



# Airborne Engineers Association

Regd Charity No: 1009201

## NEWS LETTER

APRIL 1995

PRESIDENT

Major General G Field CB OBE

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## Chairman's Piece

Dear Members,

Here we are again with the first Newsletter of another year. You will of course have noticed the new format and presentation to which the credit must go to Colin Parker's team and our Secretary Ray Coleman.

You will no doubt appreciate, to produce over 750 newsletters three (3) times a year is a tremendous drain on our financial resources. You may also be aware; our only source of income is the enrolment fee and the small profit from the shop. We are therefore looking for other means of raising income and maybe we should consider a small charge for the Newsletter. The committee is looking into the matter and we will keep you informed and it will certainly be an item on the 1995 AGM

We are taking an interest in trying to identify the remains of an unknown Sapper who was killed at Arnhem. I have received some information about persons who were not recovered, for example who they were, when and where last seen and how they were killed. I would ask members who have any information regarding missing persons, to be kind enough to write to me. Please try to give as much detail as possible to help me in this matter.

It is with regret that I have informed our President, due to work commitments and other matters, I feel I must resign as Chairman of the Airborne Engineers Association. This decision has not been taken lightly, but I feel I will not be able to give the Association the attention that it deserves and needs. I have been honoured and proud to have been your chairman since our conception. Now after nearly seven (7) years it may be time we had a new driver at the wheel. So gentlemen, I ask you again to look to yourself and to your comrades beside you to find someone to step into the position at the AGM in October.

**R F Ferguson**

**Chairman**

**Airborne Engineers Association**

## Ray Coleman- Secretary & Editor

First, may I thank so many people, for their help in my initial period as Honorary Secretary to this fine Association.

Since the last Newsletter, we have the emergence of a new Branch, which is to be known as the North West Branch, under the chairmanship of Brian (Jungle) Jones. This is always a nerve racking time for any new Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer. To all you members in the Cumbria, Shropshire, Chester, Lancashire and North Wales area, please give Brian Jones a ring and your support on **Number Redacted**

On the 8th May, the Norwegians are holding their 50th Anniversary Celebration in Oslo. We will be represented on the main parade by George Fairs MM, Jack Hobbs and Ken Cole. I believe you will agree, three colleagues of whom we can be extremely proud. I have recently received letters from Don Newman in Australia (President of Pegasus "Ex Airborne" Association of Western Australia) and Maurice Barlow from Ruamahunga Bay, Thames Coast, New Zealand. They wish to be remembered to all their friends.

That is sufficient from me now. Enjoy the Newsletter, and I hope to see many of you at all the various functions during 1995!

## Greetings

A Christmas card was received from the British Airborne Forces New Zealand shortly after the last Newsletter went out. They sent Christmas greetings and happy landings in the New Year to all members of the association. A photograph of Cliff Joy, Vic Rhodes, Clive Newman and Bob Grosvenor, accompanied by a letter written by Cliff was also enclosed. He said that the NZ contingent had carried out a parachute decent to commemorate the fiftieth (50th) anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem. The jumpers' ages ranged from fifty four (54) to seventy four (74)!

To any of the 9th who served with Cliff during the sixties, he extends an invitation to share his billet, if ever you manage to get as far as New Zealand!

## Committee Members

[Contact Details Redacted]

<b>Position</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Phone</b>
President	Geoff Field			
V/President	Ian Wilson			
Chairman	Bob Ferguson			
Secretary	Ray Coleman			
Membership	Chris Chambers			
Treasurer	Geoff Howard			
Historian	Fred Gray			
Entertainment	Dave Rutter			
1 Sqn	Bob Jones			
2 Sqn	Ollie Atkins			
3 Sqn	Bob Sullivan			
4 Sqn	Eric Richards			
9 Sqn	OC, SSM, Cpl			
131 TA	Bunny Brown			
591 Sqn	Tony Jackson			
Aldershot	Moggy Metcalfe			
Birmingham	George Barrett			
Chatham	Eric Blenkinsop			
Yorkshire	Bill Rudd			
Shop	Jan Chambers			

## News from Around the Branches

### Aldershot

The year ended for the Branch with a Christmas Dinner held in the Falcon Hotel, Farnborough. We decided this year's dinner would be different, in that it would be dinner and drinks only, with a raffle. It proved very popular with most of those attending. The function was organized by our very able entertainment team of Dave Rutter and Tony Manly with Wally Clift organizing the raffle. All the prizes were donated by members of the Branch or friends, and our funds benefited from the proceeds.

