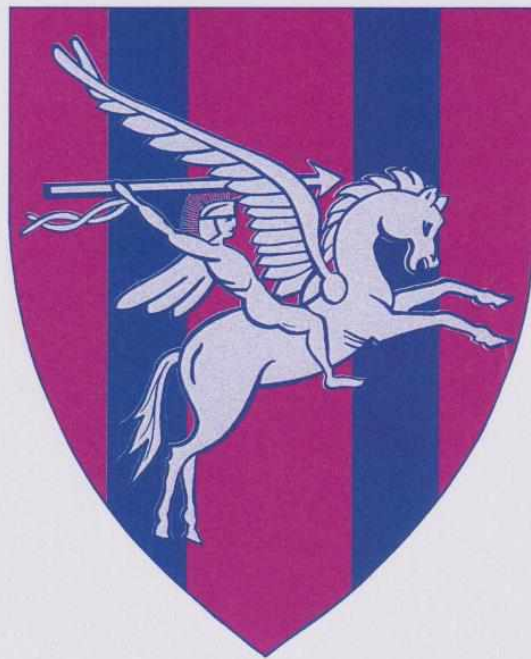




# THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



Airborne Engineers Association  
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## President's Update

**John Lee**

As I write this we are entering a further stage of Lockdown, making this year a very eventful one, I think it would be true to say, one of the worst in memory. The results of which have meant the curtailment of very many events in which the AEA members regularly take part.

The pandemic, although severely curtailing most of the planned events has not meant that all has been lost and some important ones have in fact taken place. The Executive Council were able to hold a virtual meeting in May and last month the AGM was held, again in a virtual format to which Branch representatives were invited and took part. A number of matters were resolved which will be promulgated with this Journal.

I do not propose to run through those events which did take place as these have been adequately covered by the Chairman in his report. One item of good news is that although formal invitations had not been sent out for candidates for a President's Commendation, at the recent AGM it was decided to award two. These were awarded to Charlie McColgan and Paul Moore, members of the 'Airborne Riders' for their unstinting support for the South Atlantic Medal Association and the victims of that campaign and their Ride of Respect, around not only in this country but to the Continent as well. My congratulations to them both for their excellent work in remembrance and fundraising.

Hopefully, things will improve and we will be able to get back to some sort of normality next year. With these thoughts I will now close and wish all members and their families my best wishes for Christmas and a Happier New Year.

## Chairman's Message

**Steve Wallis**

2020 is a year that we will all remember. As I write this, the Covid Pandemic is resurging with cases doubling every two weeks and large numbers of people being admitted to Hospital.

This situation has had an obvious effect on the activities of the Airborne Engineers Association. Most Branches have not been able to operate as normal and many social events have been cancelled including the Annual General Meeting and Gala Ball which was to have been held at Harrogate.

The National Committee have managed to hold three meetings, including the OGM in April and a much-reduced AGM in October. These meetings were carried out as Video Conferences using the 'Zoom' Platform which has proved to be a very useful tool. I would encourage all the Branches to maintain communications with their members using either 'Zoom' or 'Teams' both are very easy to set up and to use.

Many of the Annual Memorial events have not taken place including the service at Cromwell Lock and the commemoration to the first Airborne Forces Depot at Hardwick Hall. Probably the biggest Casualty was the annual Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. I had optimistically applied for 36 tickets for this year's event however the RBL firstly reduced this to 8 and then took the decision that there would be no Veterans march Past this year. This was particularly Poignant as this year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Unveiling of the Cenotaph.

Other events have taken place in a much-reduced format. Credit goes to Peter Yeates for organising the annual Double Hills memorial service, attended by members of 9 Parachute Squadron and, for the first time, the 'Airborne Riders'. There were also events at 'Zetland' to commemorate the Cromwell Lock Disaster and at Aldershot to commemorate the Falklands Conflict. I must also mention those who are no longer with us including 'Freddie' Kemp, 'Andy' Andrews, 'Gurney' Fisher and Mike Pallott all of whom have passed this year.

Having mentioned the 'Airborne Riders', I have to make special mention of Paul Moore and Charlie McColgan who, along with two other 'Airborne Riders' members undertook the 'Ride of Respect' visiting the Graves and Memorials around Britain to all those killed during the Falklands Conflict and raising thousands of pounds for the South Atlantic Medal Association in the process.

In closing, Melanie and I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please make the best you can of these events given the current situation, and above all STAY SAFE.

## AEA Constitution Amendments.

### 15. Membership Categories

Branch Honorary Member. Additional sentences to read - 'Branches are to register with the Membership Secretary all persons elected as a Branch Honorary Member, and their details will be included in the AEA Membership Data Base. This is to accord with requirements under the current GDPR legislation. They will only be liable to pay a Branch annual subscriptions and will not be required to pay a Joining Subscription. Membership cards issued to these members are to be annotated 'Honorary Member'.

## Annex B

### Rules of Dress for Standard Bearers.

These rules are for the information and assistance of all Airborne Engineer Association Standard Bearers with the object of ensuring uniformity in the handling of Association Standards.

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. Beret Maroon | Berets only are to be worn by Standard Bearers on all occasions.                              |
| 2. Suit         | Black or Charcoal   |
| 3. Blazer       | (Black or Blue) with AEA Association Badge  |
| 4. Tie          | AEA tie (either Association tie - Pegasus logo, or Anniversary tie - Wings and Pegasus logo). |
| 5. Shoes        | Well-polished, formal black style.  |
| 6. Gauntlets    | White well cleaned.   |
| 7. Sling        | Sling and socket to be worn over the right shoulder and the leather to be well polished.      |
| 8. Medals       | To be worn on left breast.  |

## The Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel Trust

Patron: HRH The Duke of York, KG

President: Admiral The Right Honourable Baron West of Spithead GCB DSC PC

Mr John Lee

President/ Airborne Engineers Association 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Mr Lee,

### 2 SG SEAT APPEAL

I write to thank you and your members for your most generous gift of £1,000 towards the Chapel appeal to fund nine seats in memory of the eight Scots Guardsmen and one Royal Engineer who died during the Battle for Tumbledown Mountain in 1982. I note that your gift is dedicated to the memory of LCpl John Pashley RE and this will be reflected in the donor register using the words that you have sent me.

The donor register for this appeal will be kept in the Memorial Room in the Chapel for public display.

Brigadier Charles Page MBE and all our Trustees join me in sending you all their very best wishes and thanks. We also wish you well in the current CV19 pandemic.

With all good wishes to you and to members of the Airborne Engineers Association.

Mrs Angela Perry Secretary to the Trustees

## Journal Final Printed Publication

There will be a final issue of the AEA printed journal (at no added cost) in December 2021. Your most recent subscription will be your final contribution. Any financial shortfall, if required, will be borne by the AEA Central Funds.

## AEA Online Shop

### Dave Pace (Webmaster)

A proposal is in place regarding the development of an online store for the Airborne Engineers Association. Some development work has taken place, which you can view here - [REDACTED]

You can go through the complete ordering process and even click on payment, don't worry the payment gateway isn't set up and you won't have to enter any card details.

We would value any feedback you may have on the online store concept.

## AEA Website Members Only Content

### Dave Pace (Webmaster)

With the December 2021 issue being the final printed copy, all new future Journal content will be added to the Members Only section of the AEA website along with content from many old Journal issues already present on the site.

Our aim is to ensure all AEA members can access the online version of the Journal by no later than December 2021, so...If you don't have a username and password for the Members Only content please get in touch via email at [contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com](mailto:contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com) or on either of the phone numbers listed below

If you prefer to respond by phone you can contact me as follows: Home: [REDACTED] Mobile 07977 282620



## Rogues Gallery



From L to R:

1Tp, 2Tp, 3Tp and Sp Tp Comds' 9 Sqn of the early 90's: John White, Mike Fuller, Paul Fountaine (yours truly), and Frazer Ross, respectively - taken late last summer on the eve of Lt Col John White deploying on his final tour, to Virginia, United States

Mike also served as Sqn 2iC, as did Frazer, with myself and Frazer having the pleasure of returning as OC, and Frazer going on to Command 23 Para Engr Regt (Air Assault).... a motley crew, as Dick Brown (SSM of the day, and my QM) would testify!



Frank Ryan & Jake McKue when they were young and foolish, but definitely not innocent!



Baz Henderson – Happy with a pint in his hand



Martin Walker, Phil Poulton & Chris Davies a couple of years ago



George Dunn & Mick (Porky) Willis – Kenya, waiting for the rain to stop

## 1 Troop 1966-1970

### Fred Gray - Troop SSgt

Whilst reading the last journal, I was surprised to see how many former members of the squadron had made a successful life after their military days had ended. It made me look at my own troop when I was Troop Staff Sergeant. The troop was thirty eight strong including the Troop Commander Captain Gerry Taggart and Lt Dunn as Troop 2iC



Belshaw, Rhodes, McCleery, Sheridan, Vickery, Dyer, Dunkley, Poulton, Norminton, Redhead, Arnold.

Sowdon, Plowman, Murphy, Lindsay, Thornley, Lafranais, Ellis, Beer, Thompson, Byrne, Parker.

Daniels, Bissett, Fleet, Mason, Downie, Gray, Capt Taggart, Lt Dunn, Taylor, Baldwin, Cook, Morgan, Bailey

*Not on photo: Button, Roberts, King, Cleary, Netley, Brian, Rutter, Watts, Fielder, Denham*

Five members of the troop were commissioned. Tony Roberts, Bernie Baldwin, Peter Ellis, Joe Houlston, and Dave Rutter. Tony Roberts played football for the Army and the Corps, and with further promotion became the SSM of 9 Squadron. He was awarded the MBE and retired from the army with the rank of Major.

Cpl Bernie Baldwin, LCpl Dave Rutter, Sappers Joe Houlston and Peter Ellis all received commissions. Peter Ellis was awarded two Queens Gallantry Medals and retired from the Army with the rank of Lt Col. Bernie Baldwin retired to the island of Jersey with the rank of Major and was the Branch Secretary of the Royal British Legion, Jersey. Joe Houlston will forever be remembered as the person who formed the AEA against the wishes of certain high ranking officers and probably sacrificed any possibility of further promotion. He retired with the rank of Captain. Dave Rutter was the fifth member to receive a commission and retired as a Captain. He took up several appointments within the AEA, including Secretary of the Aldershot Branch, treasurer and branch entertainments member. His most demanding appointment was that of the Editor of the very successful AEA Journal.

Three members of the troop were 'badged' and served with 22 Regiment (SAS) where Alan Lindsay reached the rank of WO1 The other two members of the troop were Tom Button and Lofty Lafranais.

Spr John Thornley took up employment in the Security industry and was last seen as Security Officer at the Twickenham Rugby stadium in the V.I.P. bar and lounge.

Spr 'Froth' Beer, the most severely injured member of the troop during one of the tours in N.I., showed tremendous determination to overcome his injuries. After five years working in a paint factory, he decided that he had to change course and get out into the world, which he did, by showing that same guts and determination require during Para Selection. He bought a small boat and with self- taught navigation set out to sail the world. First as a solo sailor, reaching as far as Fiji visiting old 9 Squadron Fijian friends and later sailing with his partner Lindsey for many more sea miles. An exceptional character admired by hundreds of his former squadron mates.

The Troop Sergeant, Derek Taylor took up employment with the international company 'McAlpine Engineering'. Derek was made Works Manager during the construction of a power station and other construction projects during his long association with the company.

LCpl Colin Parker, a former boy entrant was awarded a MiD. in recognition for the dangerous work he undertook as a plant operator whilst serving in N.I. On leaving the Army Colin became the Managing Director of the Construction Division of Mitsubishi, Hampshire. Colin also had two brothers who served in the squadron and his daughter married an officer who also served in the Squadron.

The Troop Commander Captain Gerry Taggart was further promoted and eventually appointed Officer Commanding 9 Para Sqn RE.



LCpl Bob Watts, (troop PTI), was considered by many to be the most conscientious and efficient LCpl in the squadron. When he left the army, he took up employment with the MOD Police Force as a Small Arms Weapons Instructor at one of the secret MOD Establishments. He remained in that post until his retirement.

Cpl Tom Downie qualified as diver and with the rank of WO2 was a diving instructor at Marchwood.

One member of the troop, a former boy entrant, who will remain anonymous, but well known to his peers for his generosity during the AGM raffles raising large amounts for military charities. On leaving the army he set up his own business and attained millionaire status.

Four members of the troop are known to have passed away: SSgt Roy King, Henry Morgan, Phil Eccleston and Tosh Byrne. I have no doubt there was much more success in the troop but unfortunately, I have not been able to find out what they achieved later in life.

What a clever and determined bunch of soldiers we had in 1 Troop. If a troop of less than forty soldiers could have so much talent and success, how much could a squadron of likeminded men have produced since the year it was formed in 1948?

## Diving in Gibraltar with the Royal Marines 1996

**Tom Bridges - Captain RE/RM (Retired)**

During these extremely trying times I have attempted to lighten the general mood and attempt to produce an article highlighting a couple of lighter moments during a long military career with the Royal Marines.

Gibraltar is a beautiful location at the western end of the Mediterranean. The 'Rock' as it is known holds a very special place in my heart, a place of happy memories and one great tragedy which will be forever in my memory.

For those of us who have not been blessed with a visit to the location, a little history...

Gibraltar is a British Overseas Territory located at the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula. It has an area of 2.6 square miles and is bordered to the north by Spain.

The landscape is dominated by the Rock of Gibraltar at the foot of which is a densely populated town area, home to over 32,000 people, primarily Gibraltarians.



In 1704, Anglo-Dutch forces captured Gibraltar from Spain during the War of the Spanish Succession on behalf of the Habsburg claim to the Spanish throne. The territory was ceded too Great Britain in perpetuity under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. During World War II it was an important base for the Royal Navy (RN) as it controlled the entrance and exit to the Mediterranean Sea, the Strait of Gibraltar, which is only 14.3 km (8.9 mi) wide at this naval choke point.

It remains strategically important, with half the world's seaborne trade passing through the strait. Today Gibraltar's economy is based largely on tourism, online gambling, financial services and bunkering.

The sovereignty of Gibraltar is a point of contention in Anglo-Spanish relations because Spain asserts a claim to the territory. Gibraltarians rejected proposals for Spanish sovereignty in a 1967 referendum and, in a 2002 referendum, the idea of shared sovereignty was also rejected.

Without going through all the military aspects of the diving which are extremely monotonous to those that are not familiar with them, I thought it better to highlight two aspects from the military diving world which although delighted and consumed my interest at the time are probably not best described under the 'Military Diving' spectrum.



I first visited Gibraltar with the Army in 1990. Back then I was a member of 9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers. The Royal Engineers or sappers have a long and glorious history with the Rock and as such have had a military presence there from the earliest times.

As a young Sergeant with 2 Troop I had been tasked by my Boss to carry out several small engineering task in and around Gibraltar itself. The way the work had been explained to me by the Boss was that it was an ideal 'teeth cutting' mission for a young Senior NCO in the famous 5 Airborne Brigade!

On reflection it was a great trip with twelve young tradesman/Sappers from the unit which contained a few surprises and tests along the way. A massive plus for me as a Diver was the fact that I managed to arrange a few military dives within the Harbour with Scotty an old RN Clearance dive pal of mine from my Portsmouth days. This broke up the monotony of task supervision and the numerous trips to the Royal Military Police (RMP) base on the Rock nicely. Without going into too much detail, having twelve paratroopers on a paid (with expenses) trip to the Mediterranean is probably not too dissimilar to that famous and very time consuming practice, 'cat herding'.

During my service with the RM (1994-2009) I visited the Rock many times. It holds a unique position for extremely challenging diving serials be they from the harbour itself or mounted on one of her majesties submarines. The harbour and surrounding coastline are excellent for numerous militaristic diving challenges.

The two instances I would like to share were actually during Diving Exercises, one of which involved a Midget Submarine and live demolitions. Gibraltar was one of the few places the RM could practice this highly valued skillset.

As a former Midget Submarine Commander (MSC) I have had the delight of being able to branch away from the mainstream military syllabus and enjoy experiences which for the life of me I could never have imagined happening.

### **Treasure Hunting**

Gibraltar is steeped in history, especially Sailor type history. Back in the day when the Great Lord Nelson smashed the Spanish at Trafalgar his body was carried to Gibraltar after the battle. Legend dictates that they stored the great Admirals body in a casket of Rum. To this day there is a drink on sale called 'Nelsons Blood'. I have tasted it and it is not for the faint hearted.

So whenever the Military diving programme allowed or more frequently was delayed because of equipment issues, there was a small team of divers who then gathered together on the South Mole and set off to search for treasure!

The treasure I have titled the first aspect with comes in a rather strange but highly addictive form! For over four hundred years Gin has been distilled and drank by sailors the world over. This Gin in the very early days would come from the great Gin distilleries of Holland. There was also a local distillery on Gibraltar itself. In the days of yore the old ships would line up within the protective shadow of the rock and the RN of the day would take turns in resupply at the ancient Rosia Bay which is a small fifty pence shaped harbour around the corner from the main Gibraltar Harbour itself.

Rosia is known throughout the RM diving world as a great protected site where although shallow it proves to be a navigational challenge for the Midget Submarine and when the RN ships were much smaller than they are now you can imagine these ancient vessels lining up at anchor and awaiting their turn to take on stores for whatever patrol they were bound for.

When these ancient mariners were stuck on board what do you imagine they did? Apart from the odd sea shanty they would glug away on the famous Dutch gin. When they had finished the bottle it would be idly thrown overboard to lie hidden in the sandy bottom of the Mediterranean until, in some cases, up to 400 years later, some nosey RM diver would dig it up as Treasure!

The Gibraltar seabed is of a sold sandy mixture which is great for preserving and protecting these old Gin Bottles. With the constant stormy weather and the passage of large container and passenger vessels the bottles are constantly being unearthed within their sandy tombs.

In the old days simply crudely made clay bottles were used. Jump forward to today's glass containers, mass produced and totally lacking in character and you have the reason why myself and my RM comrades were interested in these old gin bottles. Their proper name was Stone Gins with Ears, the ears were the crudely fixed handles and there were many found where the ear had become the first victim of time and had broken off.

