



# **Airborne Engineers Association**

Regd Charity No: 1009201

## **NEWS LETTER**

**AUGUST 1995**

**PRESIDENT**

**Major General G Field CB OBE**

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## Chairman's Piece

Dear Members,

Welcome to another exciting edition of the AEA Newsletter. The Newsletter is put together by our intrepid team of reporters, led by Ray Coleman, scouring the countryside searching for items of interest to members. Much has been done behind the scenes, by the committee, in bringing you the news and information. I take this opportunity on your behalf, to thank all the "authors" who have produced items for inclusion. However, I ask all members to look to themselves, as sources for articles that may be used in future editions. Please forward all contributions to Ray, who will prepare them for publication.

I have again written to the British Embassy in The Hague, offering our assistance in identifying the unknown Sapper, but we have yet to receive a reply. Many thanks to Eric Richards, 4 Squadron, for the information he forwarded on a missing Sapper and Glider Pilot.

As you are no doubt aware, the AGM this year is to be held in Ripon on the 21st October 1995. It promises to be a good weekend, so I look forward to seeing you there, giving your support to the Association.

That takes me nicely on to the "Airborne Sappers" reunion, which is being prepared for 1996 at Aldershot. Much of the work, if not all of it now, is being done by Dave Rutter who has provisionally booked a location and a group. This will be an item for the meeting following the AGM, so your ideas and more importantly your support in 1996 is needed.

This will be my last contribution as Chairman to the Newsletter, I cannot sign off without giving my sincere thanks to all the members of the team, who have helped me in my role over the last six years. Not wishing to sound like Richard Attenborough and going on forever, I would like to mention a few, Joe Houlston, John Thompson, Jan Chambers, John Shave, Tony Jackson, Fred Gray and of course General Mike. They gave the support needed to get the Association off the ground. More importantly, I would express thanks to every individual member who has joined the Association and formed this unique family of **"Airborne Engineers."**

**R F Ferguson Chairman Airborne Engineers Association**

## Appeal

Our Chairman has received a very distressing letter from the Doctor of Maika (Mike) Qarikau, stating he has a terminal illness Mike served in 9 Independent Parachute Squadron from 1961 to 1968, being the first Fijian to do so. He was an extremely likeable colleague, respected and admired by all who knew him.

It is intended to send Mike back to Fiji for approximately two-months, so his family and relations can meet together again This must take place quickly, as the deterioration in his mobility will start well before the New Year

An Appeal Fund has been started by the Association to raise the necessary money, to send Mike home, pledging £250.00 from our funds Additionally, we would wish to express our thanks to the Airborne Forces Security Fund, who have donated £1,000.00. However, we urgently seek further donations from Branches, Clubs and individuals to achieve this goal.

**All cheques/postal orders should be made payable to the MQ Appeal and sent to Bob Ferguson, 143 King Georges Avenue, Regents Park, Southampton SO1 4LE.**

**Please do not contact Mike or Brenda;** Mike has no knowledge of just how ill he is, or of our Appeal.

**Please be Generous!**

## Ray Coleman- Secretary & Editor

Much has happened in the Association since our last publication Many of our members have been fully involved in **VE events all over the country**. Two of our members, George Fairs MM and Bob Sullivan MBE, undertook a **visit to the Manor County Junior School in Farnborough**. The Association received a written request from twins; Adam and Mark Dewey, whose class were studying Britain during the War. George and Bob were amazed at the very articulate and intelligent questions asked by the children and surprisingly the main topics raised were about rationing, the evacuation of children and the blitz, not the battles as were anticipated! However, our stalwarts coped and answered all questions put to them. They were thanked by the Headmaster Mr Hugh Jeffries and the class, for the very informative and enjoyable visit.

Our **Roll of Honour** is now in place, in its magnificent cabinet at the Royal Garrison Church of All Saints, in Aldershot. The Roll of Honour records the names of soldiers who gave their lives while serving as Airborne Engineers.

During early May, six members of the Association, Leslie Bryant, Ken Cole, George Fairs MM, Tony Hepper, Jack Hobbs and Tony Houghton, attended the **50th Anniversary Celebrations in Oslo**. It was a very full programme with many visits and parades. The Norwegians were wonderful hosts and our representatives thoroughly enjoyed their three-day adventure!

