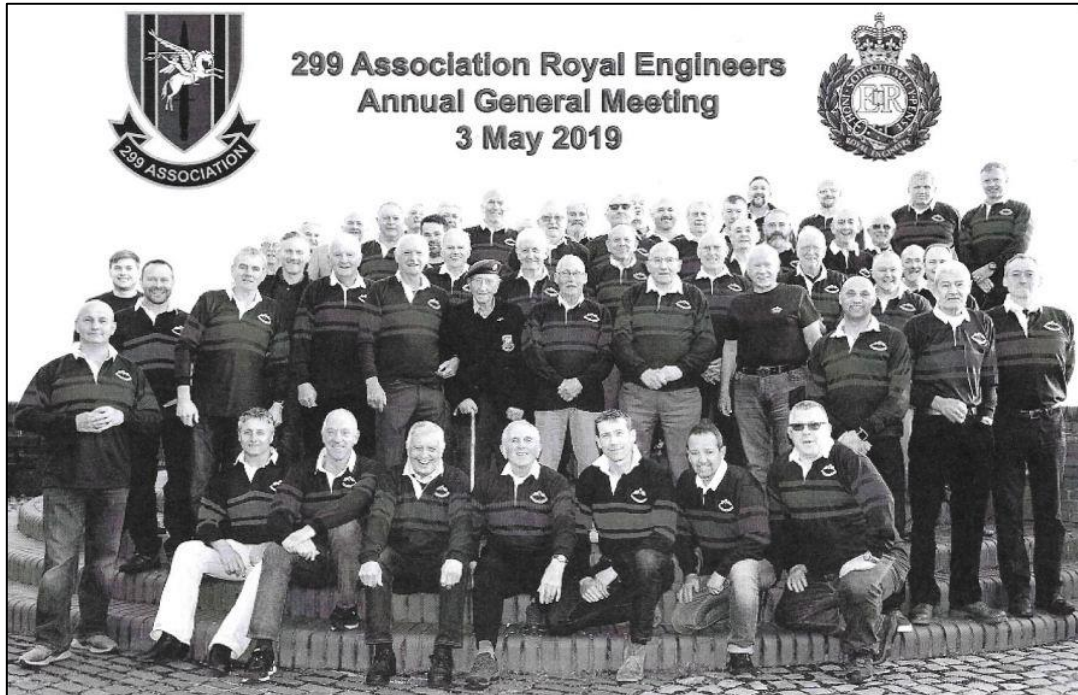
Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of "Holding a Wake".

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people, so they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone house and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, thread it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift) to listen for the bell; thus someone could be, "Saved by the Bell" or was considered a "Dead Ringer"

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## 299 Association Branch News

Gaz Coe, Secretary



Martin Tindle receives the much coveted Pegasus trophy from Gary Coe in recognition of 15 years service on the 299 Association Committee. Chris Shillito also in attendance

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## Aldershot Branch News

Dave Rutter, Secretary

Since our last branch contribution into the Journal, we have suffered both good and bad occurrences.

On the negative side we have suffered the loss of a further two stalwart members. Harold Covington, a WWII veteran sadly passed away in January. Harold had been a regular attendee at our meetings, AEA reunions and he particularly enjoyed the BBQ's hosted by Fred & Betty Gray. However, in recent months prior to his passing, ill health prevented his attendance. A fitting tribute to Harold is posted in the obituary pages of this issue.

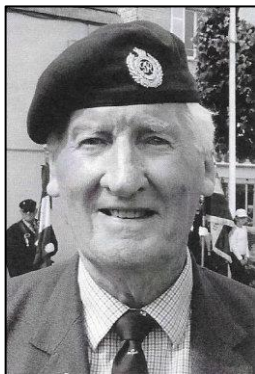
Our second loss was that of Stevie Stephenson. Stevie had suffered a decline in health over the past two years, which

led to his passing on the 25th February 2019. Having been a member of the branch for a number of years we all thought that we knew him really well. His service years were originally with 9 Sqn and for a considerable number of years with 22 SAS. It was during the celebration of his life in a church near his home in Durrington, that we were to learn of his extraordinary service career from his former 'B' Sqn 22 SAS commander that took us all by surprise. Many of the 300 plus seated in the church were truly amazed by the service history of this wonderful character, fondly referred to as 'Little Stevie'. He, together with Harold will be sadly missed by all that had the pleasure of their company. Stevie's obituary is posted within this issue.

With the departure of airborne forces from Aldershot, and in particular 9 Sqn, our branch numbers are in decline, but, by a chance meeting, John Lee met up with Ken Newton (former OC 299 Sqn) during the Menin Gate remembrance service. Ken, who lives in Bournemouth, attended our last meeting and has now become a member of the Aldershot branch.