Again for you history buffs.....

The early history of gin is much more than the sole work of one man or one moment in time, It was the gradual coming together of two forces, juniper and spirit, both of which had many separate adventures before they were united in a glass of Geneve, let alone gin

One of the first major reasons was a distilling ban in the 17th Century, which lead to Flemish distillers migrating to the Netherlands, France and Germany. Implemented in 1601, the ban on distilling (triggered primarily by the Government's concern about a national food shortage) meant that many distillers departed, though it is also worth noting that by this point - thousands of migrants had already fled due to the Eighty Years War (1568 - 1648).

Geneve was indeed first predominantly introduced to Britain during the Thirty Years' War.

The fables actually begin with the Eighty Years War, some decades earlier. In 1585, Queen Elizabeth of England sent 6,000 men to the Low Countries to provide support against the Spanish. By the time the troops arrived in Antwerp however, they were months too late. Nevertheless, during their time there the troops observed a tradition among their Dutch counterparts. The Dutch would sip from small bottles they kept on their belts, after which they fought valiantly - thanks to their "Dutch Courage".

Years later British and Dutch soldiers fought together once more (the Thirty Year War), drinking "Dutch Courage" ahead of battles. During these wars, slowly but surely, Geneve travelled back into England where it began its rise in popularity.

The English language reflects this slow adoption and transformation from Geneve to Geneva and then shortened to one intoxicating monosyllabic word: Gin, as wittily demonstrated in Massinger's 1623 play, "The Duke of Milan".



Geneve as a spirit only really became truly fashionable some years later, gaining wider popular appeal with the arrival of the Dutch King, William of Orange in 1689.

Schiedam which was one of the largest distilleries in Holland and probably one of the more common bottles recovered by the divers grew from 37 distilleries to 250 in the ancient days and exported the prized liquor all over the world.

So the empty containers thrown leisurely overboard by the ancient mariners became a much sought after item.

**Some examples of the stone Gyns with and without ears**

### **The Octopus**

The second memorable out of context event for me involved the biggest Octopus I have ever seen. It was encountered during a complex diving serial which involved a live demolition on a large propeller dumped onto the seabed within the range area.

The depth of water was around eleven meters, the visibility as you can see from the article photographs was excellent. The actual dive itself involved quite a few moving parts and I count this dive amongst the most memorable of all the diving I have ever been involved in. The dive itself started with a detailed brief and then a lengthy dive within the Midget Submarine (MS) around the South Mole area and then across and down to the demolition area which I will not reveal for obvious reasons. It was a fair distance and took us around an hour to travel the leg in the MS.

During this phase the two man crew pilot and navigate the vessel around to a position that has been marked on the navigation system within the craft. Then when reaching the actual range area the craft is bottomed out (taken to the seabed) and the search for the target (in our case the propeller) begins.

For me this is the most enjoyable aspect of the dive as I am able to open the door and visually search the surrounding seabed. Yes we are given an approximate area to search and within which the target is marked to the surface but we do not have the luxury of being able to surface and see the marker we remain submerged at all times. With the great visibility it is was my job as Navigator to look out from my position and direct the pilot along our pre-planned search pattern.

On this particular day I had opened my door and once my eyes had adjusted to the sudden light and the dull golden glow of the sandy expanse I found visibility to be out as far as fifty metres which was outstanding. I twisted round to look out to the side and signalled the pilot to slow the speed right down and thought to myself I am extremely lucky to be paid for this job!

it was during this euphoric moment of contemplation that I saw the sandy bottom shimmer slightly about thirty metres to my flank. I looked harder at the distortion and realised to my surprise and pleasure that I was looking at a large Octopus and it (without knowing the gender) was looking straight at me!

I hurriedly reached down and fumbled around for a few seconds until I located our small portable u/w video camera and then started videoing, what for me, was a veritable first in all my years as an RE and an RM Diver.

The creature was pretty big and seemed captivated by our presence. At first I thought it would flee but then to my surprise with a sudden kick of its legs it shot over towards us for a closer look.

I grabbed the Pilot and pointed him at the creature. By this time it was easily keeping pace with the boat and was now about an arm's length from us. From thinking it was big at the distant view it now seemed to fill the doorway. It moved in such an elegant and natural way and I slowly pushed out my arm into the slipstream and patted it on the head. It did not seem to mind at all. For about five minutes I completely forgot about the job. Both myself and the Pilot were fixed on our traveling companion.

With this distraction it was probably more by luck than planning that the target suddenly appeared on the seabed in front of us and for a couple of minutes we settled the boat down onto the seabed and parked next to the propeller. I was extremely disappointed to lose sight of our erstwhile buddy whilst concentrating on the positioning of our craft. I then started concentrating on the job in hand. The propeller had already after only a few days began to sink into the seabed. I cleared all around it to fully expose the blade and once again jumped back as a pair of eyes suddenly hove into view beneath the blade. The octopus had probably found it before us and had already burrowed out a large hollow beneath it. I now realised that there was also a couple of handfuls of shells and other fragments at the entrance to the burrow which meant he had probably found it as soon as we had dropped it in. The propeller had only been dropped in two days prior to the dive.

As pleased as I was to see our eight legged friends again I now realised with horror that he had chosen the target as a lair and we were in the proceeds of preparing it for a demolition. Military principles and training objectives aside there was no way I wanted to be responsible for destroying this magnificent beast.



#### **What was I to do, what a dilemma!**

This was definitely not part of the plan, I spent the rest of that particular dive trying to shoo the beast away from its newly acquired home. It was far too quick for me in my cumbersome dive gear and treated the whole episode as a game until every time I turned away from it I felt it rush past me back under the blade. I swear if I had a tennis ball it would have swam after it and returned it!

I had two more dives on the following days which we would place and then blow on the final Friday to come up with a plan within the plan to save my new pal! Before we left for the return trip back around to the South Mole I shooed the creature away and tried to fill in the cavity under the blade in the hope that it would move.

On the following day we went straight to the target as we now had it fixed into the navigation system. About fifty meters from the actual position there he was (I had decided it was he) as if he had actually been waiting for our return. Not only had he re dug his lair he had made it even bigger and now the pile of shells and fragments from his meals had grown even larger.

I can honestly say that the two final dive days were two of the worst days of my career with the thought going through my head that we were going to kill this magnificent Octopus when we blew the target. I also wondered what my boss would say when I told him I had cancelled the blow! It was with a heavy heart that I carried out the final check on the charges and said goodbye to the Octopus which had been a constant companion to all the divers who had dived on the target to that point.

As the area was cleared and the demolition blew the 45 minute soak time prior to my inspection of the blow seemed like the longest 45 minutes of my life. As I entered the water and made my way down the marker line I was dreading what I would find at the target site. The explosion which had been considerable had murkier the surrounding water but the sand soon settled back and the visibility improved quickly. As I reached the area and started to see the glow of the propeller blades I could have shouted for joy as there sitting on the top of the target was my old pal the Octopus.

He had even made use of the explosion and had half a dozen small fish, which had been stunned by the blow hanging out of his mouth.

I was ecstatic, I was also rather impressed that the beast did not seem to have suffered any ill effect from what was a considerable underwater detonation.

As far as I am concerned, Octopuses rocketed up my Creatures to be impressed by list after this episode.



## 23 Para Engr Regt - Update

### Capt Charles Collins - 23 ENGR-RHQ-IO

2020 has been a year unlike any other and inevitably, coronavirus has had a significant impact on life at 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment. The national lockdown put a lot of our planned activity on hold during the spring / summer months, but with no immediate end to the pandemic in sight, we have adapted the way we do business and will be working hard to make up for lost time in the run-up to Christmas.



The year began in a relatively orthodox fashion with Live Fire Tactical Training in chilly conditions on Warcop Ranges, that saw soldiers from across the Regiment master the basics in preparation for the readiness commitments and deployments that lay ahead.



Meanwhile, the Nordic Skiing team put in some hard yards during the Divisional

Championships in Serre Chevalier, placing an impressive 11<sup>th</sup> out of 37 teams. Spr Podmore (51 Sqn) led the charge for the Regt's Alpine team, claiming the Junior Gold for the Individual Giant Slalom event.

To cap a successful sporting month, the Airborne Sappers Cross Country team were runners up in the Army Inter Unit Championships, losing narrowly to RMA Sandhurst.

Throughout the six-week period from late January to March, 51 Parachute Engineer Squadron were in Kenya taking part in Ex ASKARI STORM as part of the 3 PARA Battlegroup, in preparation for taking on readiness commitments in the Spring. The early phases of the deployment were devoted to the construction of a tactical landing zone, capable of accommodating C-130J follow-on air-land (FAL), post parachute insertion at the beginning of the exercise. The remainder of the exercise was based around a non-combatant evacuation operation scenario, but there was also ample opportunity for fieldcraft lessons, adventurous training and wildlife spotting throughout! The



deployment concluded with a hugely rewarding community engagement task that saw Support Troop install new goal posts and a climbing frame at a local school in Nanyuki.



Elsewhere and much closer to home, February saw 9 Parachute Squadron conducting Section-led battle craft syllabus and combat engineer training, that included the construction of 4-man battle trenches, minefield breaching and the refinement of section battle drills. Concurrently, two members of the Regt's newly formed Ice Sports Team were selected to represent the Army at the Inter-Service Championships, where Spr Hoad (9 Sqn) stood out as the fastest of the Army's men in the Skeleton event. At the end of the month, several members of the Regt embarked on a battlefield study of Northern Europe, during which they studied the manoeuvre tactics of the German Fallschirmjager in May 1940.

In March, 9 Squadron travelled down to Weymouth to sharpen their combat engineering skills on Ex PEGASUS BUILD,

where they conducted survivability training, vehicle denial drills and practiced bridging by day and night. Elsewhere, 12 Para HQ & Sp Sqn led a navigation package in the Black Mountains, where they got full training value amidst the blizzard conditions on Pen y Fan! Further north, 9 Sqn were also battling the elements at the annual Spean Bridge Commando Speed March, where they achieved a commendable third place and enjoyed what was to be one of the final opportunities for socialising before lockdown. Following the Prime Minister's announcement, the decision was made that in line with the rest of the Army, the Regiment (less essential duties) would work from home, in order to reduce numbers on camp and protect our very high readiness elements from becoming infected.



What followed was a period of re-adjustment, during which opportunities for personal development via online training and courses were maximised, as we adjusted to the 'new normal' imposed by COVID-19. Keen to assist in any way they could, several members of the Regt took it upon themselves to raise money for various charitable causes. Highlights included LCpl James (9 Sqn) raising just under £1000 on behalf of the NHS by running 9 miles a day for 9 days wearing a 22 lb vest and 5 members of 51 Sqn tabbing 52.4 miles carrying 16kg in under 23 hours, raising £2,216 on behalf of Find Ipswich. Having had to cancel our planned VE Day 75 commemorations, the Regt improvised, negotiating the use of Imperial War Museums archive footage to produce a video tribute fronted by Padre Ian Kemp.

Whilst the majority of the Regt's activity was curtailed by COVID restrictions, our commitment to Operational outputs continued, with a Troop (comprised of elements from across the Regt) returning from Op TORAL in April. During their deployment, they were tasked with providing Advisor Force Protection to high-ranking NATO advisors alongside B Coy 2 PARA, where they set an excellent example throughout. In particular, Cpl Bullock, A/Sgt Wood and Lt Irving (all 51 Sqn) were singled out for praise, receiving Comd Kabul Security Force Commendations in recognition for their outstanding efforts throughout the tour.

As infection rates began to fall across the country, the Regt slowly began to return to work (initially with staggered manning) with 51 Sqn conducting pre-deployment training prior to Ex PINESTICK, where they would use their trade skills to upgrade critical infrastructure in Cyprus. Back in Woodbridge, a 12 Sqn-led exercise once again attracted storm conditions, despite it being late June!

July saw 9 Sqn Support Troop conduct a construction task of their own, upgrading concrete pads and hard standing on a military training area, whilst 51 Sqn's Sgt Aschettino led a survival package on Thetford training area. The highlight of the latter was the 48hr escape and evasion exercise during which the Commanding Officer was among those whose elusiveness was tested by Recce Troop! Further combat engineer training for soldiers from across the Regt took place during Ex EAGLE BUILD, which included airfield damage repair on the Rock Barracks runway and bridging serials on the newly upgraded Regt's training area.



At the end of the month, the Regiment bade farewell to outgoing 16X Commander (and former CO), Brigadier John Clark CBE, during his final visit to the Regiment. Having commanded at every level within 16X it truly was the end of an era.

Post Summer leave, the Regt got off to a fast start as the 16X Lead Assault Force were activated ahead of a short-notice deployment to Ukraine on Ex JOINT ENDEAVOUR. 250 troops parachuted into Southern Ukraine, where they linked up with the 80<sup>th</sup> Separate Air Assault Brigade and shared tactics, techniques and procedures during a short field training exercise. The deployment culminated in a combined- arms wide wet gap crossing over the River DNIEPER, overseen by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.







October saw sections from across the Regt compete for the Hopwood Trophy during Section Competitions, which was claimed by 2 Troop, 9 Sqn this year. The majority of the Regt will now deploy on a 3 (UK) Division Command and Staff Training Exercise and Ex WESSEX STORM, the validation serial for 2 PARA battlegroup ahead of their resumption of Air Assault Task Force Responsibilities next year.

Throughout the year there has been a steady drumbeat of success - aside from a COVID related hiatus during the summer months - on P-Coy and the Basic Parachute Course.

A significant contributing factor in this has been the creation of a new Airborne Fundamentals Cadre, designed to provide new arrivals with a bespoke training package to introduce them to life as an Airborne Soldier. The benefits are already starting to become apparent, with 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment accounting for a sizeable contingent of the successful candidates on the most recent P-Company.

It has been a strange year and we look forward to returning to some semblance of normality in 2021 as 9 Sqn embark on the next iteration of Ex PINESTICK in Cyprus and the majority of the Regiment deploy on Ex JOINT WARRIOR, a multi-national NATO exercise that will take place in the Spring.



## 131 Independent Parachute Squadron RE (V)

### EXERCISE "SACRISTAN"

For 131 Sqn this Exercise was the culmination of a long period of preparation and training which started in July 1972 soon after news was received that we were to fulfil the training commitment in the Gulf. Four weeks in the north-east corner of Arabia—in Sharjah, Fujaira and Ajman to be exact—was something very much out of the ordinary and too many employers' annoyance the turn-out from the Squadron was very high, and only a handful were unable to complete the full period.

Arabic circles were formed at each location, and by the time the linguists arrived in Sharjah they could converse quite fluently with any Arab who confined his vocabulary to the same 25 words!

The preparation and packing of the four FFR rovers and the 15,000 lbs of freight proceeded apace until at the last minute, to the QM's horror, the OC, prompted by Cpl Taylor, demanded that a piano be taken out for the Squadron "fuddle". Fortunately we were getting an additional freight allowance anyway and so it came about that an English upright piano, painted in pink and picked out with a delicate frieze of flowers, eventually found itself in the middle of the desert.

The journey out was fairly uneventful except possibly for the 2 i/c, Capt Tom Gillett, who succeeded in spraining a knee before the aircraft left the ground, and we arrived in Sharjah to find that the advance party had already done sterling work drawing and moving kit to the three locations in the motley collection of eleven decrepit 4-tonners.

The second Britannia arrived at midnight and, by 10 am, 90 per cent of the Squadron was on its way toward the Djebel, compressing the prescribed acclimatisation into a few hours in the back of a 4-tonner before the hard work of setting up camps. In fact the weather was excellent and more like the best of an English summer.

To start off, 300 Tp under Capt Alan Parker went to Wadi Shawkah to train in desert and mountain patrolling. Here a marquee was set up as stores/non-tac base, presided over by the PSI, S/Sgt Phil Dunkley, who alone had the luxury of a safari bed while everyone else was out in the sangars. All troops enjoyed their stay here even if some of the night moves over the djebel did produce their quota of bent ankles.





299 and Support Tps under Capt Derek White and Lt Phil Brown, respectively, went to start the main task at Ras Diba where we had taken on the job of developing the East Coast road to Oman through a rock outcrop. Here again the work was very hard, and during the daylight hours the drill only stopped when the charges were blown. Everyone learned the techniques of drilling through broken rock the hard way, including the DAA QMG, Maj David Canterbury, who visited us and was immediately put to work.

**Pete Brown (drilling) assisted by Ian Hendry**

HQ Tp, under Lt Adrian Lloyd, and 301 Tp, under Capt David Leventhorpe, set up the Sqn HQ at Manama where the Field Tp trained on the ranges and SHQ went about its business of keeping the Squadron going. With the assistance of Sgt Akers and two from 44 Para Bde Sigs

Tp the radio links were made to work, even though the Manama area is notorious as a difficult radio area. Nevertheless, efforts were rewarded when one evening contact was made with Capt Gordon Giles at the Bde HQ in London.

After a week the troops changed locations and then, a fortnight after the start of camp, the Squadron concentrated on Sharjah for parachuting and Exercise "Sand Fly". The exercise started from a night descent on the Juweiza DZ, whence the Squadron moved off over the desert on patrol. All covered a fair distance on this exercise but few as far as S/Sgt John Tharby who, with a small band of heroes, tried the scenic route between check point and RV. Dawn found them near a Bedu Tawi where a brief conversation implied they were five miles from Manama; 25 miles across the desert



made them realise that it is hours by camel and not miles that is the measure of distance.

At the end of the exercise the Squadron RV was the scene of the desert party "fuddle". The QM arrived with an enormous curry and 1,800 cans of beer, while the piano arrived as an underslung helicopter load. The morning revealed the desert littered with untidy heaps and the piano on the top of a 75-foot high dune, but within an hour everyone was on board the transport and moving to new locations.