The 1995 programme of events has not been finalized, but we can look forward to a mini cruise to France in the late Spring. We hope this will be a joint affair with the Chatham Branch. Any members of the association are welcome to join with us for this long weekend and information can be obtained from Dave Rutter. His address is in the latest Newsletter, SAE with any postal enquiries please.

Membership of the Branch is forty-four, we would wish to see many more of the Squadron at our meetings and they would be most welcome. Several association members live in the Aldershot area, but are not members of the Branch. Please come along and enjoy a few drinks with old and new friends.

We meet every second Friday of the month; 1945 hrs for 2015 hrs start. Car passes can be obtained from the guard room to allow you to drive up the hill and park outside the John Rock Room. We look forward to seeing you and you can be assured you will be made most welcome!

## Birmingham

Looking back over 1994, the Branch continued to make steady progress, with our reputation getting known and new members joining. We held a few functions last year, culminating in our annual Christmas Dinner in the B U S.F. Club in Birmingham City Centre.

It was well attended with some 120 diners enjoying a superb meal. The room was laid out in traditional Mess order, provoking lots of memories and just the right amount of etiquette to ensure a pleasant atmosphere It generated into the usual thrash after the last speaker and the poet - you remember?

1995 is already being planned, with members being charged with small jobs to do and places to visit, for events and socials to take place. Of these I will keep you informed, and if any member is in Birmingham on the 2nd Thursday of the month, come and see us We are in the British United Services Club, Gouch Street, Birmingham City Centre.

## Chatham

We are looking to 1995 to be a year for growth in our membership We were most heartened by Ray Coleman's notice in the February issue of the Sapper, which hopefully will bring in some new members. It is our intention during the year, to maximise the use of the media, spreading the word of our existence as an AEA Branch We trust the exposure will bring some new faces to the branch and Association.

There are of course many AEA members in our catchment area, who simply live too far away to be active members of our monthly evening meetings. For example, those personnel residing in East Sussex, East Kent and South East London. So, with that in mind we draw their attention to two events this year, which may enable them to come along with their families and share our company.

### **May 8th- Public Holiday Medway Towns VE Day**

This function is to be held in the historic Dockyard, fully funded by the Council (i.e No entrance fee). The Royal British Legion are organising a march of all Service Associations, which will form up in Wiffens Avenue to march off at 15.00 hrs. The parade will be led by the band of the royal Marines and entertainment at the Dockyard will be provided by the New Phoenix Players. The lounge, hall and bar of the RAFA Club will be open from 11.00 hrs to midnight. We would, of course, wish to see a predominance of the Red Berets on the parade! This should truly be a day for celebration.

### **June 18th - Barbecue at the RAFA Club 13.00 Hrs**

We have taken a leaf out of the book of the Yorkshire Branch, and specifically arranged this Sunday function for the benefit of our out stationed members. Tickets will be on sale at, or about, £2.50 per person (**No charge for children**). If you are proposing to attend either one or both these events, please contact:

Graham Harrison:

Eric Blenkinsop:

Numbers Redacted

## Yorkshire

How the time passes quickly, when you have to get your report down to your old boss, from the heady days of being in Amphibious together. Our Branch meets every three (3) months in the local TA Sgt's Mess in Pennypot Lane, Harrogate, North Yorkshire and the dates for this year are:

<b>Fri</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> Mar 95</b>	1900 hours for 2000 hours	Sleep-in with " <b>maggots</b> " provided
<b>Sun</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> Jun 95</b>	1200 hours for 1300 hours	
<b>Fri</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> Sep 95</b>	1900 hours for 2000 hours	Sleep-in with " <b>maggots</b> " provided
<b>Sun</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 95</b>	1200 hours for 1300 hours	Xmas Party - details not yet thought about; let alone finalised!