It is marvellous to announce the formation of another branch of the Association. The Northern Ireland Branch, based in Antrim, will cover the whole of the province. We wish them well as they join our other enthusiastic and vibrant branches in Aldershot, Birmingham, Chatham, Yorkshire and North West branches.

Recruiting, has again been good through the hard work of Chris and Jan Chambers. So why not help and get those old pals, who are not yet members, to join our very special Association. **Please contact Chris Chambers on 01252-316579.**

Many old friendships were rekindled over a few pints at **Airborne Forces Weekend** in Aldershot this year. The weather was a great excuse to stay in the bar and put the world to rights! Again our "Standard" was to the fore in the main parade, proudly being carried by John Vickerman.

In closing, I hope to see you all at the AGM in Ripon on Saturday 21st October 1995. The Yorkshire branch has arranged for a really marvellous weekend. **The only requirement is your support!**

## News from Around the Branches

### Aldershot Branch

The branch held its **Annual General Meeting on the 9th May 1995** and experienced a disappointing turnout. Slightly more than one third of the members were present. Nonetheless, we managed to decide how the branch was to be run in the coming year. All the present committee members volunteered for a further year of duty in their present posts, with Tony Manley taking on the additional duties of Assistant Secretary

There will be four organised social events, besides Airborne Forces Weekend, a Christmas Dinner and the Association AGM. This was considered sufficient for the year's activities. Suggestions for social events included, the ever popular Sunday Lunch on a river barge restaurant, theatre night, beer and skittles evening and a second visit to the Tower of London in the evening.

George Fairs MM and Bob Sullivan MBE, answered a **request from a local primary school** to attend and discuss various aspects of the Second World War Details of their exploits appear in the News Section. A worthwhile and satisfying day for George & Bob, pupils and staff!

For those members who made the **trip to Cherbourg**, it proved to be a weekend with a difference! It gave us the opportunity to sample life on a large ship at sea and have a few drinks, without the worry of driving home. The wives seem to spend most of their time in the on-board duty free shop. However, this was just a practice run for when they were let loose in the French Supermarkets! The return journey; was much of the same, apart from the road works just outside Portsmouth. Some of us almost missed the sailing time on the outward journey. Nonetheless, it was considered well worth the effort to make the trip. Wally Clift, is determined to give the impromptu tour of the A3 around Guildford a miss, the next time he goes to Portsmouth!

We hold our meetings the second Friday of each month, in the convivial surroundings of the "John Rock" room, located in 9 Squadron lines, Rhine Barracks. Any former and present member of the Airborne Engineers, is most welcome to come along; to meet old friends and have a few drinks!

## Birmingham Branch

The branch has been busy over the last few weeks, with regular meetings and a **Beer & Skittle evening** at a country pub, just outside Birmingham. Everybody who attended this night, had an enjoyable time! A **Pig Roast** was organised for July in a local Rugby club, which brought out the reserved characters in our midst. As the surroundings were not too dissimilar to the N.A.F.F.I. on a food night, the wives may have a different version! The Ripon branch AGM and social was attended by some twenty (20) members, who travelled up by coach, Poor Old Ripon!!

Remember the Dhala Road? If you were there, this branch has acquired the **Dhala Road ties**, at no little trouble by a Birmingham branch member. If you would like one, **contact Brian Care (0121-553-2492) who will attempt to oblige from current stock!**

We also intend to visit the "**Trent Chase Tragedy**," where ten (10) men from 300TP 131 Independent Para Sqn TA drowned. This will be on the 23rd/24th September. Should you be interested to attend, again **contact Brian Care on the above telephone number.**

On a lighter note, if any members are in Birmingham on the second Thursday of the month, come and have a beer with us at the B.U.S.C., Gough Street, off Queensway, Birmingham City Centre. **You will be most welcome!**



## Chatham Branch

The **VE Day celebrations at Chatham** were a great success, with the local population responding magnificently to the day's activities. Several of our members took part in the parade and there was a good display of "Red" & "Sand" coloured berets. The day's festivities were brought to a most enjoyable conclusion, by several swoops down the Medway, by a pair of WW2 fighter aircraft. Followed by a spectacular firework display, with much "**Ooohing & Aaahing**"!