**Demonstrating that a 4-tonner can now get over the pass.**

The final fling was against a platoon of the Union Defence Force (UDF) clearing a pass through the djabel on another exercise. By this time the Squadron was fairly well hardened but most found the picketing

of the hills very hard work indeed. As night fell on the first day we halted at a junction in the Wadi while both sides stopped to lick their wounds. Not, however, for long; as the moon rose so did the Squadron, moving up a side Wadi and by-passing the UDF. Unfortunately this left the UDF platoon to vent its wrath on the water resupply train—2/Lt Roy James, one Arab, two donkeys and four jerricans of water—with the result that the water arrived only at the end of the exercise.

After a strategic truce to let the UDF through our lines, we pressed on through the gravel plain into the desert toward the Quarn Quadayrah feature for the final assault. At the breakfast halt in the Wadi bed however, water became an urgent requirement and a Sioux of the det 664 Para Avn Sqn, piloted by Lt David Marfleet, was tasked for a tactical resupply. The approach was so tactical that the rotor blades never appeared above the Wadi edge and the Sioux was heard but not seen until he rounded the bend in the Wadi, much to the relief of a very thirsty Squadron.

The problem of striking camp and handing in kit was much less than feared due largely to the organisation of the Q team of Capt Ray Ebsworth with RQMS Smith and SQMS Brennan, who made short work of the mass of tentage and kit. Our team of drivers from 562 Para Sqn RCT and Q Redknap REME were also glad to bid farewell to the 4-tonners which by both hook and crook had been kept rolling for the four weeks although few finished with the same radiator and springs with which they had started.

Fortunately everyone had an opportunity during the last few days to visit the souk in Sharjah or Dubai and as a result the Squadron is an airborne advert for a well-known brand of Japanese watches.

The last night was fairly eventful and it is said that some officers only just made it to the aircraft and are thankful that no extradition order seems to have followed them home! Certainly most people on the returning Britannia's flaked out soon after boarding and came to only just in time to sample the Keo sherry and wine in Cyprus. England seemed a very cold, overcrowded and uncharitable island to return to, but for everyone it was very much a camp to remember.

## Airborne Forces Riders

South Atlantic Medal Association 2020 Ride of Respect - 01-08 August 2020

### **Maj (Retd) Paul Moore (9 Para Sqn RE attached to 3 Para in 1982)**

Some of you reading this will recall that last year's ride was inspired by Jimmy O'Connell (3 Para) who had details of all the 3 Para graves from the impressive research he did when writing his fantastic account of the Battle for Mount Longdon 'Three Days in June'. Jim called me one day and asked if I lived anywhere near Lanchester in County Durham. I drive through that village almost every day and Jim told me that one of the 3 Para lads rests there - Stewart Laing - so I set off to find the grave. Since then I have made it my task to honour Stewart every year on 12 June on behalf of all 3 Para and attached arms, the same as I do in Edinburgh at the grave of my section commander in 9 Sqn and good friend - Scotty Wilson.

This revelation shocked me as I realised that if I did not know where one of my mates was buried, there must be others out there. There started the research into where all of the Falklands gravesites are located and following the success of the 2019 Ride of Respect where we visited all of the 3 Para gravesites, this year we planned to include all of the other Falklands war graves and memorials in the UK as far as possible. Right from the start we knew this ride was going to be much harder than last year. Planning the ride took over 8 months and included a route planning distance of around 2400 miles, over 40 graves to visit and a dozen or so Falklands memorials, not to mention arranging accommodation, ferries, fuel, and fundraising - all complicated by a little thing called Covid19.

We found that the minimum time we could fit the ride in was over 8 days. Originally it was planned for early July but due to the situation we postponed the ride until early August. As it happens this was a good decision but in conducting the ride, we found that it was not all plain sailing. The full program and sheer tempo of the ride meant that we got very tired and there were mistakes made along the way, but we also learned a few things and met some wonderful people. In order to keep costs down we asked for help from our wider Airborne and Corps family and the offers of beds, meals, brews and beers were outstanding. Our program did not allow us to visit all but to those who did offer assistance we are very grateful.

This year the team consisted of Charlie McColgan (9 Sqn), Tony McKie (1 Para), Phil Damant (RAF) and myself, and later Iain Omerod (264 SAS Sig Sqn). So is this just about the gravesites? Most certainly not. Our ride is conducted for the following reasons:

Remembrance - to demonstrate that the fallen are not forgotten.

Respect - for their families, the pain of their loss of a son, husband, or brother continues. Awareness - to let people know where our fallen lie so that they may give due respect. Support - by fundraising for SAMA82 whose support gives comfort to veterans and families.

To give you some idea of the itinerary and diary:

### Day 1 - Sat 01 Aug 20



0700 Hrs - Depart

0745 Hrs - Whitley Bay, Hesleyside Road, NE25 9HB - Memorial, - Captain Chris Dent 2 Para

1100 Hrs - Mortonhall Cemetery, Edinburgh, EH16 6TX - DSgt Daniel Wright 2 Scots Gds

1245 Hrs - Kennoway Cemetery, KY8 5LN - Captain David Wood, 2 Para 1500 Hrs - Western Cemetery, Arbroath, DD11 3RA - Cpl Peter Fitton 45 Cdo, Cpl Ian Spencer 45 Cdo, Cpl Laurence Watts 42 Cdo, Mne Paul Callan 45 Cdo.

1545 Hrs - Visit Falklands Memorial Garden, 45 Commando, RM Condor. DD113SP

1700 Hrs - Laurencekirk Cemetery, AB30 1HF - LSgt Clark Mitchell 2 Scots Gds

1915 Hrs - Macduff Myrus Cemetery, AB44 1 PQ - Cpl Peter McKay 45 Cdo. Day total - 399 miles

Overnight - Kinloss Barracks, IV36 3UH

Diary Notes: What an epic day! We were met by around 20 bikers at Whitley Bay from the Widows Sons and Eights and Aces plus others who escorted us all the way to Edinburgh. There we were met by Invictus MC who also escorted us all the way to Arbroath in a very professional manner. This helped us to stay on time. We were blown away by the support of bikers, veterans and the public who turned up at cemeteries along the way. It was lovely to meet Shenia the wife of DSgt Danny Wight in Edinburgh. We could barely get our bikes into Kennoway Cemetery and then had trouble getting out again due to the number of supporters there. The support shown has been fantastic, not just by bikers but many members of the public too. Mick Walker of Airborne Engineers Scotland was there to support us and good to see Mick looking so well.

The visit to 45 Cdo Memorial Garden in Arbroath was a detail we only added in at late notice thanks to Fiona - Jenny Wren - of the Royal Naval Association Riders - but well worthwhile as it is a memorial to all 45 Cdo personnel lost on operations since the 1970's, including the Falklands. The RN Riders escorted us the rest of the way to Kinloss. At Laurencekirk we were honoured to meet Theresa the wife of LSgt Clark Mitchell. She made a very moving speech telling us about Clark, and how he was taken so young shortly after their marriage, but how our ride has given her pride and lifted her spirits. This helps us to know we are doing the right thing. After a brief visit to Macduff to pay respects to Peter McKay 45 Cdo, we made our way to 39 Engineer Regiment for an overnigher in Kinloss Barracks and a well-earned beer! Many thanks to Lt Col (QM) Gus Thompson RE and Cpl 'Griff' Griffiths for your hospitality. Very much appreciated.

## Day 2 - Sun 02 Aug 20



0700 Hrs - Depart

0900 Hrs - Spean Bridge Commando Memorial, PH34 4EE

1130 Hrs - Penny Fuir Cemetery, Oban, P34 4QA - Mne Gordon MacPherson 45 Cdo

1400 Hrs - North Dalnotter Cemetery, G81 4SL - Sgt John Simeon 2 Scots Gds

1500 Hrs - Cardonald Cemetery, G52 1SB - Gdsm Archibald Stirling 2 Scots Gds

1600 Hrs - Sandymount Cemetery, G32 0HW - Gdsm Derek Denholm 2 Scots Gds

1700 Hrs - West Cemetery, Hamilton, ML3 9BY - Cpl David Hardman 2 Para

1845 Hrs - Knadgerhill Cemetery, Irvine, KA12 0YE - Gdsm James Reynolds & Gdsm David Malcolmson 2 Scots Gds

Day total - 295 miles

Overnight - Premier Inn, Prestwick, KA9 2RJ

Diary Notes: This day was just a blur. It started with a stunning early morning ride down the north shore of Loch Ness to Spean Bridge Commando Memorial. There was no way on this earth would we ever ride past this and miss out honouring our Royal Marine and Commando Brothers. Departing at 0700 hrs meant there was very little traffic on the road and the ride down the loch was just breath taking. The Royal Marines Association did us proud by providing a Standard Bearer and Charlie laid a wreath in honour of those brave men. Following this we headed down to Oban to pay our respects to another Royal, then on leaving Oban - travelling back on the same road we rode in on - disaster struck! Tony lost control of his bike on the wet road and struck the rear of a parked car, writing off his bike

and the car but luckily, with cat-like agility (or sheer paratrooper instinct) he went over the roof of the car and landed in the bushes at the side of the road! He had a few bruises and he bumbled like a shell-shocked budgie for a bit but thankfully otherwise fine. A lucky lad. Assuming this was game over for him in good paratrooper style we stripped Tony of any essential equipment, made sure he had food and water and carried on with our mission, leaving him to sort out recovery back to Durham. We had a very memorable service at Irvine where two Scots Guardsmen are buried together. The story here is that Gdsm Jim Reynolds was an orphan and there were no family to claim him therefore he was buried alongside his good pal Gdsm David Malcolmson. We also

met the brother of David Malcolmson who gave us a very significant bottle of whisky to auction for SAMA. We later found out that it may be worth over £5000. Safely parked up for the day we reflected on the day's events, what led to the accident and what we must do to ensure it doesn't happen again. We also called Tony to see how he was, (to take the mick) only to find that he intended to buy another bike the next day and will catch us up later yeah, right ya 1 Para loony!

## Day 3 - Mon 03 Aug 20

0700 Hrs- Depart

1030 Hrs - Cairnryan DG9 8RG - Larne BT40 1 AX

1615 Hrs - Blahs Cemetery, Lisburn, BT27 5RA - LCpl Tony Cork 2 Para

1715 Hrs - Palace Barracks Memorial Garden, BT18 9RA

1900 Hrs - Stena Line Ferry Terminal, Belfast, BT3 9JL Day Total - 111.5 miles Overnight - On ship

Diary Notes: A nice little early morning ride down to Cairnryan after a bit of breakfast. A luxury.





A pleasant two hours on the boat and we were met by my old mucker Moore Campbell and around 30 guys and gals from the NI branch of the RBL Riders. We had a bit of time for a little ride out along the beautiful North Antrim coast to Glenarm for a burger on the sea front and a nice ride down to Lisburn to pay our respects to Tony Cork of 2 Para. We were once again amazed at the number of people who turned out to meet us and join with us in paying respect. We were especially grateful to meet Tony's son and daughter. Riding with us was former Royal Marine Padre Andrew Rawding who assisted us by conducting a short and simple service of remembrance which everyone appreciated. We were then escorted up to Palace Barracks in Belfast to visit the Memorial Garden.

Albert Owens MBE (1 Para) gave us the guided tour completely from memory. It was fantastic. We also paid our respects to all those who lost their lives on Op Banner. While this slightly detracted from our Falklands theme, we felt it was appropriate due to our current location, all of us having served on Op Banner and the fact that Albert is so passionate that their sacrifice should never be forgotten. Padre Andy once again did his bit, his strong voice booming out in the relative silence of the Memorial Garden.

I don't mind admitting that this was an emotional service. We had all lost mates over there and elsewhere, and the thought that we had almost lost another just the day before was not far from our mind.

#### Day 4 - Tue 04 Aug 20

0830 Hrs - Depart

0900 Hrs - Kirkdale Cemetery, Aintree, L9 9EN - Gdsm Ronald Tanbini 2 Scots Gds

1100 Hrs - Stockport Cemetery, SK2 6LS - Pte Mark Fletcher MID 2 Para

1300 Hrs - Welsh Guards Memorial, Wrexham Town Hall, LL11 1ZA

1630 Hrs - SAS Memorial, St Martins Church, Ross Rd, Hereford. HR2 7RJ

1700 Hrs - Move to Ross on Wye HR9 5QQ - Tea Break with Jean Jenkins 1730-1830 Hrs-Tea Break

1900 Hrs Yew Tree Brake Cemetery, Cinderford, GL14 3HU - Spr Chris Jones 59 Cdo Sqn RE

2015 Hrs - BP Garage, Newport Rd, Chepstow, NP16 5YS - RV with Patriots MC

Day total - 242 miles

Overnight - Patriots MC South Wales, NP11 4PT

Diary Notes: As we got off the ferry in Liverpool it was raining but we had time for a quick trip to McDonalds to keep the fires burning. It was a pleasure to meet Danielle the daughter of Ronald Tanbini and his baby grandson at the cemetery where his grave had been carefully tidied up by two lads from the Scots Guards only a couple of days before our visit. On arrival in Wrexham we had quite a following, probably around 20 bikes. We found the Welsh Guards Memorial easy enough and met two ex-Welsh Guards guys there who had only found out about the visit the night before. We paid our respects to all those lost on the RFA Sir Galahad, including two of our own Andy MacIlvenny and Wayne Tarbard. However, soon we were on our way to Hereford where the SAS Association met us and Gordon Mather MM - former SAMA Chairman - gave a guided tour of the SAS Memorial plot and we were allowed into the church to view the stunning stained glass window dedicated to the SAS Regiment. At this point we were also joined by ex-264 SAS Sig Sqn rider Iain Ormerod in Hereford for the rest of the trip replacing Tony McKie.

Our next visit was to see the lovely Jean Jenkins. We had met Jean last year on the 3 Para ride, we kept in touch and she is a great follower of the Airborne Forces Riders. Sadly, Jean is not too well at the moment, but we had a nice hour nattering while she filled us with tea and sandwiches, and hugs all round because 'little bugs' were not going to stop Jean hugging her boys. It was already a long day by the time we met up with our old mucker Denzil Connick (3 Para) and The Patriots in Chepstow and we were certainly glad to get off the bikes into the Patriots Clubhouse for a well-earned beer and some much needed down time. The Patriots looked after us extremely well and before we knew it, from our sleeping bags we could hear Patriot Mitch rustling up a full cooked breakfast for us. Top bloke! We knew that Day 5 was going to be a long motorway day but we were looking forward to being met by some Royal Marine Riders who would escort us from Taunton down to Plymouth.

#### Day 5 - Wed 05 Aug 20

0900 Hrs - Depart

0930 Hrs Courtesy Call - SAMA82 Office, Pontypool, NP40LS

1330 Hrs Buckland Monochorum Cemetery, Yelverton, Devon, PL207NA - Cpl Jeremy Smith RM

1430 Hrs Weston Mill Cemetery, Plymouth, PL2 2EP - Cpl Mick Melia 59 Cdo Sqn RE

1530 Hrs - Drake Cemetery, Plymouth, PL7 1UQ - Sgt Roger Enefer RM

1830 Hrs - Cenotaph, Blandford Forum, DT11 9AZ - LC Adrian Wellstead RN

1930 Hrs - St Michaels Church, Hamworthy, Poole, BH15 4HR Sgt Nicholas Hunt RM SBS

Day total - 296 miles

Overnight - Nichols Family - Poole. BH12 5AD

Diary Notes: We made the obligatory courtesy call to the SAMA office in Pontypool mainly because the lovely Joanne Stephens spoils us rotten with brews, biscuits and sarnies, but also as we had to offload our very valuable whisky cargo and around £1400 in cash we had been given in donations so far. We certainly were getting nervous about carrying that lot! It was a long day on mostly motorway or fast A roads but we were well escorted by a group of Royal Marine Riders who we met at Taunton Services. These guys knew where they were going which saved us a load of time. It was raining lightly as we got to Plymouth but we knew it would get worse. And it did! It was great to see so many friends from 59 Cdo Sqn RE at Mick Melia's grave and especially Mick's wife Gill and partner Frank - also ex RM. By now it was lashing down, we were tired and soaking wet and traffic was heavy so the recipe was just right for another accident to happen so we opted to miss out one serial in order to have a 30 minute break for a brew before moving on. We felt bad about missing out visiting the memorial to LC Adrian Wellstead of HMS Sheffield, but it was always the case that if we were behind time or needed time for some reason then we might have to miss out a serial. Knowing that it was a memorial as opposed to a grave, we had to miss this one out but we also knew that Adrian would be remembered at the Royal Navy memorial in Portsmouth the following day.

After a short visit to Hamworthy to pay respect to Sgt Kiwi Hunt SBS we were relieved to arrive at Colonels Cottage and the Nichols family residence for our overnight stop. Johnny (ex 9 Para Sqn RE) and Denise laid on some excellent food, the rain had now stopped and we had a very pleasant evening yarning about old times and blowing the froth off a couple but then we had an arrival! Tony McKie - he of the earlier crashed bike fame - had ridden his replacement bike which he had bought the previous day down from Durham to Poole to rejoin us. Now we were five and we unanimously voted Tony McKie the Airborne Riders 'Man of the Match' for such a fine display of Airborne initiative and spirit!

#### Day 6 - Thu 06 Aug 20

0900 Hrs - Depart

1030 Hrs - Courtesy Call - Forgotten Veterans UK, PO4 9LD - Fort Cumberland

1140 Hrs - RM Museum Southsea PO4 9PX 'The Yomper'

1220 Hrs - Royal Navy Falklands Memorial, 18 Gun Battery, Old Portsmouth, PO1 2JE

1400 Hrs - Tidworth Military Cemetery, SP9 7JR - Maj Roger Nutbeem RAMC

1530 Hrs - St Peters Church, Frimley Green, GU16 7AQ - LCpl Simon Cockton AAC

1630 Hrs - Aldershot Military Cemetery, GU11 2DD

Lt Jim Barry RSigs

CSgt Gordon Findlay 2 Para

Cpl Steve Prior 2 Para

Cpl Paul Sullivan 2 Para

LCpl Gary Bingley MM 2 Para

LCpl Nigel Smith 2 Para

LCpl Badharparsad Limbu 1/7 Gurkha Rifles

Pte Steve Illingsworth DCM 2 Para

Pte Tommy Meehan 2 Para

and others from Airborne Forces.