There is always hot food laid on and the bar timings are those of a proper Mess reflected in the prices. A raffle is a regular feature, which members contribute to when they remember, the prizes and the takings go into the coffers!

An excellent venue, courtesy of Dave Edmunds and his Merry (they usually are) Men! All are welcome and if you are up this way, please contact either Bill Rudd or me and we will give you directions on how to find us: Address's in AEA Directory:

The AEA AGM will be held in Ripon on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1995, in the afternoon with a proposed Dinner Dance in the evening. For those wishing to attend please contact Bill soonest, if you would like to avail yourself of the accommodation that is available for a small fee! Alternatively, a large SAE to me will result in you receiving a brochure listing all the hotels and B&B's in the area.

At present, we are planning on a casual get together on the Friday evening. The rest of the weekend will be as above, with accommodation being vacated on the Sunday. Costing's etc., have not been finalised but you will be notified when they are known.

### Ripon Weekend

This is being held on 16th, 17th, and 18th June 1995, it would be good to meet fellow members there. We are looking forward to seeing John Vickerman on parade with the AEA standard and Roy King with the Ripon REA standard. This adds the correct amount of colour to the proceedings!

### Chatham Weekend

Members of our Branch combined with Ripon REA will be attending the Veterans Weekend and looking forward to renewing old friendships.

Enough advertising! Branch meetings have an attendance of 20 plus and at our January 1995 meeting we had 14 ladies present, who are an important part of our Branch. We are in a sound financial state and our membership is slowly growing, as the word gets around concerning the AEA However, still no sign of that rare creature called a "**servicing AEA member**"!

It's with regret I have to report the deaths of Bob Lindsay and Sam Hall MM. May they rest in Peace.

## North West Branch

Now hear this! Ye of little faith - The Association has a new Branch - AEA North West. The first meeting consisted of myself, Tom Purves, Stan Lyng, Bill Oliphant, Tony Hogan and Harry Whitewas held at my home on Sunday 4th March 1995. A Chairman (myself) Hon. Secretary (Tom Purves) and Hon. Treasurer (Tony Hogan) was volunteered.

Our next task is to go North West wide. Having trawled through the 1994 register there are some 35 members in the North West, including North Wales, Lancashire, Cumbria, Cheshire, Manchester and Merseyside areas. The next meeting is on Saturday 29th April 1995 and will be held in the Royal British Legion Club, Thatto Heath (St Heleus) at 12.30. A bar and a buffet lunch will be available. That is all for this day's work, more later. Brian W Jones - Chairman.

**Phone Numbers for contact: - Chairman:** **Number Redacted** **Hon. Secretary:** **Number Redacted**

## Chris Chambers - Association Membership Secretary

Since the last "News Letter," a further Fourteen (14) Sappers have joined us, detail as follows:

George Francis	9 Squadron	1949 to 1951
Ivor Anderson	591 Para Sqn R E	1943 to 1945
Peter Coyle	British/Rhodesian Engineers/RH Special Forces	1975 to 1980
Eric Cross	300 Sqn T A 131 Engineer Regt (Airborne)	1950 to 1952 1954 to 1955
James Middlemass	9 Indep Para R E	1943 to 1974
Michael Marshall	9 Indep Para Sqn R E	1967 to 1971
John Weddell	3 Para Sqn R E / 9 Indep Para Sqn R E	1944 to 1952
Kevin Blacow	9 Para Sqn RE	1992
Dave Brown	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1971 to 1980
Vincent O'Neill	9 Para Sqn RE	1994
Alan Brice	9 Indep Para Sqn R E Rhodesian Engineers	1962 to 1969 1973 to 1980
Godfrey Rossie	9 Indep Para Sqn R E	1951 to 1956
David Jewell	591 (Antrim) Para Sqn R E	1942 to 1948
Donald Barrett	261 Airborne Park Sqn R E / 1 <sup>st</sup> Airborne Division	1945

**To all of the above, "Welcome to the Association." We look forward to meeting up with you at forthcoming events**

**Taffy Brice** wishes to be remembered to all who know him! He also extends an invitation of accommodation to any associate member who plans to visit South Africa for the Rugby World Cup.