Our Spring lunch, organised by Dave & Lorna Leibrick was held at the Oak Park Golf Club on Saturday 13th April. Dave pulled out all of the stops by encouraging former 9 Sqn colleagues and friends to join us at the luncheon. On the day 38 members and guests were in attendance. Not only did Dave & Lorna organise the whole event, but also provided two of the 'star' prizes for the raffle. It had previously been unanimously agreed that the raffle proceeds be donated to 'Combat Stress'. The sum raised, thanks to the persuasion of the ladies selling the tickets and Mark Desborough's jovial comments as each prize was claimed, raised the tidy sum of £261. This has been donated to this worthy cause and a letter of gratitude has been received from the Combat Stress charity.

The one regret on the subject of the Spring lunch was that I forgot to take a camera. One of the most unusual prizes, donated and manufactured by Adam Frame, was a Jerry can formed into a mini bar, with hinged door, shelves, glasses and a bottle of fine gin.



More excellent news is that our Normandy veteran, Bob Sullivan has been accepted as an 'In Pensioner' at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Bob joined their grand ranks on Monday 13th May. At the tender age of 97 years, Bob said that it will make a pleasant change having someone to prepare his meals and other privileges. We wish him well and hope to visit him once he's got his feet 'under the table'.

The next social event will be our annual BBQ, hosted by Fred & Betty Gray. No date has yet been arranged and it has been suggested that we study the forecast for the months of July-September to hopefully select the most favourable weather conditions.

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## Chatham Branch News

Baz Bassett - Chairman

The Branch has had a bad start to the year with the loss of two key members to the branch, Bob Seaman and Mick (Gurney) Fisher. With the small size of our team the loss of 2 members is quite significant and as great characters they have both left a large void in our lives. We obviously send our heartfelt sympathies to their families and friends.

This year it is slightly less hectic than last year. With the focus on last year being the AEA AGM & Reunion Gala Dinner, it almost feels like an anti-climax that we are back to a steady state of normal events.

Along with many others a number of the branch members attended the annual Armistice Parade at the Cenotaph in London, very poignant as it was of course the people's parade in memory of 100 years since end of the First World War.

The Christmas Dinner as always was a bumper success with members and their extended families in attendance enjoying the family event at the King Charles.



Christmas was soon followed by the Valentines Buffet Lunch in February to cheer us all up, welcoming in spring and giving the ladies a break from cooking.

In April a number of Branch members also attended the Aldershot Branch Spring Luncheon.

Next on the Branch Calendar will be our Annual John Rock Dinner which is to be held in June. This year we have opted to have the John Rock Dinner as a lunch time event; a change can be as good as a rest as they say. The John Rock Dinner always has a Theme, and this year will be the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of OPERATION Over Lord, the D - Day Landings in Normandy, France.

Most senior member of the Branch, Major (Retd) Alan Graham MId (our last WWII Veteran). Maj Graham served with This year, we will be hosting our both 3<sup>rd</sup> Para Squadron RE & 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Squadron RE, he will be 95 years young on the 16th June 2019 and he will be accompanied by his wife Mary, (who is also 95 years young), Daughter Patsy and Granddaughter Kate, who on behalf of her grandfather will read out some of his memories of OPERATION Over Lord, D - Day Landings in Normandy.

At the end of June is the Armed Forces Day (Medway), and as always a number of Branch members will be on Parade, this event is well supported by members of the public and is a great day out on the Great Lines with the Regiment also involved with displaying a number of stands, equipment and demonstrations.

There are of course many other events around and about that members will be attending and I hope that the weather and the events go off smoothly during the summer months.

Later in the year we have our Annual Curry Buffet Lunch, in the Officers Mess at 36 Engineer Regiment which is one to look forward to and of course further on the horizon is this year's AEA AGM & Reunion Gala Dinner at Banbury.



Membership is as always, a problem, one of two heads have popped above the parapet to see what's happening and we hope to perhaps capture a couple more, even if it's just to attend our functions, it would be good if we could draw the odd one or two ex Sqn members back into the fold.

Our Branch events as always are open to all AEA members, families & friends should you wish to attend and let's not forget the Veterans Breakfast at Fort Amherst once a month which is strongly supported by the Medway vets.

I would like to thank all our Branch members, wives, partners, families & friends for their never - ending support and generosity, whom without the Branch would find it difficult to continue.

Lastly, on behalf of our Branch President Lt Col (Retd) Brian Awford and all Branch members, I would like to send our best wishes to all AEA members, families & friends and we look forward to catching up with you at some time over a beer.