Day total - 171.5 miles

Overnight - Premier Inn, Aldershot, GU11 1SQ

Diary Notes: There were a few sore heads this morning but the cracking bacon butties and a brew sorted us out for a cracking ride up to Portsmouth in busy traffic picking up riders on the way. As we entered Fort Cumberland there were already some Airborne Forces Riders there to meet us and we were given a fine welcome and photo shoot by the staff of Forgotten Veterans UK. We were met by my old mucker and former Sapper Gary Weaving who has been



instrumental in helping veterans in the Portsmouth area as well as further afield, and Gary gave us a briefing on how they support veterans from Fort Cumberland. Great work Gary and the team! Leaving the Fort we must have had around 35 bikes and to our surprise there were more waiting outside the fort and at the 'Yomper' to meet us. Here I made a slight navigation error which took us into a private estate dead end much to everyone's amusement but not the neighbours!

Love it or hate it 'The Yomper' is an iconic image from the Falklands war, and while in Portsmouth it would be remiss of us not to pay our respects there or to miss the opportunity for a photograph. SAMA Chairman Tom Herring also spoke about what we were doing and outlined plans for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Falklands war in 2022. We were guided around to 18 Gun Battery and the Royal Navy Falklands memorial by a local rider (I'm not daft enough to get lost twice in a row!) where I was concerned that not only were

we early but there were by now around 50 bikes to park up without causing any problems. We made our act of remembrance there, assisted by several standard bearers and veterans from all over the Portsmouth area. It was very moving especially as one lady spectator introduced herself to us as coming from the Falklands and after throwing a couple of names about we found we have several mutual friends in Stanley. By the time we got to Tidworth there must have been around 70 bikes in the convoy and I was starting to get a little worried about the size of the traffic tail however, all I had to worry about really was the five of us and being on time. It was hard to tell how many people were at Tidworth cemetery but it must have been around 150. We arrived at Aldershot military cemetery a little early which was just as well. We could not believe how many people were there to join us in our act of remembrance. On some previous occasions we have had buglers turn up to play, but in Aldershot we had Falklands veteran and our old friend John Ferry (9 Para Sqn) who played a lament after our act of remembrance. This was a nice touch and I think appreciated by the many people there. This was on one of the hottest days of the year and by the time all of this was over we were ready to get showered and a beer. A nice surprise awaited me at the hotel as my daughter and granddaughter had come over from Basingstoke to surprise me. We had a really nice evening in the Trafalgar in Aldershot courtesy of Richard Stacey (1 Para) and the Traff now has a nice new 2020 Ride of Respect plaque on its wall as a small show of respect and thanks from us.

Day 7 – Fri 07 Aug 20



0800 Hrs - Depart

0845 Hrs - Brookwood Military Cemetery, GU24 0JB - LCpl Christopher Thomas 1WG

1045 Hrs - Holy Trinity Church, Twydall, Chatham, ME8 6JU - Memorial - Cpl Andy McIlvenney

4 Tp 9 Para Sqn RE

1230 Hrs - All Saints Church Basildon, SS16 4PX - Pte Stephen Dixon 2 Para 1430 Hrs - Courtesy Call (1 Hr) - PRA HQ & Pegasus Magazine, Merville Barracks, Colchester, CO2 7UT

1730 Hrs - St Michaels Church, Oulton Broad, NR32 3JP - Pte Dave Parr 2 Para Day Total - 266 miles

Overnight - Bickel Family, Attleborough, NR172RL

Diary Notes: It was an early start from Aldershot much to the annoyance of the team (who all had headaches!) but we had an extra serial to go to at Brookwood cemetery near Pirbright, - that of LCpl Chris Thomas 1 Welsh Guards who was one of the last soldiers to be killed in the war. By now this being our seventh day on the road we were feeling a bit tired and mistakes were starting to be made .....and I'm not just talking about my

navigation! The route to Chatham was fairly straight forward but one missed GPS turning point and we ended up taking the back streets up the hill and through Gillingham to get to Twydall church and the memorial stone to Cpl Andy McIlvenney. We were met by my old mucker from 9 Sqn days Tim van der Kraan who had secured access to parking and the church itself, which was very much appreciated, as was the reception by many mates of mine and Charlie's from days gone by. Heading up the M20 towards the Dartford Tunnel, the traffic started to increase and Chris Rea was playing 'Road to Hell' on my iPod very apt. We had to filter through the traffic approaching the tunnel. Drivers were mostly kind to us and allowed us through - filtering is NOT illegal - and knowing that one of the bikes was limited in range - yes it was a Harley - we pulled into Thurrock services for fuel.

We quickly set off again and I got onto the motorway slip road when my bike (a GL1800 Goldwing) lost all power and blew out a great cloud of white smoke. For some bizarre reason I thought the clutch had gone but the evidence was there and a quick check of the fuel receipt confirmed it. I had put diesel into the bike by mistake! I was in disbelief that I could have done such a thing but such is tiredness and getting distracted at the pumps. No excuses. It happens. In true paratrooper style I was stripped of all my 'must-go' gear and off they went (making a 'hurry up' waving sign to me as they went!) to continue the mission, leaving me by the side of the road to try to get the bike sorted. It was hot - nearly 30C and the motorway slip road on the M25 is a dangerous place to breakdown, but luckily help came within about an hour and I was taken to Tilbury dock where the bike was de-fuelled, tested and refuelled all by around 1700 hrs.

I thought the M25 at teatime on a Friday was going to be a nightmare but it was not too bad as I made my way direct to Attleborough in Norfolk, our final RV for the day and the home of my good mate Dave Bickel RE and his lovely wife Gill. In the meanwhile, the remainder had been to show respect at graves in Basildon, Colchester, and Oulton Broad where they were met by the Norfolk Harley Owners group who escorted them all the way to Attleborough and their bike night at a bar called Route 11. That's where me and Dave found them. Sipping non-alcohol beers and enjoying the hospitality of the HOG guys. I quickly lost count of the number of 'Diesel' jokes that came my way ..... 'Would you like a diesel...err I mean a drink?'

A very enjoyable night followed at big Dave's place, accompanied by Dave's son Joe who is in 2 Para, and another mate Craig ex 3 Para. Dave produced an enormous BBQ, the beer and banter flowed, and many toasts were made. We even made a few from Charlie's desert boot. The Port went down well, but when the whisky started to flow it was game over for me and the events of the day caught up. It had been a long, hot day. Not one of my better ones, but at least we were all safe.





Day 8 - Sat 08 Aug 20

1000 Hrs - Depart

1330 Hrs - St Mary's Church, Marston on Dove, Derby, DE65 5GB - Spr Wayne Tarbard 4 Tp 9 Para Sqn RE

1430 Hrs - St Mary's Church Cemetery, Boulton Lane, Alveston, Derby, DE24 0GE - Mne Michael Nowak 45 Cdo

1630 Hrs - Eckington War Memorial, S21 4BH -

LCpl John Pashley 9 Para Sqn RE

1930 Hrs - All Saints Church, Hutton Rudby, TS15

OEY - Sir Rex Hunt CMG

Day total - 307 miles

ENDEX

**Ride total - 2267.5 miles**

Diary Notes: We could afford a bit of a late start on our last day which was good because we needed it! We had received a lot of messages from friends and strangers who wanted to ride with us on our last day, and one guy even rode from Leeds to Attleborough this morning just to join us for the final day! Good effort. He was rewarded with a mug of tea and one of Big Dave's sausage sarnies before we set off down the A14, picking up more and more riders as we went on our way to Marston on Dove in Derbyshire. We were met there by more bikers and the Derby and Leicester Branches of the Parachute Regiment Association who both kindly presented cheques to SAMA in recognition of our ride. We were also met by Wayne Tarbard's sister and niece who told us that it gave the family some comfort that by doing our ride they know Wayne and the others are not forgotten.

We were really pleased to be able to honour Mne Mike (Blue) Nowak as his grave had been very hard to trace. However, someone who knew Blue back in 82 had contacted us during the ride to correct the location we had published, this got us to the correct place and we were able to honour him too. That made my day. By the time we got to Eckington memorial the Standards of the PRA and REA were flying. This was the penultimate location on the ride and a memorial to our old mate John Pashley (9 Para Sqn RE) who was killed on Tumbledown. It was great that so many turned out to join us in remembering Pash, but especially good that a local landscaper had renovated the area around the memorial with proper paving free of charge the week before we arrived. Thank you whoever that was.

Very aware that we were now on the final leg, it was a busy Saturday evening on the roads and we were all tired we set off for Hutton Rudby in North Yorkshire and the grave of Sir Rex Hunt - The Governor of the Falklands in 1982 and our final act of remembrance on this ride. The church is situated in a dip in the village and on a bend in the road so we did not know how many people were there until we rounded the corner! The place was mobbed! It seemed like the whole of Teesside PRA had turned out en-masse and even brought the beer and the buffet too! Priorities first though and we paid our respects to Sir Rex in exactly the same way as we had with all of the other graves we visited. I read out the obituary published in the Guardian when he died and many people remarked afterwards that he was a truly remarkable man, an RAF Spitfire pilot at the end of WW2, Diplomat in the British Embassy at the fall of Saigon and a real no-nonsense character. A bit old school if you like but certainly the right man at the right time in the Falklands in 1982. A short time later we were all home, beer in hand and able to reflect on the week.

Was it worth it? Certainly. Even if just one relative gets some comfort by knowing that we don't forget their loved ones then it is worth it, but on this trip we were thanks many times by relatives for doing just that.

Did we achieve the aim? Certainly. We made over 50 separate acts of REMEMBRANCE and demonstrated our RESPECT to the fallen and their families. We brought about AWARENESS of where the graves and memorials are and we hope others will visit them in the future, and everyone contributed to SUPPORT the South Atlantic Medal Association by helping us to raise over £7400 - some 300% over our original target.

Will we do it again? Certainly. We are already planning next year's ride where we will put the rides of 2019 and 2020 together making one big ride, but we will be doing it over a period of two weeks. The dates of the 2021 SAMA Ride of Respect are: Sat 31 July to Sunday 15 August 2021.

Thank you all for your support.

Paul Moore, Charlie McColgan, Tony McKie, Phil Damant, Iain Omerod

## In Memory of Col 'Freddie' Kemp OBE



Colonel Freddie Kemp OBE Born 18 January 1954, died 18 September 2020, aged 66. Determined, fiercely protective and mischievous, there was never any doubt that Freddie was going to join the Army given a long family association with the Corps of Royal Engineers. Both his grandfather and great grandfather were Sappers, and his father had served with the 9th Parachute Battalion during and after World War 2 and later with the Royal Engineers. As a result, Freddie specifically wanted to be a Parachute Engineer and nothing else would suffice. He was educated at Brighton Hove and Sussex Grammar School, Welbeck College and RMA Sandhurst before being commissioned in 1973.

Early in his career he served three times in Northern Ireland, twice with 9 Parachute Squadron in South Armagh in the sapper role and once with 2 Armoured Engineer Squadron in Londonderry, deployed as infantry. During his second tour with 9 Squadron he was fortunate to cheat death

during a route reconnaissance in a covert car south of Bessbrook when a Granada car overtook him and was blown up by a huge culvert bomb almost immediately afterwards. During the follow up operation, it was discovered that the bomb was detonated by a command wire traced to a firing post with a well-planned escape route for the terrorists. However, the section of the route immediately before the culvert was invisible to the firing point. The bombers, who had been tipped off by a Provisional IRA lookout that the 'next car' was the target, therefore mistakenly detonated the bomb under the Granada that had just overtaken Freddie in the 'target car'.

In 1982, 9 Squadron deployed to the Falkland Islands as part of the UK Force to regain the islands after the Argentinian invasion. As the 2iC, Freddie played a key role in ensuring that the Squadron was thoroughly prepared for what lay ahead and an impromptu speech he gave on the eve of the Squadron landing ashore is still remembered by many with him at the time. In the immediate aftermath of the devastating Argentinian air attack at Bluff Cove on Sir Tristram and Sir Gallahad, he quickly set up the helicopter casualty evacuation sites at Fitzroy, helping to evacuate more than 200 wounded and badly burned soldiers, amongst whom were a number attached to the Squadron.



His next posting was to the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment. His role was to establish, recruit and train a Combat Engineer Squadron and he was awarded the Brunei Independence Medal by the Sultan for his efforts leading up to and during the Independence celebrations in 1984. Keen to instil a love for travel and broadening horizons in his young family, wife Kate with son Freddie and daughter Hannah, Freddie organised an extended trip back to the UK at the end of the posting. Despite the constraints of a shoestring budget, they were able to visit Australia, New Zealand, French Polynesia and the United States before Freddie had to report to Staff College.

He subsequently commanded 34 Field Squadron, supporting 19 Airborne Brigade. As the first Gulf War loomed, he was warned to stand by for a reconnaissance to the Middle East and asked his Sergeant Major to borrow a camel from a circus for the next Squadron Parade. After the Sergeant Major had called the Parade to attention the camel walked from left to right behind Freddie, clearly visible to the whole Squadron. Nothing was said but a heavy hint had been dropped regarding the next point of effort!

Freddie left the regular Army in 1991 to set up his own company. Meanwhile he had joined 10 PARA as a reservist and served in a variety of appointments that included company commander, Training Major of Cambridge University OTC and Commander 2 (Southeast) Brigade Specialist Team. He sold the company in 1995 after being recruited to work for an operator in the airport car parking business, where an aspect of his role was to find land and obtain planning permission. It was through this that he met his second wife, Jane.

Freddie was mobilized to join 16 Air Assault Brigade as Liaison Officer to the Special Forces in Afghanistan in 2001/02 and to 3 Commando Brigade during the second Gulf War in 2003. On leaving the airport parking business, together with their beloved spaniel Zara, he and Jane bought their home in France, a place that holds very happy memories for his family as well as being the place that cemented Freddie's keen fondness for Bordeaux claret. It was here that he perfected his homemade fig jam and persuaded all visitors to regularly partake in 'coffee and cognac'.

Perhaps the most challenging but rewarding time for Freddie during his long military service with both regular and reserve forces was his appointment at the Defence Inquest Unit to assist coroners coping with over 300 military inquests

going back to 2002. There he took charge of all Special Force inquests at the behest of Director Special Forces for 4 years from 2009 and was awarded the OBE in 2013 for his contribution. He approached each inquest with enormous compassion and respect for the personnel and the families involved. In 2013, Freddie was also promoted to Colonel and became Team Leader for implementing the Defence Youth Engagement Review, introducing a Cadet Forces Commission that recognises Cadet Force officers as Youth Workers rather than Reservists. He finally left the Army in 2018 having served longer with the Parachute Regiment than the Royal Engineers.

Freddie had an intimate connection with Arnhem: His first wife's father, Lieutenant Rod Pearson, had been deployed during Operation Market Garden in September 1944 with the 1<sup>st</sup> Airlanding Light Regiment RA and developed a lifelong friendship with Kate ter Horst and her family, who had nursed many of the wounded during the battle within her house in the old Rectory at Oosterbeek. Such was the importance of that friendship that he named his daughter Kate after this remarkable woman. Freddie and his family all maintained this strong relationship with her family and Freddie has subsequently parachuted into Arnhem on multiple occasions as well as leading many battlefield tours there.

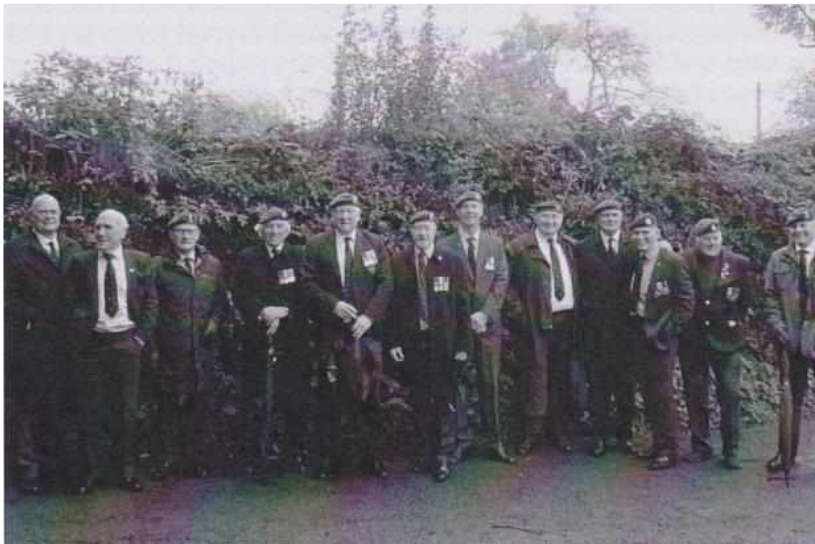
He is survived by his second wife Jane, his two children from his marriage to Kate, Freddie and Hannah, and two grandsons.

Freddie will have been well known to many of us. Commissioned into the Corps in 1973, he passed P Coy the following year. His long service with 9 Sqn included Op CORPORATE in 1982. He transferred to the Parachute Regiment in 1991, serving with 10 Para (V) and HQ 16 Bde. Freddie saw active service in Northern Ireland, The Falklands, Iraq and Afghanistan

### **A few of the many who came to bid Freddie a final farewell**







With a final fitting tribute from the RAF



## 9 Squadron in the 1950s and the emphasis on Airborne Initiative

Dave Edmonds



Thanks to Fred Gray and his excellent publication and the 9 Sqn 'Old and Bold' website, I have had a lot of memories revived over the last couple of years. A recent query by Dave Ruddock regarding initiative tests tempted me to respond about the one I was sent on in 1956. John Moorhouse suggested that this had the makings of a good article for the magazine, Andrea agreed with him and if the marriage has taught me anything it was to know how to avoid being nagged.

When I started to think it occurred to me that not many of us go back that far, I wish I was one of you! And as things have changed so much perhaps some might be interested in how life was during selection in the unit at that time.

I reported, along with about 14 others in the autumn of 1956 for unit selection. The first three weeks were taken up with doing every dirty job in Waterloo Barracks. We didn't appreciate that the assessment had already started and that we were being watched all the time. Eventually we were handed over to Rick Mogg for the physical torture.