At the time of writing, we look forward to the **11th June Barbecue**, as this will be the first daytime function of the branch. We hope it will be a successful venture! Our entertainments team of Mick Fisher, Chris Reid & Keith King, fully supported by our energetic Secretary, Graham Harrison, put a great deal of effort into the organisation of our entertainments. We are assured the Barbecue will be all right on the day, but rumour has it, if Mick puts on the apron, the sausages will be burnt!

We continue to attract members from East Sussex. A positive response has been received from two out stationed associate members, Bert Fordham and Terry Porter. We hope there will be others following soon!

**REA Veterans Weekend, 8th/9th & 10th September 1995**, affords a unique opportunity to take advantage of meeting up with old friends and AEA members. The programme will be identical to last year and is as follows:

**Friday 8th September - 18:30-19:30. Happy Hour** with all ex-Airborne Engineers who are attending the Darland Boys Dinner. **19:30 to late**, a **Buffet Dance reception** for all AEA members attending the weekend. The ever popular "Ed Kelly" will provide the music for the evening and we are confident our ladies will again provide a superb buffet! Unfortunately, it will not be possible to issue complimentary tickets this year, but we feel at £5.00 per head, we shall be offering good value for money.

**Saturday 9th September** - Those AEA members planning to attend the 6th Airborne Division RE reunion dinner at the Victory Club, who are accompanied by their ladies, need to note, a separate dinner for the ladies is being arranged. This will take place in the Grille Room at the Victory Club. This was a huge success last year and proved to be excellent value for money!

A coach will be organised for all persons wishing to attend, at a cost of approximately £8.00 per person, including return of journey. The cost may vary according to numbers of personnel requiring this facility.

To help in the organisation of the catering and transportation, those personnel planning to attend one or all the functions outlined above, please complete the "Pro-Forma" in the rear section of the Newsletter and send it to our Secretary **Graham Harrison, 2 Fairfax Close, Rainham, Kent. ME8 9SZ**

**News from Others-We** recently received a letter from Mike Gratton (9Sqn 1949-1953) in Canada who is hoping to attend the October AGM in Ripon. He mentioned other members of B.A.F.A. Canada, Lt. Peter Silverman (9 Sqn 1957-1962) and David Rance (9 Sqn 1959-1964). We also hear on good authority, George Jones (9 Sqn 1949-1957) is planning to visit the UK from Western Australia this year. Nobody knows his itinerary, so he could be on an initiative test! For those members who are ex-3 Para Sqn, you will be pleased to learn that Jim and Mary Rogers celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on Friday the 2nd June 1995.

**The Association Newsletter:** In conclusion we congratulate Ray Coleman, Colin Parker and his team on a superb effort. We note the Chairman's concern regarding financing the Newsletter and we will endeavour to be as supportive as possible.

## Yorkshire Branch

Our Branch meets every three months in the local TA Sgt's Mess in Pennypot Lane, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The meeting dates for the remainder of this calendar year are:

**Friday 29th September** 1995-1900 Hrs for 2000 Hrs (Sleep in with "Maggots" provided) **Sunday 3rd December** 1995-1200 Hrs for 1300 Hrs (Xmas Party)

There is always hot food laid on and the bar timings are those for a proper Mess, along with associated prices! Branch meetings have an attendance of 20 plus and we are well supported by our ladies. Still no sign of that rare creature a "**servicing AEA member**"! We have seen some new faces and a few old ones have been noticeable by their absence, but with the trips abroad etc.; it is not surprising.

The **AEA, AGM** will be held in **Ripon 21st October 1995** in the afternoon, with a Dinner Dance/Buffett in the evening. For those wishing to attend, avail themselves of accommodation, catering and the Dinner Dance, please complete the form at the rear of the Newsletter Alternatively a large SAE to me, will result in you receiving a brochure listing all the hotels and B&B's in the area. For those travelling long distances, we will have a casual get together on the Friday night. Accommodation needs to be vacated on the Sunday. We would ask you to complete the detail, tear out the perforated page and send with the correct cheque amount on or before the 1st October 1995.

**Chatham Weekend:** Members of our branch, combined with Ripon REA will attend the Veterans Weekend and we look forward to renewing old friendships.