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## Scotland Branch

Gil Nicol, Secretary

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2019 several members and their wives attended the annual P.R.A .Christmas Dinner Dance, hosted by PRA Lothian Branch, which was held at R.B.L. Rodney Street, Edinburgh. Everyone agreed that it was a most enjoyable evening much enjoyed by in excess of 100 attendees.

On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December a medal presentation was held at Edinburgh Castle. This was the presentation of the GSM 1962 with clasp South Arabia presented to Captain (Retd.) Eoghann MacLaglainn who was wounded whilst attending the 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment overseas camp in Aden.

An article relating to this presentation is featured on page 10 of this issue. This presentation came about after dogged representation, to the government, by (mainly) John Donaldson. There were members of his family in attendance as well as colleagues from AEA Scotland, Airborne Signals, PRA Lothian Branch and 2 ex 9 Sqn members who all though they are considerably younger than our members were pleased and felt privileged to be invited to attend. Also present, with his daughter, Annie, was Angus MacNeil M.P for The Outer Hebrides who assisted in the awarding of this medal. Not to be outdone Capt. Maclachlainn's wife, Sheilagh, was presented with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of AEA Scotland at the much appreciated buffet lunch in the Governors Castle Residence. Thanks were given to Mrs Linda Lyness for the preparation of the buffet and it has been arranged for a bouquet of flowers to be delivered to the castle for Mrs Lyness. It should be noted that some members travelled from as far as Coldstream, Helensburgh, West Kilbride, Ayrshire, Newcastleton (The Borders), Dunfermline, Perth, Glasgow and local areas. Captain MacLachlainn and family had travelled from South Uist for the presentation.

We are pleased to welcome Peter Long, a former officer in 2 Troop, to be our newest branch member. We look forward to meeting up with him in the near future.

Sadly, on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2018, we were informed that Kim Panton had passed away. Kim had been ill for quite a considerable period of time with Throat Cancer. He was a founder member of A.E.A. Edinburgh before we became A.E.A. Scotland and was formerly a member of 2 Troop, 300 Squadron, 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment (T.A.). Until his illness took over he had been a regular attendee at our meetings and contributed to the proceedings of the branch. Our commiserations go to his wife Rose and his children Lesley, Shirley and Grant as well as his grandchildren. Kim's funeral was held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at Mortonhall Crematorium, Edinburgh and was well attended by his colleagues from AEA Scotland, PRA Lothian as well as independent personnel.

**"We will remember him "**



We have been informed that Jinty Murray, wife of the late Frank Murray (Ex A.E.A. Scotland Chairman) is ill and we have sent a get well card on behalf of A.E.A. Scotland with our best wishes. Frank was a stalwart member and supporter of A.E.A. Scotland and whenever we had occasions where wives were attending Jinty was always by his side.

AEA Scotland members attended the funeral of Robert Mitchell, (P.R.A.Lothian Branch member), on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 at Mortonhall Crematorium. There was very good representation of AEA and PRA Lothian members, so Robert had a good send off. Well done lads.

On 12<sup>th</sup> April 2019 we had a get together at The Guards Club, Edinburgh to remember the events at Al Milah, Aden, which occurred in 1965. We also took the opportunity to present John Donaldson with a Crystal decanter with glasses and a bottle of his favourite whisky "Isle of Jura" as a thank you, from his colleagues, for all the good and outstanding work he has done on behalf of 300 Squadron in getting partial recognition for their sacrifice whilst in Aden at their annual overseas camp in 1965. The decanter and glasses were engraved with a set of wings and APJI. Congratulations were received from Angus Mac Neil (MP for the Outer Hebrides) and Major General Michael Riddell-Webster CBE, DSO (The Governor for Edinburgh Castle). John is still fighting to get recognition for all members of 300 Squadron who were at Al Milah at that time. It was especially good to see John in attendance as he had a fall, about 10 days previous, injuring his knee, arm and bashing his head. We thank him for his effort and wish him all the best in his endeavours. It was a very good turnout from our members with some members travelled quite a distance (Coldstream, Dumbartonshire, Ayrshire and various other areas) to be present.



We have programmed a wreath laying ceremony on the 12<sup>th</sup> June at The Eastern Cemetery, Edinburgh in memory of Cpl Scott Wilson (Ex 9 Sqn) who was tragically killed during the battle at Mount Longdon, Falkland Isle. More details will follow in our December issue.

Later in June there will be an Armed Forces Day Parade - details will follow in our December Issue

**Best Wishes to our colleagues South of the Border**

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