The selection proper started with a lecture by an officer who told us proudly of the exploits of Airborne Sappers in the war. It was during this lecture that I first heard the expression "Airborne Initiative" and be told that we would be tested for it and if we failed could forget

ever getting into 9 Squadron. Despite what I remember as constant pain my main worry was always "The Initiative Test"

To put everything into perspective there are some things that I should explain. Firstly, we were only 11 years from the end of WW2. Everyone knew someone who had taken part. Secondly, these were the days of National Service, again everyone knew someone who was serving. Thirdly, almost every policeman you met had a row of medal ribbons. Because of this the forces were held in high regard and well understood. I had been in uniform for two years when I came to Aldershot, I lived in Yorkshire, served down south, so I knew all about hitch - hiking.

After being searched for money we were sent on our way for the test by Rick with the words "If you're not back by Monday morning don't bother because we don't want you," Rick had a master's degree in motivation! The feared day had arrived.

My test with Ginger Cooke was to go to Oban, get the top policeman's signature on police headed notepaper and get back to Aldershot in 5 days.

The hitch-hiking was easy, for the WW2 and National Service reasons and we were in Oban in about 38 hours, most lifts were done by cargo vehicles driven in many cases by people who had learned to drive in one of the forces during the war, occasionally by cars. Of course there were far fewer cars on the road and no Motorways. Cars were preferred as they were more comfortable and one of us could doze in the back.

I remember one car driver giving Ginger a ten shilling note (50p) to see us on our way, this again was not that unusual in those days.

We arrived in Oban in ample time to complete our task without attacking the ten bob. It was when we found the Police Station that the learning process began. The Desk Sergeant took us straight in to see the Superintendent. He spoke to us about his two world wars, a Scottish Infantry Soldier in WWI and an RMP in WW2. He then sent us down to the canteen where we were fed. Because he didn't want us on his roads at night we were given a room with beds and blankets and told we would be called early to be on our way.

We were called, given breakfast and a large pack of sandwiches together with the vital letter. The Desk Sergeant took us outside and put us in a police car. To our amazement we were taken a considerable way to where we transferred to another police car. This happened twice more until we reached . I assume the changes of car were due to the changes of police districts. I can't image that happening today under any circumstances. I think the only initiative shown up to this time was that shown by whoever arranged our fast journey south. We certainly hadn't been tested. The final police driver arranged a lift for us across the Clyde and through Glasgow. The rest of the trip was uneventful and we were back in the Aldershot District by Saturday afternoon. I think that this was when we did show some initiative, we worked out that if we got back to Waterloo Barracks for our evening meal we might meet Rick and if we did we would almost certainly be working on Sunday. We decided to use the donated ten shilling note to buy fish and chips in Farnborough and sneak into Aldershot after dark when we hoped Rick wouldn't find us. Our ruse worked and we had a quiet Sunday with lots of rest ready to start again on Monday. I know that others failed to complete their test but ours was easy, I think this is the first time I've admitted that but they can't fail me now!

To our amazement a completely changed Rick Mogg told three of us that we had passed unit selection and would be going to Maida Barracks that afternoon for the next phase.

He told us that he had tried to make us harder than we needed to be to pass the final selection and the three of us, Dave Blake and Ginger Cooke being the other two would find the course easier if we carried on helping each other as he had

taught us. We did as he suggested, which I think was noticed because Maida gave Dave Blake and I the job of beating hell out of each other in the Milling. I won of course, but they only credited us with a draw.

I think the worse part of Maida was standing at the end of the course waiting for your number to be called and to be told pass or fail. We all passed and continued our close ties throughout Abingdon where we even managed to do our first balloon jump from the same cage.

I know that all of us owed a lot to Rick although we didn't appreciate it at the time, fortunately I served with him for many years afterwards so he did get the odd beer.

Returning to the Squadron from Abingdon and the way that we were greeted on our return by the SSM Reg Orton and 2i/c Captain Peter Wade convinced me that I had come to the right place and three months later I signed up for nine years. Being a bit slow, I never did find out how to leave and finished up in uniform for another forty two years. I may put the follow up to this on paper if only to keep the mind active. I seem to remember 1956 as if it were yesterday but please don't embarrass me by asking what I did yesterday!

## Finding the Forgotten 4<sup>th</sup>

### Gus Hales

It came to light during a little research into Arnhem that over in Rutland, there was a memorial plaque to the 4th Parachute Squadron RE, in the parish church at Glaston. After a bit more research, we found that pre-Arnhem, the 4th Parachute Squadron who were formed in 1943, to provide Engineer support for the 4th Parachute Brigade, were based in the area.



I decided to phone the vicar to find out further information. Members of the fourth would meet yearly at Glaston church for their annual remembrance parade. Due to age and detreating health the last service was held in 2008. Although they are still remembered by members of the congregation, alas none of the veterans are able to attend.

As an endurance cyclist I normally once a year, do a long distance ride over several days, from Sheringham in Norfolk over to West Wales.

I realised that I had passed this village many times, not knowing a thing about the 4th. We arranged a visit with the vicar and my former troop Sgt Pat Neal. We both attended the church in Rutland, the place where the 4th Para Sqn Royal Engineers said their prayers before leaving for Arnhem.

The 4th were decimated and were only in existence for two years, being disbanded after the battle. The vicar met us there and had printed a service sheet. She recorded the last post and God Save the Queen. It was a great gesture and the vicar was very pleased that we had attended a few days before Remembrance Sunday and the day before lockdown. We thanked the vicar for opening up for us and taking the trouble, so these men are not forgotten.



We laid the wreath and read out the names of the fallen, then Pat and I sat outside for a couple of hours, on the 4th's dedicated bench. In the nippy but glorious sunshine. Talking of old times and contemplating the events of September 1944.



The Memorial Bench in position in 2005

# MINUTES OF AN AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**HELD BY ZOOM' ON SATURDAY 17th OCTOBER 2020**

1. Opening
  - 1.1. Opening address: The Chairman welcomed all those attending and opened the meeting at 1008 hours.
  - 1.2. Members Present: There were 13 members present
  - 1.3. Apologies: Apologies were received after the meeting from John Brennan
  - 1.4. Exhortation for Absent Friends: The Chairman called for a minute's silence to 'pay our respects to our fallen comrades, be they serving members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces or Association Members' - The Chairman also gave The Exhortation:

“We will remember them!”

2. Minutes of the previous AGM and OGM
  - 2.1. The minutes of the OGM held by 'Zoom' on Sunday 24th May 2020 and the previous AGM held on Sat 5th October 2019 at the Whately Hall Hotel Banbury have been circulated to the Branches by the National Secretary.
  - 2.3. There being no comments from the floor the Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder that the minutes as recorded be accepted.

Proposer: Adam Frame Seconder: Mick Wallace - The minutes as read were accepted.

3. Treasurers Report
  - 3.1. The Treasurer, Lt Col (Retd) Dick Brown, gave an update on the current national financial position advising all present that these were subject to audit.
  - 3.2. A copy of the accounts was made available for all those attending, these are appended to the minutes and will also be added to the AEA website.
  - 3.3. The Chairman requested a proposer and seconder that the Treasurers Report, subject to annual audit, is accepted as presented.

Proposer: Gil Nichol Seconder: Billy Morris - Carried.

4. Association Shop Report
    - 4.1. The report was presented by Dave Rutter presented the report on behalf of the Shop Manager, Jeanette Rutter.
    - 4.2. The Chairmen reminded those present that the shop is a trading account and forms part of the treasurer's report, and that the vote is to reflect how the shop is stocked, maintained, and run.
    - 4.3. Turnover in the shop has been much reduced due to the current situation with Covid and the fact that branches are not meeting.
    - 4.4. The Chairman said he would advertise the shop on all the Airborne Engineer Facebook pages stating that it was still open for business.
    - 4.5. A request was made for a proposer and seconder that the shop report as read be accepted.
- Proposer: Dave Pace Seconder: Gil Nichol - Carried
- 4.6. The Chairman gave thanks to Jeanette and Dave.

5. Journal - Editor's Report
  - 5.1. The report was presented by Dave Rutter who stated that the last 'Hardcopy' issue of the Journal would be the Dec 2021 issue and not the June 2021 as previously stated. The cost of the Dec 2021 issue would be found out of the existing funds with the AEA main account making up any shortfall.
  - 5.2. It was agreed that the REA be allowed to take up advertising space on the rear cover of the journal now that Ian Rosenvinge had sold Peterlee Parachuting centre.
  - 5.3. There were no comments from the floor.
  - 5.4. The Chairman thanked Dave on behalf of the association.

6. Membership Report
  - 6.1. The report was presented by Mr Steve 'Billy' Morris who stated that there had been 4 new members since the last report. Total membership of the association now stands at 1130. Billy reiterated the need for the membership database to be kept up to date.
  - 6.2. There were no comments from the floor.
  - 6.3. The Chairman thanked Billy on behalf of the association.

7. Welfare Liaison Officer's Report
  - 7.1. The Chairman stated that there had been no correspondence from IZZY Leather and that he was not aware of any cases requiring welfare support from the association.
  - 7.2. There were no comments from the floor
  - 7.3. The Chairman thanked Izzy for her continued support.



8. Archivists/Historian Report
- 8.1. The Archivist report was presented by Mr Nick Gibson.
- 8.2. Access to the museum continues to be modified in accordance with the ever-changing government guidelines, currently there are no events or guided tours permitted and the usual 40's Christmas event is uncertain. The archive building is currently being refurbished and has been emptied to a deep storage facility in Cheshire where it is inaccessible. It's anticipated that it will be recovered in the early spring when it will once again be accessible.  
The AEA archives have been partially documented by the museum staff but in a cursory manner and will benefit from more detailed annotation in the future.  
A copy of the current state will be shortly available in Excel format.  
Downstream it is intended that selected areas of the archives will be open to the membership to encourage contribution possibly via the association website, we can examine this possibility in the future.
- 8.3. Ownership of the archives was discussed, and it was suggested that ownership now rests with the RE museum. This will be confirmed before the next OGM.
- 8.4. The Chairman thanked Mr Gibson on behalf of the association.
9. AEA Sports Club Report
- 9.1. The report was presented by Mr Steve 'Billy' Morris.
- 9.2. There has been little activity however mention was made of 'Nat' Hague, who is organising walks around the South Downs for association members, and Phil 'Taff' Adams who has now taken part in over 300 marathons.
- 9.3. There were no comments from the floor.
- 9.4. The Chairman thanked Billy for his report.
10. Branch Reports
- 10.1. Aldershot Branch
- 10.1.1 The Aldershot Branch report was presented by Dave Rutter.
- 10.1.2 There have been no meetings due to the current situation with Covid-19. Potters, where the Branch meets, is closed. Members of the Branch keep in touch informally.
- 10.2. Birmingham Branch
- 10.2.1 A written report was received from the Birmingham Branch Chairman Neville Collins.
- 10.2.2 Prior to the Covid lock down the Birmingham Branch members were organising social events such as Rambling outings, Dinner clubs, Breakfast Clubs, Annual Dinners and coach trips, Welfare was well looked after, various members were also involved in welfare work with other bodies, all this with the wonderful support from our ladies and at various functions throughout the year and I have thanked all those involved for their time and efforts.
- 10.2.3 Several meetings have taken place during the Covid period following strict rules as laid down, with social distancing, sanitising stations throughout the venue and table service for refreshments. Due to the local restrictions the start time of the meetings was brought forward so that members could be clear of the building by 22:00 hrs.
- 10.3. Chatham Branch
- 10.3.1 The Chatham Branch Report was presented by Baz Bassett.
- 10.3.2 No regular meetings have taken place during the Covid period. Members do get together informally and there was a good turnout for the 'Ride of Respect'
- 10.3.3 The Branch had looked at holding a Christmas function at the King Charles Hotel, but this was found to be impractical.
- 10.4. Yorkshire Branch
- 10.4.1 The Yorkshire Branch Report was presented by Adam Frame.
- 10.4.2 The Funeral for the Branch President Mike Pallott will be held on Friday 30th October at the Crematorium in Harrogate. The event is being organised by the REA who have requested standards be paraded. Social Distancing measures will be in place.
- 10.4.3 The Branch is also looking to appoint a new Welfare officer to replace Pete Stevens who has given up the post due to ill health.
- 10.4.4 Next year's AGM in Harrogate will be 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> October. All details remaining the same as was planned for this year.
- 10.5. Scotland Branch
- 10.5.1 The Scotland Branch Report was presented by GIL Nichol.
- 10.5.2 Since "Lockdown" we have all been keeping in contact with each other and happily none of our members, including wives/partners have been affected by the Corona virus. Long may that continue.
- 10.5.3 In June we had a new member join our branch, He is Robert Stewart and served with 9 Sqn 2005—2008. We welcome him to our branch and look forward to meeting up with him soon
- 10.5.4 On 12th June 2020 one of our branch members, Mick Walker, visited the Edinburgh Eastern Cemetery and attended the grave of Scott Wilson. Mick paid his respects on behalf of AEA Scotland and left immediately after.
- 10.5.5 We managed to hold a reduced format for our Cromwell Lock Memorial Service held at Zetland Park, Coatbridge on Sunday 20th September 2020. This meant that some members attended the memorial and paid our respects on behalf of AEA Scotland. Some individual members turned up and paid their respects keeping within the Scottish Government Official guidelines for outdoor gatherings. We were joined by representative from Falkirk Sappers, The Royal British Legion (Grangemouth) , Airborne Forces Association (Scotland) After our service we retired to The RBL Grangemouth Hall for refreshments.

- 10.5.6 Unfortunately, due to the corona virus situation, the Cromwell Lock Memorial Service at Newark was cancelled.
- 10.6. Wales and West Branch
- 10.6.1 The National Chairman reported that he had been in contact with the Wales and West Branch Chairman, Gus Hales. The Branch has cancelled all meetings and has no events planned due to the Current Covid Restrictions.
- 10.7. 299 Branch
- 10.7.1 No report was received from the 299 Branch.
- 11. Election of Officers
- 11.1. The Chairman notified the members present that the President has kindly opted to remain in post for another year.
- 11.2. The Treasurer informed the meeting that he would remain in post for a further six months.
- 11.3. The position of National Secretary is still vacant. The Chairman asked those present to canvas their members to see if anyone was willing to take on the role. If a volunteer is not forthcoming.
- 11.4. Propositions
- 11.5. That the association vote over the sum of £260 to assist with the restoration of the Headstone of Cpl 'Scotty' Wilson who was killed in action during the battle for Mount Longdon during the Falklands Conflict. (Note a donation of £250 has been received from the REA Airborne Branch)  
Proposed by: Dave Rutter Seconded by: Gil Nichol - Carried.
- 11.6. That the association formally recognise AEA members Paul Moore and Charlie McColgan for their recent 'Ride of Respect' to visit the Memorials and Graves of all those killed in the Falklands conflict, and that the association donate the sum of £500 to the 'Airborne Riders'  
Proposed by: Dave Rutter Seconded by: Dick Brown - Carried
- 11.7. Remembrance Events and Services
- 11.8. The Falklands War 1982
- 11.8.1 The Falkland's memorial service at Pangbourne was cancelled however the AEA donated £1000 for the procurement of a memorial seat for LCpl John Pashley who was KIA during the battle for Mt Tumbledown.
- 11.8.2 A wreath laying service, organised by Col Chris Davies, was held at Aldershot Military Cemetery on Sat 13th June 2020.
- 11.9. The annual Double Hills memorial service was held at Paulton on Sun 6th Sept 2020.
- 11.10. AEA Scotland held a memorial on Sunday 20th September for those killed in the Cromwell Lock incident at Zetland Park, Grangemouth Representatives from the Families, AEA Scotland and other organisations were in attendance.
- 11.11. A memorial service to the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Squadron was held on Sunday 27th Sept at Donington village, Lincolnshire.
- 11.12. All other memorial events were cancelled due to the current situation with COVID.
- 12. Any Other Business at National Level
- 14.1 Dress Code for Standard Bearers whilst representing the AEA at Formal Events.

The National President Lt Col (Retd) John Lee presented a form of words detailing the dress code to be adhered to by Standard Bearers when representing the AEA at formal events. The wording was agreed by all present and the AEA constitution will be updated accordingly.

*Rules of Dress for Standard Bearers.*

*These rules are for the information and assistance of all Airborne Engineer Association Standard Bearers with the object of ensuring uniformity in the handling of Association Standards.*

- 1. Beret: Maroon berets only are to be worn by Standard Bearers on all occasions.
- 2. Suit: Black or Charcoal
- 3. Blazer: (Black or Blue) with AEA Association Badge
- 4. Tie: AEA tie (either Association tie - Pegasus logo, or Anniversary tie - Wings and Pegasus logo).
- 5. Shoes: Well-polished, formal black style.
- 6. Gauntlets: White, well cleaned.
- 7. Sling: Sling and socket to be worn over the right shoulder and the leather to be well polished.
- 8. Medals: To be worn on left breast.

#### 14.2 Honorary Membership

The National President Lt Col (Retd) John Lee presented a form of words detailing the qualifications for those wishing to join AEA Branches as Honorary members. The wording was discussed and agreed by all those present and the AEA Constitution will be amended accordingly.

*Membership Categories*

*Branch Honorary Member. An additional sentence to read 'Branches are to register with the Membership Secretary all persons elected as a Branch Honorary Members, and their details will be included in the AEA Membership Data Base. This is to accord with requirements under the current GDPR legislation. They will only*

*be liable to pay any Branch annual subscriptions but will not be required to pay a Joining Subscription. Membership cards issued to these members are to be annotated 'Honorary Member'.*

14.3. Update on the On-Line Shop

14.3.1 A discussion was held on the future of the AEA shop. It was agreed that the shop would continue in its current format for as long as Jeanette Rutter was willing to manage the day to day running. In the meantime, Dave Pace would continue to develop the online platform.

14.3.2 Dave Pace reported that the Online Platform now had full functionality up to the 'Checkout' Function, at which stage the functionality was disabled. This means that members can go through the process of searching and placing an order but that no money would be taken.