**The CHAS Saga,** Bill Rudd phoned early one Sunday morning to inform me, "Ginge" Grocock supported by John Wilkinson and Tony Stone, were walking from Kin Ross in Scotland to Bolesover in Derbyshire. The walk was in aid of the Children's Hospice Association of Scotland (CHAS) and urgently needed RE Cap badges, Panic! Within an hour, not only had they been correctly badged, but my youngest daughter Lindsi and I were busy rattling collecting cans in the Square at Ripon! A good way to spend a Sunday morning!

Well; the lads moved off south and we next met up with them at Hardwicke Hall. The same day, Bill Rudd, Charlie Dunk, Baz Henderson, John Hughes and I were on parade to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the PRA. There were many Airborne Sappers on parade and quite a few had never heard of the AEA, but they have now!

In came "Ginge" and gave a very interesting speech with John. After which, the buckets went round for a collection! "Ginge" was next seen pushing a wheelbarrow along the road to his final destination. He was ably supported by some members of 4 Para, who were practising mobile VCP's en route, (Much upon the lines of Dick Turpin!) Arrival in Bolesover, some 330 miles later, saw "Ginge" in pretty good shape. The total money collected was expected to exceed the original £10,000.00 target. The final figure will undoubtedly be published in the Newsletter. It was great meeting these guys and to give them a little support, not only for their good cause, but because they were part of The Squadron.

Again, I would take this opportunity to send my thanks to the Secretaries of the other branches, for kindly sending their minutes. It is a good way for us all to keep with what is going on. Good Luck to the new North West and Northern Ireland branches. Pleased to see the trip to Norway was such a success.

## North West Branch

We recently undertook our second meeting of the branch, on Saturday the 29th July 1995. We had twelve (12) members present and the branch strength now is twenty-one (21). We meet every three (3) months and the next meeting is on the 7th October 1995. The branch will hold its first AGM on the 24th April 1996, after which there will be a Dinner Dance for all members and their guests. On the 20th August 1995, members' present at the branch meeting of the 29th July 1995, will attend Liverpool Football Ground at Anfield for a commemorative parade, "Tribute & Promise," which is being organized by the British Legion & SSAFA.

Due to the illness of our Chairman's wife Morag, who we are delighted to advise is now recovering, our news is not so extensive. However, we expect to contribute more fully to the Newsletter in the future.

## Northern Ireland Branch

As the newest branch of the association, I thought I would write a few words to let everyone know of its existence. The branch was formed on 24th May 1995 with a membership of approximately thirty (30). Having just recently moved from SSM 9 Sqn to take up RSM of 25 Engineer Regiment, I noted there was many ex-9 Sqn serving over here. W02 "Molly" Molyneaux, Major I. Rosenvinge and I, decided we should try to form a branch in Northern Ireland. I contacted the association and they steered me in the right direction.

The date was set, the function room booked, the meeting opened! We were fortunate to have Ray Coleman Secretary of the AEA and Brigadier I.D.T. McGill, Commander HQ UKLF present at our first meeting; which went off extremely well. A total of fifteen (15) members attended the first meeting, including a civilian, Mr A.G. Iles. With this successful opening, we have planned to meet every two months to remind ourselves of **Airborne** years! Best wishes to all our friends from the Northern Ireland branch.

## Association Membership Secretary

Since the last "News Letter," a further twenty-two (22) have joined us, detail as follows:

Peter Hault	9 Para Sqn RE	1982-1984
Edwin Wren	3 Para Sqn R.E., 2 Para Sqn R.E. A/B Park Sqn, 9 Para Sqn R.E. 131 Para Regt. T.A., 9 Para Sqn 131 Para Engr. Regt. T.A.	1943 to 1958
Ralph Young	9 Independent Para Sqn R.E.	1959 to 1966
John McCarthy	9 Independent Para Sqn R.E.	Total Service 21 Months
David Pearce	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1979 to 1985
Pete Marlow	5 A/B Bde. H.Q., 9 Para Sqn R.E.	1990 to present
Karl Roose	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1981 to 1990
Paul Moore	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1981 to 1990
William Jarvis	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1985 to 1990
Neil Johnson	9 Para Sqn RE	1984 to 1989
Andrew Meadows	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1985 to 1994
Barrie Ladlow	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1955 to 1956
Allan Marshall	300 A/B Sqn R.E.	1950 to 1957
Robert Turnbull	9 Sqn R.E.	1949 to 1957
Joseph Timberlake	9 Airborne Sqn R.E.	1946 to 1948
Daniel Diamond	9 A/B Sqn R.E.	1950 to 1951
Timothy Van Der Kraan	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1978 to 1983
Donald Shaw	299 Para Engr. Sqn R.E. (V) 9 Independent Para Sqn R.E.	1956 to 1962
John Copson	R.E. Postal Unit (16th Independent Para Bde)	1959 to 1961
Paul Nash	9 Para Sqn R.E. Field Coy. R.E. (Airborne) Airborne Sqn RE	1990 to 1993 1945 to 1947
Paul Eldred	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1985 to 1988
Jim Riddle	9 Para Sqn R.E.	1982 to 1989