**Mick Mathis** who served in the Squadron 1977-1981 would like to send his best wishes to all members of the association and especially to Staff Sergeant Adam Frame. His new address can be obtained from the Membership Secretary or Fred Gray.

### **Change of Address**

Would members changing their address, please inform the Membership Secretary ASAP. Several newsletters had to be redirected and no doubt some have not reached their intended destination. The letter is the only means of contact for more than half of the association membership, once contact has been lost, it is very difficult to re-establish. We would also like to know of any omissions and mistakes in addresses, particularly postcode. **Fred Gray also wishes to know about any decorations you may have received.** If they are not on the latest address label then we do not have them, so please help us to keep an up to date record.

May I take this opportunity to wish the newly formed

### **North West Branch**

Up there in Merseyside, Good Luck! May they grow in numbers over the years to come, hope to make your next meeting in April. To all of you that have forwarded names for potential members, "I thank you". Keep up the good work; together we can grow.

**"Happy Landings"**

**Chris**

## Diary of Events 1995

Date	Event
8 <sup>th</sup> May 1995	VE Day
16 <sup>th</sup> / 17 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup> June 1995	REA Ripon Weekend
1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 1995	Airborne Forces Weekend - Aldershot
8 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup> September 1995	REA Veterans Weekend – Chatham
9 <sup>th</sup> September 1995	6 <sup>th</sup> Airborne All Ranks Reunion
24 <sup>th</sup> September 1995	Double Hills Paulton Nr Bristol
21 <sup>st</sup> October 1995	AGM held at Yorkshire Branch

## Citations of Airborne Engineers

I have now started on one of those projects that I expect will take at least two years to complete. I intend to frame and hang in the John Rock Room, the citation for gallantry or brave conduct, regardless of when it was awarded. This covers the period from 1941 through too today. Six have already been, these are: SSM Reg Orton, Sgt Hughie Lake, Colonel Ian Wilson, Major Gen MacKay and Colonel O'Callaghan. To save hours of searching through records at the PRO, I would grateful if those who had such awards would send me a copy of their citation. Wherever possible, a photograph taken about the same time as the award would also be helpful, although any photo will do.

In the John Rock Room we have group photographs of the nine war time Squadrons and Companies dating from 1943, but unfortunately without names. To help in identifying the officers and men, could those people who possess a copy, write down the names of their comrades and send the copy to me. Start at the top left-hand side and work down numbering as you go along each row. Many of 3 Para Sqn have been named, as has about seventy-five of 286 Fd Pk Coy. 9 Airborne Coy is almost complete, thanks to some very diligent work by Arthur Cottle (a nephew of Sapper Cottle killed in Arnhem). 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron is being worked on by Eric Booth and friends. Norman Penny has given the association four troop photographs of 9 Squadron when they were in the Canal Zone 1952-53. Only a few names are known, so please have a good look at them, if you have a copy and send me those names that you remember.

## Arnhem Plaque

On Wednesday 14th September 1994, two ex-sappers of Number 2 Platoon 9th Field Company R E, were invited on behalf of Lt. Col E O'Callaghan MBE MC, and veterans of the 9th to unveil a commemorative plaque to the memory of 2 Platoon sappers who fell because of action around Arnhem Bridge in September 1944.

It is placed in the entrance to Eusibus Grote Church, which suffered great damage during the battle. The Church is now restored with its spire overlooking the John Frost Brug and surrounding countryside.

Some of the sappers have no known graves, but, as the Burgomeister of Arnhem said in his address, "they will be forever remembered in this ideal meeting place".

Among those watching, was Mrs Carol Hudson who had come from Queensland, Australia. She was three months old in September 1944 and hoped to meet up with any of her father's comrades and was unaware of the unveiling. Her father, Corporal Robert Evans, died of his wounds on 25th September 1944

The plaque was commissioned by Arthur Cottle, nephew of Sapper A Cottle who was killed during the battle and has no known grave. The two ex-sappers of 9 Field Company who attended the ceremony were Mr Tom Carpenter and Mr Frank Paine

**Historian - Fred Gray**

## Obituaries

### John Poultney

Wartime veterans of 9 Field Company RE will be sorry to hear of the death of one of their proudest members. John Poultney passed away in the latter part of 1994 but unfortunately no details of the circumstances of his death are known.