14.3.3 Dave Pace also clarified that the Online Platform was not a company that would run the shop on behalf of the AEA, it was a tool to assist with the ordering process and would still require a shop manager who would hold the shop stock and distribute orders when they were received. More detail can be found regarding WorldPay in the previously distributed PowerPoint presentation - please contact Dave Pace if you require an additional copy of this document or have any questions regarding its content

14.3.4 Dave Pace will now provide a link to the Online Platform and requests feedback from AEA members.

14.4. Use of Zoom for National and Branch Meetings.

14.4.1 The National Chairman asked those present if they were happy to continue holding National Meetings via 'Zoom' for the duration of the Covid situation. All agreed.

14.4.2 The National Chairman encouraged all branches to consider the use of 'Zoom' or a similar teleconferencing platform such as 'Webex' or 'Teams' as the tool for re-commencing Branch meetings. It was explained that the Chairman had a 'Zoom' subscription that allows meetings of unlimited length to be held with up to 100 participants. If Branches want to make use of this subscription it is available to them.

14.5. Affiliating 4 Troop 9 Para Sqn to the AEA.

14.5.1 This was discussed and it was decided that, as 4 Troop are not a recognised association, formal affiliation to the AEA was not possible. However, all members of 4 Troop qualify for Honorary membership of the AEA and that avenue is open to them if they so wish.

14.6. Transition of the AEA Journal from Hardcopy to an Online Publication.

14.6.1 Dave Pace informed the meeting that this was a relatively simple task. He could set up an online template which could then be populated with content provided by others.

14.6.2 Dave Pace also asked whether the Journal would still have an 'Editor' who would review articles before they were included in the online template. Dave Rutter confirmed that he would stand down as Journal Editor after the last hardcopy issue scheduled for Dec 2021, a new Editor would therefore be required.

14.6.3 Dave Pace suggested that the last few hard copies of the Journal could also be published online in parallel to iron out any problems. He warned against leaving this to the last minute.

15. AGM and GALA Ball.

15.1.1 The 2021 AGM and GALA Ball will be Hosted by the Yorkshire Branch and will be held at the Cedar Court Hotel Harrogate over the weekend 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> October.

15.1.2 2022 Event will be hosted by the Birmingham Branch, dates, and location to be decided.

15.1.3 2023 Event will be hosted by the Wales and West Branch, Dates and Location to be provided.

16. National President's Points

16.1. Cromwell Lock Memorial

The president expressed concern over the maintenance of the Memorial at Cromwell Lock. It is unclear who has responsibility for looking after the memorial. Previously it was Newark PRA however, 299 Branch and Birmingham Branch have also had input as have the Canal and River Trust, 299 have now stepped away. Gil Nichol stated that the Scotland Branch donated £200 per year for the upkeep but was not sure where this money was being spent. The President agreed that he would contact the Canal and River Trust and attempt to clarify the situation, he would then report back.

16.2. President's Commendations:

Following a short discussion, the President decided that the President's commendation would be awarded to Paul Moore and Charlie McColgan in recognition of their Stirling efforts in organising and participating in the 'Ride of Respect' where members of the 'Airborne Riders' over a 10 day period, visited the graves and memorials of all those who died during the Falkland's Conflict. It was also recognised that both had been involved in numerous charity events including, but not limited to, 'Badges for the Flower Children of Arnhem' and the 'Ride to the Wall'.

17. National Chairman's Points:

The National Chairman emphasised the need for the association branches to return to a regular series of meetings as soon as possible. It is recognised that physical meetings may not be possible under the current restrictions, however On-



18. Next National Meeting Date:  
The next national meeting is the OGM in April 2021. Unless circumstances change, this will be a 'Zoom' meeting.
19. Chairman's Closing Remarks:  
The Chairman thanked those members of the Association who attended and for participating in this Annual General Meeting.  
The meeting was closed in good order at 1200 hours.

Produced by Lt Col (Retd) R. Brown Honorary Treasurer  
Registered Charity 1009201

<u>Previous Period</u>	<u>Current Assets</u>	<u>Current Period</u>
	Cash	
	Current Account	
	Deposit Account	
	<u>Liabilities</u>	
	Newsletter	
	<u>Total Liabilities</u>	
	<u>Total Assets Minus Liabilities</u>	
	<u>General Purpose Fund</u>	
	Balance as per last Balance Sheet	
	Add Excess of Income	
	Deduct Excess of Expenditure	
	Accumulated General Purpose Fund	

<u>Expenditure/Losses</u>	<u>Current Period</u>	<u>Previous Period</u>	<u>Income/Gains</u>	<u>Current Period</u>	<u>Previous Period</u>
Stationary/Postage	1,000	1,000	Interest	1,000	1,000
Engraving			Subscriptions	1,000	1,000
Wreaths			Donations	1,000	1,000
Transfer Newsletter	1,000	1,000	Shop Profit	1,000	1,000
AEA Web Site			AEA Aldershot (error)		1,000
FI Trust Donation	1,000		Gala Dinner 2019	1,000	
Golf Trophies	1,000				
Double Hills Donation		1,000			
AEA SW Branch Donation	1,000				
Gala Dinner 2019		1,000			
Shop Stock Presentation	1,000				
AEA Aldershot Branch 100.00					
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>3,000</b>
<b>Excess of Income</b>			<b>Excess of Expenditure</b>	<b>1,000</b>	
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>3,000</b>

# Op Banner Tales - Those 'Sleeping Policemen'

**Ronnie Hadden**



Some may not be familiar with the term sleeping policeman. The expression was regularly used during 1971 in Northern Ireland to describe the creation of tarmac bumps in the roadway, mainly streets, to slow traffic down particularly outside military bases, police stations, important buildings, and so forth. The idea was basically to make it difficult for terrorists to do drive past shootings, bomb throwing, or any other such activities, on personnel and the building itself. Their installation also allowed the soldiers or policemen on duty an opportunity to deal with the incident as appropriate.

The term sleeping policeman has now by and large been replaced by such names as speed bump, speed ramp or humps, and the like, with designs varying from full to part roadway width. Personally I still prefer the term sleeping policeman. The control of traffic using speed bumps, etc., in a non-terrorist setting did not appear within the rest of the UK until the late 1970's following on from their extensive anti-terrorist employment in Northern

Ireland - the province acting as a fitting test ground. Controlling street traffic in this manner is not a new concept, however, as some American towns had introduced the idea as far back as the early 1900s.

The use today of speed bumps in their non-terrorist role within UK towns and cities is somewhat contentious as many motorists regard them as a nuisance rather than an effective safety device. Nevertheless, during 9 Independent's tour of duty in 1971 the Squadron was tasked to install many of these contraptions in and around Belfast, often during the night, under the onsite supervision of Wally Clift. Some of these locations were in high risk areas but Wally and his gang got on with the job as you would expect from 9 Sqn lads.

The instalment of sleeping policemen during the '71 tour was not, as you would expect, advertised in advance and many motorists were caught unawares in the days following their installation. Signposting at the locations concerned was mostly non-existent. Scores of drivers did not know how to handle this weird layout in front of them. It has to be said that at that point hold ups and slow moving traffic was a common feature of travel through Belfast. On numerous occasions my section found itself caught in a traffic jam and basically a sitting target. I recall on one occasion I was tasked to do a quick 'priority' job (they were all priority jobs) with my section at the then Hastings Street police station first thing in the morning. The main street outside the station - bottom end of the Falls Road - was jammed packed with traffic taking people to work, and a sleeping policeman layout had been recently installed.

I remember as we left the station's front entrance the air was thick with exhaust fumes and there in front of us grounded on one of the asphalt humps was an Austin mini containing two very attractive young ladies. The front wheels of the mini were spinning with the vehicle going nowhere, and its position was causing an even greater traffic jam. On seeing us the girls requested our assistance. There was nothing suspicious about the situation and no shortage of volunteers from the lads. We got our hands around the mini - still clutching our rifles of course - and lifted the vehicle with the girls aboard clear off the bump and sent it on its way. This kind of occurrence was typical for the period. A further problem associated with this new speed control arrangement was the damage caused to car exhausts. When I cautiously suggested to Wally that the height of the sleeping policeman's hump might be too high and responsible for half of the exhaust repairs in Belfast that month, his defence was, "Don't blame me, blame the boffins, I'm just following their diagram."

A short time later in our tour an unfortunate incident occurred involving a sleeping policeman arrangement. On this occasion the installation was turned against the Squadron by IRA gunmen. My section had just completed the construction of a new OP that overlooked the republican dominated Ardoyne. The OP formed part of a network of OPs observing that area and was erected from a bombed out butchers shop located on the Crumlin Road. It was a fairly large job and took us the best part of two weeks to build. On completion it was decided that a sleeping policeman layout across the Crumlin Road in front of the OP should be installed. Wally Clift and his gang did the job one night and all was well.

However, a few days later one of the Squadron's Bedford trucks picked up some stores from Belfast docks and in the process returned to Antrim Bridge Camp via the Crumlin Road - one of our regular routes into and out of Belfast - driving past the OP and over the sleeping policeman set-up. A number of IRA gunmen had entered a house on the opposite side from the OP tying up the family in the process.

At least that was the family's version of events. The gunmen opened fire on the truck as it negotiated the bumps. Mick O'Leary (a Leeds United man and the 'Johnny Giles' of the Squadron football team) was driving the truck and quickly accelerated away from the incident. He continued on up the Crumlin Road, past the Woodvale Junction - a well-known sniper hot spot - and eventually drew into a petrol station to check on the lads in the rear of the truck.

Fortunately no life threatening injuries were sustained. Sadly back at the scene, a young woman had been standing at a bus stop on the other side of the road and one of the bullets struck her in the head. She died from this injury. The gunmen made their escape leaving the family tied up.

A less sombre incident involving a sleeping policeman installation on the Springfield Road occurred during our 1973 Belfast tour. I was now back in 2 Troop and my section had to improve the anti-rocket fence around the Henry Taggart Hall (affectionately known as the 'Henry Target' by the lads who served at the base).

The hall formed part of the army base located within the notorious Provo stronghold of Ballymurphy and had become a much-loved target for IRA gunmen. The base also included the Vere Foster School. All in all an anti-rocket perimeter fence of about 300-400 metres was needed to effectively protect the base. I had constructed the original 18 ft high anti-rocket fence in 1971 with the help of the lads from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Scots Guards. That job jumped to number one in the then list of priority jobs after Andersonstown Police station received a direct hit from an RPG7 rocket. The Henry Taggart Hall would be next.

My original fence was still standing after nearly two years of rioting and everyday usage. Basically our current job entailed the transformation of the base into a GGI fort. We had just completed this task and on the final day had to carry out some repairs to the Springfield Road gate entrance.

It was early morning, about 5.30 am. Most section members, and myself, were in the gatehouse OP organising a quick cup of tea before commencing work. Also in attendance were the two sentries and an RUC officer. An attempt to destroy the gatehouse OP using an RPG7 had been initiated by the Provos just two days beforehand, but it failed. The rocket hit a strategically placed metre high anti-rocket fence opposite the OP, exploded, and its remains were thrown back about 10 metres causing no damage to its intended target, or indeed the fence. If there was any more proof needed that these chain link anti-rocket fences did their job it was there for all to see. At the time my section and I were busy working about 60 metres from the OP but out of sight of the gunmen due to the layout of the houses. A hail of bullets had followed the firing of the rocket from at least two, perhaps three, Armalite rifles on automatic.

We always started work early on that particular job as it was predicted any terrorist activity would not take place before 11:00 am, and more than likely late afternoon. During the preceding night a sizeable sleeping policeman arrangement had just been installed on the Springfield Road covering the length of the Hall and car park area, a distance of approximately 90 metres. Why this layout had not been installed previously is not known? Hence, there we all were in the gatehouse OP that morning anxiously awaiting the first vehicle to come along the quiet and traffic empty Springfield Road. The RUC officer, Constable Murdoch, (alias used) was a tall giant of a man and highly experienced policeman. He was curious to see how motorists were going to handle this new speed control installation. All of us were especially interested in traffic coming in towards Belfast as there was a rather steep downward sloping hill on the road past the Henry Taggart.

We did not have long to wait. An old Bedford pick-up truck came into view heading speedily down the hill towards our location. The RUC officer commented, "Oh, that's Billy Hughes (alias) starting his milk run. He's an eejit. He'll take no notice of that sign." The sign was a simple blackboard placed temporarily against one of the streetlamp posts until a proper signpost could be organised. Billy's pick-up had a load of milk crates stacked in the rear cargo bay of the truck. The truck hit the first hump and some milk bottles were thrown out breaking on landing with the milk running down the drainage channel. However, Billy did not slow down. Instead he put his foot on the accelerator and hit the next bump with greater speed and more milk bottles flew out of the back. This performance was repeated over the remaining bumps until he hit the last one sited beyond the OP and, on a bend in the road. At this point Billy lost control of the vehicle, mounted the pavement and crashed into a city council chain link fence situated in a hedgerow. The vehicle now came to rest.

At this stage we were looking out of the rear side window of the OP checking on the outcome, and of course showing genuine concern - not laughing, honest. Fortunately Billy was not badly injured and climbed out of the cab a little dazed. With that PC Murdoch got hold of the OP's public address microphone and broadcasted rather firmly, "Billy this is Constable Murdoch. Make your way to the gate post. I want a word with you." A rather startled Billy made his way to the OP. Billy was a relatively fit young lad about twenty years old and still a little bit confused with what had just taken place. "Did you not see that sign back there telling you about these bumps?" asked Constable Murdoch. "No I didn't Mr Murdoch, honest." replied Billy. "Mr Slater (alias) is your boss isn't he?" asked Murdoch. "Oh you're not going to tell him are you Mr Murdoch?" said Billy somewhat anxiously. "Well I'll have to won't I," replied Murdoch, "there's a smashed up vehicle out there!" After a few more exchanges Murdoch finally grabbed hold of the OP's bask broom and said to Billy, "Here take this broom and get out there and sweep up all that glass you've scattered on the road. If you do a good job I'll put a word in for you with Mr Slater." "Would you Mr Murdoch? My Ma will kill me if I lose this job." said Billy. Off Billy went to sweep up the glass.

Whether Billy kept his job or not I don't know, but he certainly brightened up our morning. I can well imagine his boss instructing him not to dawdle on his way past the Henry Taggart Hall. "It's like a shooting gallery past there. Don't you hang about," his boss would have said. "And remember, the Dairy always delivers." A number of households in West Belfast got their milk late that morning.



# The 'Pegasus' & Fergie Semple Golf Competition

## Mick Leather

The grit, sh\*t and bus ticket attitude that is synonymous with the airborne warrior was partly responsible for us getting away for a depleted Golf Trip this year. The original one in April/May was shelved for the main reason of the Covid lockdown, but as the year progressed and restrictions were eased, a few of us decided that the way we play golf is socially distancing by the very nature of our inability to hit the ball straight, so ventured to get a trip together in September. The usual suspects were contacted and as they all agreed, 3 days and 2 nights were booked at Coulson Manor in Surrey at the end of September.... the timing was very fortuitous as this coincided with the easing of restrictions but before they were re-introduced.



We managed to get 12 to sign up, although there were some late casualties and one complete 'no show'; investigations are being carried out as to what happened but it is what it is. Because of the short time to put it together, there were notable absences because of other commitments so we hope to see the likes of Robbie Burns, Ian McGill and Mick Wallace at future events.

We couldn't have asked for better weather although for some the journey was long. There was the usual market like bartering and negotiating with regards handicaps but as we

are a trustful band of souls, playing handicaps were agreed without the need to produce certificates, passports or Paternity DNA however by the end of the 3 days competition, there are those who clearly got their handicaps in a Tombola and will be subject to more stringent scything next year.

The Hotel itself was under some limitations because of staffing, which therefore limited the in-house menu. Having said that the sustenance was palatable if not in great quantity, but that left more room for ale which I observed was consumed with the time old vigour that was instilled during our time with the squadron, (Unless your name was Ant Middleton and you couldn't hack more than 2 halves of shandy!)

Again, that said it would be remiss of me to not mention that 2 of the civvy quests were somewhat perturbed to find breakfast was not served beyond 9.00 am and floating down for a leisurely start to their day at 10 past left them with a curt "Tough Shit, you were informed" from the hotel and a quick dash into Croydon to find a transport cafe!

None of this detracted from the golf whereupon over the 3 rounds there was some exceptional scoring. Dave Rutter could have done a lot better if he didn't putt like a limp-wristed craphat!

Consistency was shown by many, none more so than Colin Birkenshaw who despite hitting the same fir tree from the 1<sup>st</sup> tee on the opening 2 days, consistently carded good Stableford scores of 39, 36 and 40!! Still not enough to win. There were the usual grumblings from Geoff Barlow who, whilst hitting some very good shots, failed to get them to go in the right direction. It would have been sooo wrong for him to win anything though as his dress code of black day socks with shorts and beanie hat are only acceptable now in this country on a works beano to Southend!! On the other hand, Tony Hogan or (according to him, his wife Anne!!) seemed to think that having an outfit with a designer label entitled him to wear outlandish dayglo yellow shorts likened only in colour to winning the Tour de France!



We played the now accepted format Stableford off full handicaps as a daily competition with nearest the pin and longest drive prizes as well as daily 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> placed prizes. In addition, there was the eclectic competition for the Airborne trophy. We have recently allowed the introduction of family and friends to accompany us and it has made for a fun time as they have integrated quite nicely with the banter and colloquialisms of the airborne fraternity. HOWEVER this year, upon being told that they could not participate in the Fergie Semple Trophy as this was a purely Airborne occasion, promptly revolted and added the "Civvy Cup" to the last day's itinerary by introducing a glass pint tankard (in true airborne fashion, stolen the night before from the bar), emblazoned with their moniker in indelible marker pen.

The prizes were evenly distributed, although my 1<sup>st</sup> place on day one was reduced to 2<sup>nd</sup> when it was realised by someone that I had not included all the scores and had to 'surrender' my trophy to the winner Colin. I was

unable to reclaim the 2<sup>nd</sup> place prize from the now relegated to 3<sup>rd</sup> place

participant as he liked it and refused to relinquish it. I won't mention any names but as I was going to 'key' his Bentley! We had some trouble getting rid of the nearest the pin prize on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day as the chosen hole had the full field of gladiators pass through it thinking the competition was "nearest the green"! No matter we moved that trophy to the next par 3 only to find the players unable to deviate from their chosen competition again. It was finally resolved on the 3<sup>rd</sup> par 3 that was so short you could have thrown the ball onto the green.



I could list the winners and scores here but I feel that is unnecessary as they know who they are and the prime aim of the trip is to socialise with people we have known for years and can converse with in a manner that would offend a snowflake without attending a funeral and I feel that was achieved. In fact, so much is the want to meet up purely for the pleasure, I would like to mention the mad dash of Billy Morris from his HSE course on completion just to play the final day for nothing more than the pleasure of being around kindred spirits.

I do have to congratulate Barry Richardson on winning the Pegasus trophy on count back from last year's winner.



Barry carded Stableford scores of 36, 36 and 46 with his now defunct handicap of 23 to win with an eclectic Stableford score of 51, the same as last year's winner, but won on count back on the last day.

If that last paragraph confused any 'Fieldies' out there and puts them off coming next year, don't worry... the scoring is worked out for you by me, a former detective from the Fraud Squad!

**Billy Morris presents Colin Birkenshaw with  
the Fergie Semple Trophy**

My parting shots to ALL of you is this. Having recently attended another funeral, I want to emphasise that trips like this have been borne out of the very ethos that drove Joe Houlston and others to form the AEA in the first place and that was to socialise with people of a like mind and to that end I am happy to continue to piece together these soirees as long as they are supported. There are a lot more of you out there that play golf and would enjoy the trips. We're not here forever and I for one am getting fed up of hearing at funerals, "We need to get together more often, before it's too late!"

Next year's event is listed below. Be there or be talked about!

## AEA Golf Trip 2021



Wednesday 21st to Friday 23rd April

Telford Shropshire

Price Beating £155 per Person!

Includes:

- \* 2 Nights Dinner, Bed and Breakfast in Twin room at 4 Star Telford Hotel and Golf Resort
- \* 3 rounds of Golf
- \* Use of Spa and Gym
- \* All Prizes include Nearest Pin & Longest Drive each day.
- \* Full A la Carte Menu
- \* 20% off all drinks

Please contact Mick Leather on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

To secure a place, deposits of £50 are required by 15th January 2021

For further information on the venue, visit: <https://www.telfordhotelgolfresort.co.uk>



## EX 9 (Old & Bold) South Coast Ramblers

**Mike Robertson**

Not to be beaten by our brothers up t'North, I thought I would write a few lines about our similar gatherings as the softy southerners. Re Barney Rooney's article .....

On retiring from full time work in February, I committed to do a number of things before I got too knackered to do them. As well as a few more adventurous goals, this included spending more time with extended family, and old friends. This should have been the easiest item on the bucket list; however, Covid 19 kicked in, so initiating the list was delayed for a few months.

Once we were freer to travel and meet people, it included getting together with my grown up son in Portsmouth, and rather than going for lunch and a walk on Southsea seafront, we decided to get into the countryside and do some hill walking.

Over the years whenever I was in the Portsmouth area, I would always take the opportunity to catch up with my old mate Nat Hague. We have known each other's kids from the day they were born, so as Nat knows my son Paul, it was inevitable that we would combine the two.



As an aside, a bit about my friendship with Nat (the Jap). He was one of the first people I met when joining the Sqn in February 77 when he was pissed mattress storeman and issued my bedding on coming back to the lines after passing P Coy. Nat insists to this day that he was not the pissed mattress storeman but rather the "Sports Store Manager".

We were later in 3 troop together that included the 1979 trip to Belize. He went to 28 Amphibious in Hameln, so did I. He was a diver, so was I. We were also both diving instructors and REDE together, firstly at Marchwood and later at Gunwharf HMS Nelson (Formally HMS Vernon). Whilst at the school we went to Hong Kong to run a basic diving course for the Ghurkha's; but that's another story.

**John Moorhouse, Bob Cole, Dave Rutter, Tony Winn,  
Nat Hague, Dave Ford & Mike Robertson**

Anyway, back to the walking. We started with a short walk up Butser Hill on Queen Elizabeth Country Park, followed by a longer route a couple of weeks later. We discuss other potential walking routes and whether we should try and get more to join us. Without going firm on anything we left at that.

Nat then took the initiative and now regularly posts the routes and RV's on the 9 Sqn Old and Bold pre 1990 Facebook page with a welcome for anyone to join us.



A regular RV now is the Royal Oak which you will all be familiar with as the finish of the South Downs March, done as the final event on Pre-para and included as a P Coy event when run from the "Shot". As it turns out with the same landlord who was running the pub in the 80's and early 90's and an Ex Matelot.

Regulars include Chris Davis (when not sailing), not so Ginge Ford, as grey has replaced the golden locks, Dave Rutter, Tony Winn and sometimes his brother Barry, Tony Manley, and on occasions Paddy Moorhouse, Bob Cole, Pete Sudnik & Paul Mills.

The more recent walks have been around the Devils Punch Bowl/Hindhead Common. This I feel will be another regular route or area to explore further.

So far, no such issues as falls and loss of body parts and other afflictions that has befallen last of the Summer Wino's troop up North...touch wood.





So every other Thursday, RV generally at 10.00 hrs, a couple of hours steady walking and catch up on old times, then into a local hostelry for a light lunch and a few more dits. Anyone and everyone is welcome (not just ex 9). Watch out for Nat's posts normally put up a few days beforehand, respond to the post, but by all means just turn up.

**The Celtic Cross at the 'Devils Punch Bowl'**  
**Pete Sudnik, Tony Manley, Dave Ford, Nat Hague,**  
**Chris Davies & Dave Rutter**

As we move into winter, I don't see enthusiasm dropping off... at least not yet. Time to dig out the Peter Storm and dubbin the boots... or will it be wellies and Pac a Macs.

## Last of the Summer Wine - The WINOS Walking Group

**Barney Rooney (Nom-de- Plume 'Foggy')**

As a prelude to this, seemingly, random scribbling's about the 'Last of the Summer Wino's [LOTSW], and their ramblings, I'd like to mention Poncho O'Donovan, who, had it not been for his hiking Wales Weekends, we probably wouldn't have started our own Walking Group.

It was during a weekend back in 2012 that Phil Poulton asked me if, from time to time, I would fancy doing a few walks for a bit of exercise and fun. The suggested region would generally be around the Lake District and nearby areas.

Phil, having done several walks on his own had gained a great deal of knowledge in this field. But for me, having any little experience in this subject - apart from the Wales weekends, jumped at the idea. Phil had volunteered to co-ordinate the walks and send out the various routes via the internet for all volunteers to peruse' (*Ordinance Survey Maps were also advised for a bigger picture of the topography*) Mine and Phil's map collection is somewhat extensive now covering most of the northern Mountains, hills and Dales! (*Don't be alarmed at this, as these days we enjoy the medium landscapes for the trails*). A couple of weeks later Skiddaw and Blencathra, and later, Helvelyn's Striding Edge near Keswick, were all conquered, followed in weekly walks by High Street, Griesdale Pike and others around the A66, were hiked over the next couple of years.

Winos (as we are more commonly known)

Enough of that for now. After a year we were joined by Jeff Langford and Shez Sheridan and went on to enjoy glorious walks in the Yorkshire Dales. Being naive to the area, I was introduced to some of the most scenic parts of this fair land. As time went by and into 2016/17, Paddy Denning joined the merry band. Due to the fact that Phil (*Compo is his WINO's nom-de-plume*), for family reasons had moved house a bit further south into Derbyshire, we started walking mostly in the Derbyshire Dales, and a whole new set of walks followed thereafter.



News got out and a steady inflow of a further nine joined the band, namely Richard Fleck, Dave Grimbley, Jim Harrower, Dave Knowles, Danny Gallagher, Don Moroney and the recent inclusion of Clog Claughton. This, if each member attended, would make up a fine fighting section!

**Paddy Denning, Shez Sheridan, Danny Gallagher,**  
**Cyril Knowles, Richard Fleck, Dave Grimbley, Phil Poulton,**  
**Jim Harrower, Barney Rooney (kneeling) & Monty (the dog)**

On a different aspect, but unchanged narrative, this year has been a bit of a disaster not only due to the virus pandemic, but a few have been incapacitated in some form or another! My own heart bypass operation in December 2019 kept in convalescence until March.



Shez Sheridan divested himself of a kidney! (*Didn't slow him down though!*), then Dave Knowles had a fall to keep him off the walks [to date]. Phil (Compo) also suffered a fall. Jeff Langford went down with nether regions problems. Fenny Fleck had a bit of a medical problem and logistics on the home front. Danny Gallagher got shingles. Dave Grimbley had an eye problem, (but is OK now) and Jim Harrower had a hip problem. So if these 'MINOR hiccups' continue, Monty, Chez's dog, will be the last one standing!

If you enjoy the company of fellow Airborne Colleagues and have a hankering to get out into the countryside, why not join us? None of our group has contracted Leprosy yet and you could be the first!!

Our walks are usually on a Wednesday or Thursday thereby avoiding the heavy traffic of a Monday or Friday. We always drive to a nominated (*Grid Ref or Post Code*) village pub to begin a walk, change to walking apparel, accommodating for the weather forecast for the day.

The start time is 08.00 and after approximately a 7 to 10 mile, circular hike around The *Lancashire, Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Cambrian* scenery (*the Peak District is taking preference at the moment*), when we are back to the motors at the start point at approx. 1400 hours.

After the day's walk we usually have a farewell pint in the nominated pub who had been previously approached regarding parking facilities. Compo collects a sub of £5 from each walker which pays for the round of drinks and

any surplus is put into the kitty towards our Christmas do. The Xmas hike is usually a relative short walk before retiring for a festive evening dinner in a chosen hostelry, where our pre-ordered meal is served. An overnight stay in a chosen YHA on the night of the dinner is also arranged.

At last year's Christmas event, the WINOS welcomed, Dave Rutter, Tony Manley, Froth Beer and John Sparham. If you feel that this is the thing you've been looking for, contact Jock (Compo) Poulton via email on [pltonp@aol.com](mailto:pltonp@aol.com)



Finally, we all agree on two things:  
 1. We are not quite as fit as our 'P' Coy days.  
 2. We won't be ending this great pastime anytime soon.  
 We offer a warm welcome to anyone who would be interested in a good day out with old Shiny 9 Sqn friends.

## Membership Report

**Steve (Billy) Morris MSM**

We welcome the following new members

Membership No	Name	Units	Service Dates
1523	Robert Stewart	9 Para Sqn RE	1995-1998
<b>Honorary Member (Birmingham Branch)</b>			
HM 1524	Rhett R Hammond	2 Fd Engr Unit Bethlehem 44 Parachute Brigade	1980-1981 1982-1989

Rhett Hammond served with the South African Military, and now lives in Coventry, he is also an affiliate member of the Parachute Regiment Association (PRA).

"GENTLEMEN, WELCOME TO THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION"



## Aldershot Branch

### Dave Rutter - Secretary

Similar to other branches, since the dreaded coronavirus struck we too have been forced to cancel all meetings together with our Spring lunch, annual BBQ and social gatherings.

### 9 Squadron Falklands Veterans' Homage

It is now an established custom that ex-members of The Squadron gather every year in Aldershot Military Cemetery, on the Saturday nearest to the 14<sup>th</sup> June, to pay respects to the Fallen in the Campaign of 1982. It is an informal gathering



with no vicars, prayers or sermons; just a gathering of friends showing their respect. A wreath is laid, the stories flow and Derek Broadbent takes some cracking photos. In 'normal' times we then repair to a local hotel for a couple of beers and some take a light lunch.



This year Covid restrictions prevented this so we enjoyed a couple of bottles of port and a blether in warm sunshine around the Airborne Memorial Stone in the Falklands Plot (close to the lower gate of the Cemetery). This has all the signs of becoming a tradition, too!

In 2021 we will gather at 1045 for 1100 on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June. Any Squadron or ex-Squadron members who are in/around the Aldershot area on the day are most welcome (Mick Leather drove up from Wales this year!) In a heart-warming gesture, especially to John Pashley, a veteran from the Scots Guards Association usually joins us and lays a wreath. Berets, medals and jackets are worn by most but veterans in Squadron polo shirts or motorbike leathers are equally welcome. It's about remembering our Fallen and Squadron Brotherhood, not parades.



On Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> August we once again returned to the Military Cemetery (social distancing sort of went out the window) to meet and greet the 'Riders of Respect' on their epic journey throughout the UK remembering those who perished during the Falkland's conflict.

With the ongoing spread of the coronavirus and Government warnings of further 'lockdowns' it would seem that any return to normal life is yet still some way off. Not surprisingly, our members have no desire to attend any branch meetings in the near future.

On behalf of our members, we extend Healthy & hopefully, Wealthy, good wishes for the coming Festive Season to all members and their families of the Airborne Engineers Association.

## Birmingham Branch

### Steve Brown - Secretary

Branch Meetings. Like all branches, due to the national lockdown, the branch ceased to hold meetings after March of this year. However, the branch was able to re-start our meetings on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2020 while following strict protocols of social distancing and the use of sanitizer stations within the venue. The branch felt that we should hold the meetings as a more social side as there are some members who live alone and the meetings gives a chance to socialise. We have been fortunate enough to continue holding the meetings and will do so until they need to cease. Due to the fact that there was little branch or National business to discuss and being a more social gathering it was suggested that the branch subsidise a supper at the meetings with the result that a Pie and Chip supper was duly supplied with thanks to Roger Howles and Bob Dorrell for sorting this out. The attendance has been fairly good with an average of 20 members attending.

Welfare. The branch has been fortunate not to have any casualties from Covid 19 during these past months. However, some members have been taken ill, a member had to be hospitalised through Pneumonia, one member had cancer of the tongue, the



cancer was removed and he is now recovering well, Our Chairman was also rushed into hospital but is now fit and well, another member is waiting for a Cardiologist appointment, another member has gone into Hospice care and another member has had a serious fall.

Branch members have been encouraged to keep in contact with other members for a chat and a catch up. This proved very successful and the contact worked very well and gave support to members.

Cromwell Lock. This year being the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this tragic event was due to take place on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020 but unfortunately was cancelled due to restrictions by HM Government. This will now take place in September 2021. Wreaths and flowers were laid by some members and from 131 Commando Squadron RE who should have provided the guard of Honour. Planning that had been undertaken will carry over to 2021.

Branch Social and Organised events. As with everyone else most of our events have had to be cancelled this year.

Some items that should have been in the last issue but the branch did not submit on time but we feel they deserve a mention are,

The Branch Christmas Dinner 2019 on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2019 was once again very well attended and quickly sold out, meaning some members missed out on tickets. A big thanks to the organisers of this event went to Roger Howles, Tom and Ann Smith and Maureen Aitken who all made this dinner a great success, again.

The Bunny Brown Memorial Trophy for 2020 was awarded to Eamon Smyth for his hard work and generosity for getting the Plaque on the Bridge at Toscaig in memory of the sappers of 300 Troop who sadly lost their lives at Cromwell Lock replaced. This award is presented to a member who has carried out exceptional work for the branch.

The Branch AGM in April 2020 had to be postponed due to the current Covid-19 emergency but the existing committee remain in post until the AGM can be rearranged.

Committee.

Chairman. Neville Collins.

Secretary. Steve Brown. (Until the branch AGM)

Treasurer and Vice Chairman: Tom Smith.

Welfare: Tony Higgins.

Membership: Eamon Smyth.

PRA Representative: Neville Collins.

Other matters,

Prior to the entry into last Decembers Journal and too late to be included, it should be reported that

Kevin Lambeth made a donation of £250.00 into the branch funds in exchange for one of his paintings that should have been auctioned but unfortunately was not. Thanks Kevin.

A photo supplied by Roger Howles while on Ex Jockey Club in Aden 1965 during which time there where the Regiment suffered casualties.



**301 Sqn, 131 Para Engr Regt - Dala Road, Aden April 1965**

## Chatham Branch

### Baz Bassett - Chairman

Unlike the summer edition these notes will not be full of our social events. Obviously since the COVID restrictions and like other parts of UK we have had all our events cancelled. This has meant communication primarily by phone and the odd visit to friends. Key players have been able to meet for the odd "Bacon Butty" a Brew and a chat but in reality we have realised planning ahead for events was never going to work especially with the current conditions as they are. The National AGM held by zoom I thought was an excellent event and perhaps it's something to consider for the future, alongside the actual meeting allowing members who are unable to attend the meeting to view and comment. Well done to the National Branch in organising it.

I am sure like many others we have tried to keep ourselves busy, the first lock down seems a long time away and I am sure like Lin and myself we have all tried to find some sort of routine. Walking appears to be popular although when we go out now there are not so many people about as there were. Tim and K has taken it to heart and has basically been carrying out a "pre para" and has lost a lot of weight and got fitter. Admittedly the weather was fantastic during the first phase and really helped. Rearranging the garden was popular with Lin and I found myself shifting more earth than the tunnels at Colditz. My hidey holes in the Garage, Attic and small cellar all got a good dig out with a few visits to the local refuse collection area. I still have lots more "useful items" to go but have not quite got the heart to get rid of them. They are unfortunately on Mrs B's hit list. The latest fad is redecorating so it's on with the overalls and splash around the magnolia.



The Branch with friends did manage to conduct a small event in August when the South Atlantic Medal Association - Ride of Respect 2020 - visited us in Medway to pay their respect at the Headstone of Cpl Andy McIlvenny. Andy served with 4 Troop, 9 Para Sqn, and was tragically killed on the RFA Sir Galahad during the Falklands conflict.

Considering the restrictions it was a very good turn out on a really hot day. Fantastic commitment by the riders and their



support team for this memorable ride. Hats off to Charley McColgan, Ginge Moore and the many others for their support and determination to push his through. The photos attached are of the Riders and attendees on the day.

For us now as a branch, it will be back to the odd meeting with a Bacon Butty and a brew and a debate about what else but, COVID, BREXIT and whoever has won the election in the good old U S of A. I do hope that science and technology produces a suitable inoculation soon and we can start to get back to normal marching rather than marking time!