John was one of the original sapper's of the Company when it was converted to the Airborne role in 1941. He was with the company in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Arnhem. He was one of the few that came back across the river at the end of the battle.

After the war he emigrated to Australia with his family where he kept meticulous records of 9 Companies' experiences throughout the war Nothing is known of his family or occupation in later years, despite exhaustive enquiries, these may come later.

### Mr Ronald (Sammy) Hall MM

Sammy Hall passed away on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1995 in the Darlington Memorial Hospital after a short illness. He was eighty-three (83).

Sammy as he was known to his wartime comrades and friends, first encountered military action in the Spanish Civil War. He was on the side of the republicans in 1935/36. He joined the Royal Engineers on 20th March 1940 and served with the 6th and 8th Bomb Disposal Companies. He joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Squadron in 1942 and served with them in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Arnhem. He was awarded a Military Medal for his action during the capture of the Primasole Bridge; in Sicily. At Arnhem he was part of the force that held the bridge under the command of Lt Col Frost. He was severely wounded when his right elbow was shot away and subsequently spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner.

After the war, he spent many years as a Special Constable in the town of Darlington, where he kept a watchful eye on the young soldiers from the nearby army garrisons. He was a regular member of the local branch of the PRA and twenty-six members attended his funeral Sergeant Tom Gilley, his Troop Sergeant and four other members of the AEA also attended .

Our condolences and thoughts go out to his wife Winifred and Daughters: Brenda, Susan and Irene and Sons: Gary and Alvin.

### Lt Col Peter Bennett OBE

Members of 9 Parachute Squadron who served during the period 1950-1951, will be saddened to learn of the death of their former OC, Lt Col. Peter Bennett OBE.

A distinguished soldier, sportsman and world traveller he took command of 9 Independent Parachute Squadron R E just as they arrived in Aldershot from Hemeln. The squadron had been reformed from the regular sapper's who had served in the 6th Airborne Division.

In 1953 he went to London to be CRE 16 AB Division (TA) and CO 131 Para Engineer Regiment the largest recruited unit in the TA. He was awarded the OBE for his period of command.

After retirement from the army in 1957 he joined the National Coal Board in an executive position, retiring as Deputy Chairman in 1975.

After retirement he took up many appointments in public life, also spending many hours in his favourite sport of fishing. He married his wife Rosemary in 1951 and had two children, John and Clare with five grandchildren. To them we offer our deepest sympathy.

### Mrs Dorothy Edwards

It is with great sadness, we inform those members who served in 9 Para Squadron during the late sixties and early seventies, of the death of Dorothy Edwards the wife of Charlie Edwards. She died on 15th January after a long illness and her funeral was held in the Aldershot crematorium attended by her family and many friends. She will be sadly missed by all those who knew her.

Our deepest sympathy to Charlie, son Michael and daughters Catherine and Patricia.

## Association Shop

Items available and applicable pricing!

<b>Description</b>	<b>Price</b>	<b>Postage &amp; Packing UK</b>
<b>Association Ties</b>	£12.00	£0.50p
<b>Association Blazer Badges</b>	£10.50	£0.50p
<b>Association Jumpers</b> Maroon with Blue Pegasus & words "Airborne Engineers" (Sizes: 38" - 48" to order)	£17.00	£2 40p <b>Recorded Delivery</b>
<b>Association Sweatshirts</b> Maroon & logo as jumpers-Sizes: Med/Large/X-Large <b>to order</b>	£13.00	£2 20p <b>Recorded Delivery</b>
<b>Association Polo Shirts</b> Fred Perry Style, Maroon with Logo- Sizes: Large/X-Large	£12.20	£2.20p <b>Recorded Delivery</b>
<b>Association Shields</b>	£13.50	£2 25p <b>Recorded Delivery</b>
<b>Book "The 9th" by Tom Purves</b>	£14.00 <b>Membership Price</b>	£3 50p <b>Recorded Delivery</b>
<b>Stick Pins c/w Parachute Wings</b>	£2.50	£0.40p