Until then may I wish you all Good Christmas Cheer and hope that you and your loved ones stay safe over this period and look forward to hopefully seeing you in the New Year, sometime!

## Wales/Southwest Branch

### Gus Hales - Chairman

Dear all, as a branch we were two meetings into our twelve month set up period, before the 'LOCKDOWN' arrived. We were discussing the option of a formal branch launch venue and launch date.



Our first meeting was a get together, to explore the viabilities of a branch in this area.

Our second meeting was held at the Welsh Club in Hereford, just before the 'LOCKDOWN.' At that point we had no official members. Due to that meeting we went from zero, to twenty six signed up members.

**If anyone's interested, I cycled a 95 mile round trip to attend Freddie Kemp's final farewell**

As the branch was still in its exploratory stage and we hadn't officially launched, it was thought best to suspend proceedings until the Covid situation becomes clearer. There have been a couple of occasions where it looked like we could start up again, but alas Covid restrictions made large group gatherings, too difficult to be viable.

Considering the size of the branch area and the distances some members may have to travel to attend our Saturday branch meetings, we really had no choice other than to suspend formal branch activity until further notice. However, some members are keeping in touch via zoom and other smaller gatherings. In addition we had a few Wales and the West branch members attend Freddie Kemp's funeral. So contact within the membership is being maintained.

Let's all hope we get back to normal soon and we can continue to develop the branch.

Stay safe from all at Wales and the West Branch.

## Scotland Branch

### **Gil Nicol - Secretary**

Since 'Lockdown' we have all been keeping in contact with each other and happily none of our members, including wives/partners have been infected by Coronavirus - long may that continue.

In June we had a new member join our branch. He is Robert Stewart and served with 9 Para Sqn 2005-2008. We welcome him to our branch and look forward to meeting up with him in the near future.

On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020 one of our members, Mick Walker, visited the Edinburgh Eastern Cemetery and attended the grave of Scott Wilson. (KIA Falklands 1982). Scott was killed during the battle for Mount Longdon whilst serving with 9 Para Sqn RE. Mick paid his respects on the behalf of the AEA Scotland members.

Due to the Coronavirus and in consultation with our members, it was felt prudent to cancel our Annual Lunch due to be held at Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September at the Royal Scots Club, Edinburgh.



Unfortunately, the pandemic resulted in most of our programmed events being cancelled, but we did manage to hold a reduced format of remembrance at the Cromwell Memorial Service held at Zetland Park, Grangemouth on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September, where our members paid their respects on the behalf of our branch members. Keeping within the Scottish Government Official Guidelines for outdoor gatherings, representatives from Falkirk Sappers, The Royal British Legion (Grangemouth) and the Airborne Forces Association (Scotland) were also present. Following the service we retired to the RBL Grangemouth Hall for refreshments.

Sadly, due to the virus situation, the Cromwell Lock Memorial Service at Newark was cancelled. So too are all events for 2020. We live in hope for

a healthier 2021.

Hearty and Healthy good wishes for the coming festive season are extended to our colleagues and their families South of the Border.

## JUNE 2021 PUBLICATION

During the winter season when you find time on your hands, give serious consideration to writing an article for the next and penultimate AEA journal.

There are a multitude of stories/experiences yet to be divulged to our readers, so instead of sitting back waiting for someone else to put pen to paper (or more likely, hit the iPad or computer keys) get cracking and do one yourself.

The journal is only as successful and interesting as its content.

Fortunately I already have promises from several members which will highlight their times not only in the SQN or 131, but also of tasks outside their normal remit, in civilian life or with non-airborne units.

Photographs can also embellish your article and can easily be incorporated into the text of your input.

Further to the last statement, don't forget photos of those deemed suitable and apt for the Rogues Gallery.

Don't wait until the last minute, get typing and send me your article before 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021



## The Final Let-Down

Britain's unique parachute training from fixed balloons finally dropped out of sight during the late 90's/early 20's.



Men from 5 Airborne Brigade made their last jumps from a silver painted RAF Mk 3 Kite Balloon at Hankley Common. It marked the end of nearly 150 years of history - but will save £3 million a year! And it brought about a surprising switch of affections for paras who for years have said they hated jumping cold from a static balloon - preferring instead the movement and noise of an aircraft.

"If it was set up in a fairground and offered to the public, they'd be able to charge a lot of money for a thrill like this, said WOII Brian Moss of 216 Para Sigs Sqn", who voiced the opinion of many.

Brian Moss was one of the last men to use the balloon for parachute training before the RAF's Balloon Operations Squadron from Hullavington was disbanded 132 years after Army ballooning began.

It was in July 1863, that a balloon ascent was made from Queen's Parade, Aldershot, by 44 year old pioneer Henry Coxwell. Nine years earlier he had published a book on "Balloon for Warfare," and spent 34 years of his life trying to make the balloon suitable for scientific and military purposes. On that first Aldershot flight, Coxwell was accompanied by Capt F. Beaumont and Lt GE Grover of the Royal Engineers in an attempt to prove that balloons could be used for reconnaissance by watching movements of troops. It was a successful first flight - although when they finally came down to land, they swooped so low over the town the cradle and ropes of their balloon dislodged bricks and mortar from the house tops.

It was another 28 years before Aldershot became the scene of the first military manoeuvres in which balloons were used, but just a year after that in 1892 the Royal Engineers' Balloon School opened in Aldershot's old South Camp.

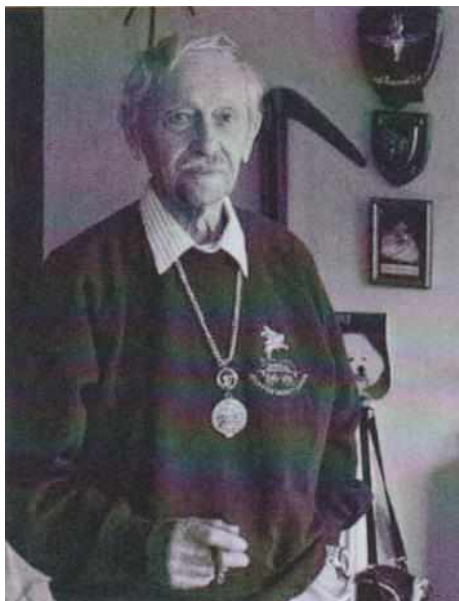
The RE school was set up in the area occupied today by Browning Barracks, where a plaque set in a plinth at the corner of the living quarters recorded its existence for the thousands of paras who trained in the old Parachute Regiment Depot there.

Since the Parachute Regiment was formed during WWII, until its demise every British Para had made his first descents from a balloon.

Britain, up until then, had been the only country still using balloons. It was replaced at that time with a privately-run high-winged twin tailed Skyvan aircraft for dropping onto the Hankley Common 'dropping zone' or flying and parachuting onto Salisbury Plain. The box like Skyvan could carry up to 19 'passengers', and like the C130 Hercules, the RAF's main aircraft for parachuting, had a rear ramp from which they could be dropped at speeds of 195 miles an hour. It was vastly different to the traditional tethered balloon cage, where the ascent began with the 'comforting' words of the RAF PJI calling,

"Up 800, 5 men jumping"

## OBITUARIES



Eric Richards has sadly died. He was a Sapper, No.3 Troop, 4th Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers. He took part with the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in Operation Market Garden in 1944.

Eric, a Wasp flamethrower operator, dropped on 18th September onto Ginkel Heath 8 miles from Arnhem. He fought mainly at the large house at Sonnen- burg in Oosterbeek. There he took part in an action that fought off German attacks, Eric supplied the grenades to Phil Hyatt who was awarded a Military Medal. During the evacuation he was wounded and taken prisoner by the German SS 9th Panzer Division. He was imprisoned in Stalag XI-B, Fallingbostal.

He escaped but was recaptured. He was finally liberated by the 7th Armoured Division on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

Post war Eric served in Palestine, Cyprus and Egypt (Canal Zone). He served in the Regular Army until 1953. RIP Eric.

Eric featured in 'Veterans of Arnhem' by Keith Collman



### Mike Pallott:

Retiring President of Yorkshire Branch AEA, he held the appointment until the day he died. For those of you who had the privilege of knowing Mike, it will come as no surprise to you that he likely also had his last cigarette on the day he died too.

Mike was in my opinion, one of life's memorable characters who was considerate, fabulously welcoming socially and a gentleman to boot. When he knew you, he would do anything to help you and those with whom you associated. No surprise he held Provincial Grand rank in the Masonic Craft Order.

Mike was one of the very first members of 59 Indep Cdo Sqn RE when they formed in Singapore in 1964 under an ex 9 Sqn man as their first Officer Commanding, Maj John Grosvenor. At the time, the British Government were extremely concerned that we would

be drawn into the Vietnam conflict in support of our American cousins. As a precaution we despatched several missions into Vietnam to recce our various areas of expertise which the Govt of the day were certain we would get asked to advise upon. One area as Engineers was to be the tunnel systems.

Mike and another colleague, Bob Ishmay (who later retired as a Lt Col) were sent to recce these tunnel systems and see where we could best be utilised in the Corps. The pair were hence forth known as the Tunnel Rat Brothers! I was fortunate enough to visit Mike one morning in late March this year, knowing he was ill and that it was possibly one of our last meetings before lockdown. I was privileged to be taken into his trophy room, more of a shrine to his exploits in the Corps to be fair. He had an extension built on the bungalow he and Jeanette loved in Rainton near Thirsk. One of the rooms designated as his study (shrine in my book) which was brimming with memorabilia. There on a specially illuminated shelf was his Tunnel Rat Brothers presentation piece! An educational fact to me but proof of the story, I was in awe - Mike Pallott - adventurer, International Corps ambassador.

I hear Mike spent some time on a submarine around the same time, it was an effort to cross train with 59 Cdo. As a result Mike wore the submariner dolphins with pride having been presented with the honour by the submarine crew, obviously having made an impression on them during his time with them.

When I was RCMO at 21 Engr Regt, there was the 2011 annual Ripon weekend. At a planning meeting, the CO Bobby Walton Knight was dishing out responsibilities and hosting lists etc. The comment was "Head of the Freemasons in Ripon, Mike Pallott" I immediately raised my hand and said, I'll host him Colonel. On the day, Emma and I were in the Mess when a waiter came past with some red wine, Mike and I took a glass and I said, the classic line "Just bring me a bottle"! Five bottle's later, we were amongst the last few standing. Mike asked me why he was invited and I told him, he just laughed and suggested it was just my ploy to get him in the mess to get on it. I told him it wasn't true but he insisted it was lol.

Of course Mike was Bill Rudd's Secretary in the Yorkshire branch having stepped up to the plate when Charlie Dunk passed away so suddenly RIP. Bill was always very appreciative of Mikes work, telling me that he always had the minutes ready for scrutiny on the Monday after the Saturday meeting. Of course they were long standing buddies from 59 Cdo Sqn as well as Mikes time at 9 Para Sqn as the A.O.

When the Yorks branch were asked to leave the Harrogate TAC, Mike was the PSAO at Pontefract and re housed the branch same day. Most of you will remember Bill Rudd for his booming voice and hearing aid. I recall coming to an AEA meeting one day and Mike (in his capacity as branch Secretary) pulling me to one side saying that Bill could hardly hear what any of the branch were saying. As his President sat next to him, you are repeating everything to him from the floor. Would it not be a better set up if you did the Chairman's job and Bill did the Presidents job? I was speechless but instantly saw the sense in the proposal. Clearly Bill knew about it already so no matter what I thought, it was a done deal between the two of them. No sooner had we sat down and Bill announced the changes. Hence it remains Mike Pallott's guidance and foresight I write this obituary on his behalf.

Mike told me himself of his funeral plans and the fact that St. Michaels hospice in Harrogate were already involved in assisting him and Jeanette at home with him being bed bound in his later days. We kept contact regularly and I was privy to the fact that he would never get back out of bed after the hospital had said he would not survive another round of Chemotherapy. He told me that the Ripon freemasons had collected around £1000 in support of St. Michael's hospice and that he would double any funds raised. We as a branch have donated £100 in support of Mike efforts.

All of my experiences and times with Mike Pallott have been so fondly remembered and I for one will miss his counsel and friendship. We as a branch owe Mike a huge debt of gratitude for keeping us on the correct path. Honoured by the Association with his well-deserved commendation for his hard work and dedication to the branch in 2014, it gives me enormous pleasure to count Mike as a friend and brother. Perhaps poignant that it is November and Remembrance weekend as I write this. Mike, we will always remember you, save journey brother.

Mike Pallott was an ardent supporter of ACREOA of course having a foot in both camps! I took him with me, Bill Rudd and Bob Prosser one year - Messy! But Mike was always the perfect gentleman.

## Memories of WOII (QMSI) 'Dusty' De Ste Croix - who passed away 6 July 2020

### John Lee



I first met Dusty when he was appointed QMSI to 131 Indep Para Sqn RE(V) back in the very early seventies and he made an immediate impression as good instructor, able and willing to share his knowledge and also with a good sense of humour as well.

I well remember him taking me aside when I had been appointed Local Sergeant to attend a course at the Int Corps Depot in Ashford and what to expect in the Mess and more importantly what not to do. Advice which was very useful then and in the future. His sense of humour was exemplified when the squadron was at Otterburn in January one year and a sapper was struggling to get up one of the steep slopes, making loud wheezing noises and causing some concern. Dusty's only comment was, 'Don't die Sanger, don't die, there are too many forms to fill in'.

He will be remembered for a big toothy grin and a pair of large horn-rimmed spectacles which always seemed to appear in his photographs.

I do not know of his postings after leaving 131 in 1973 but I understand that he served for some time later in the Jersey Field Squadron (The Royal Militia Island of Jersey), 111 Regt RE. Any further news would be appreciated and of interest.

### Jim Farrier 1937-2020

#### Fred Gray



It is with great sadness that the association was informed that Jim Farrier passed away on Thursday 5 November after a long fight against cancer.

Jim with wife Dorothy - they celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary last year

Jim was a National Serviceman who had extended his two year compulsory term to a three year engagement for him to be eligible for service in 9 Para Squadron. Jim, born in Newcastle 1937 was one of the great characters of the squadron at that time. Never short of a joke being blessed with that sense of humour not fully understood by the southern population of the UK. He also enjoyed breaking into song at any time. He was a member of the squadron cross country team in winning that year's championships in 1958- 59.

He returned to his home city of Newcastle after he completed his National Service and met and married Dorothy and they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary this year. They have two daughters and ten grandchildren who never wanted for anything with two such adoring grandparents as Jim and Dorothy. Jim

also entered into the property business and owned a pub and a number of other properties.

Jim and Dorothy attended the annual reunions of the AEA meeting with a few their former Army mates and friends. They were always good company at the table with Jim commanding the attention of the other guests with his brilliant humour. A friend of mine and a sad loss to the association.

### Paul Ratcliffe

Paul passed away 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020. He served with Airborne Engineers during the period 1944-53. He saw service with 1 Para Sqn, 4 Para Sqn and 9 Para Sqn RE.

Paul had been a member of the AEA soon after its conception and had been a regular subscriber to the journal over the many years. His daughter stated that Paul had great pleasure in reading of his fellow colleagues and was interested to read of the exploits of not only 9 Para Sqn but of happenings within the modern Airborne Forces.

## We Will Remember Them



## Photos from Inside Rear Cover

These photos were on the inside rear cover of the original printed version

### 1 Troop 9 Indep Para Sqn RE -1961



John Tonna, Alan Peak, Jimmy Brown, Bob Cooper, Tom Downie, Mick Fisher, Ken Turk, Dave Millet,  
Alfie Fisher, Martin Camp & Kevin McGrath

Chris Chambers, Dai Rees, Ian Cook, Johnny Wall, Ken Bowen, Fred Robson, Brian Watton, Ken Maybee,  
Terry Mulligan, Mike Sheldon, Nogger Morris, & Chris Bedford

Scouse Andrus, Danny Hart, Don Wallace, Jimmy Simpson, Punchy Mowett, ?, John Smith, Fred Fox, Bob  
Roberts, Ticky Wright, Noddy Mearns

John Smee

Derek Whiteway

Terry Wick

### 70<sup>th</sup> Normandy Anniversary Trip





## Association Merchandise

Shop Manager - [REDACTED]

### Ties

Association Ties (Pegasus Logo)	18.00	1.50
Anniversary Ties (Wings & Pegasus Logo)	18.00	1.50
9 Para Sqn Ties (Wings Logo)	18.00	1.50
Bow Ties (Wings & Pegasus Logo)	12.00	1.50

### Badges

Association Blazer Badge	15.00	1.50
9 Sqn Blazer Badge	15.00	1.50
Lapel Wings (Blue enamel)	3.50	1.50

### Clothing

Association Sweatshirts (Maroon or Blue with Logo S / M / L / XL)	17.50	3.50
Association Sweatshirts 'V' Neck (Maroon or Blue as above)	17.50	3.50
Association Polo Shirts (Maroon/ Blue with Pegasus Logo S/ M / L/XL)	14.50	3.50
Association T Shirt (Maroon or Blue with Logo S / M / L / XL)	9.00	2.00
Association Shower Proof Fleece (Maroon or Blue with 'Airborne Engineers' Logo M / L / XL)	29.00	3.50
Baseball Cap (Blue or Maroon with Pegasus & Wings Crest)	8.00	1.50

### Miscellaneous

Association Shield	22.00	3.50
Association Cuff Links	10.00	1.50
Pegasus Tie Clip	6.00	1.50
Ladies Long Polyester Scarf (Pegasus Logo)	14.00	1.50
Ladies Pegasus (Gold Coloured) Brooch	3.50	1.50
Key Ring (Pegasus Logo)	2.00	1.00
Fridge Magnet (Pegasus Logo)	2.50	1.00
Paper Weight (Pegasus Logo)	5.00	2.00
AEA Car Sticker (Pegasus in RE colours with website address)	2.00	0.60
AEA Car Front Grill Pegasus Badge (Airborne Engineers Lettering)	12.50	1.50

Please note: P&P cost refers to UK locations only

All cheques to be made payable to:

"Airborne Engineers Association".

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