### To all the Above, "Welcome to the Association"

May I remind you all again, please keep me informed when you change your address, especially our serving members, when you change units. Just to refresh your memories, all changes of address should be sent to: -

**Mr Chris Chambers Membership Secretary 24 Longfield Road Ash Nr Aldershot Hants. GU12 6NA**

My thanks to all of you who have written to me of late, keep spreading the News on the Association. We are still growing and it is most encouraging, especially the lads of 9 Para Squadron taking an interest and joining our ranks. We hope, they in turn, will persuade their mates to follow suit!

Last but not least, Best Wishes to W01 Dick Brown in his new \*\*\*\*Hats posting, out there in \*\*\*\*\*  
Congratulations to him for setting up the local AEA branch, **Well Done!!!!**

**"Happy Landings" Chris**

## Historian- Fred Gray

### Memories of VE Day- by Tom Carpenter



On VE Day 1945, I was on repatriation leave, at the home of my parents in Birmingham. I had spent the last eight months of the war as a POW, having been wounded and captured in the battle for Arnhem bridge in September 1944. The POW camp Stalag X1B was in Fallingbostal in North West Germany. The camp was liberated by the cavalry of the Guards Armoured Division on the 16th April 1945. The overwhelming joy and excitement of that moment are difficult to describe after months of hunger, packed 400 to a hut, designed to house less than half that number. One blanket per man, sleeping on wooden slatted three tier bunks, the ever present stench of suppurating wounds, rats and fleas in abundance, with a meagre ration of cold water for ablutions. I along with most other detainees' had lost some five (5) stones in weight and we were suffering from severe malnutrition.

On the 17th September, came the landings at Arnhem. My family soon realised my unit was involved and watched the news closely, as things deteriorated daily. The War Department reported me missing on the 20th September. It was only after two long months of uncertainty, confirmation was received by my family that I was a POW.

Eight months later came our liberation. As the days passed, frustration started to build up as we wanted to be on our way home. After seven days we were organized into small groups and deloused by men of the RASC. We then boarded their troop carrying vehicles and with a great cheer, moved off away from this "hell hole" of a place. Kept in our small groups, we were called forward to board our aircraft for the flight home. Our first landfall was Blackbush Airport, near Aldershot. Later in the evening we took off for a reception camp near Bath in Somerset. Here we were given a telegram to send home, mine simply read, "Arrived safe, see you soon-Tom."

It was a good homecoming with both my parents, a brother and my girlfriend Winifred, waiting for me. It was the 26th April, some twelve (12) days before the official VE Day. Those first few days were spent happily visiting friends and relatives, making plans for my wedding to Winifred. When VE Day finally arrived, there were many street parties. Winifred and I visited many of them, seeking out old friends, returning in the evening to bonfires and dancing in Cooksey Street where I lived. We spent hours doing the "Lambeth Walk" and singing around a piano, which had been dragged into the street.

I was finally discharged from the Army in September 1945, after ceasing to fulfil Army physical requirements. I was awarded a small pension of £1 30p (One pound, two shillings and sixpence). VE Day May 8th 1945 was indeed a wonderful experience, but my hopes for a future really began at dawn on the 16th April with the appearance of the Cavalry of Guards Armoured Division, who still had much bitter fighting ahead of them, before the final surrender at Lunenburg Heath.

Tom Carpenter served throughout the war with 9 Field Company (Airborne) RE and was one of the first of the 9th, to join the AEA

## Combat Stress

Although today's Army is engaged in a peace keeping role, it hasn't always been so World War II, Korea, Kenya, Cyprus, Aden, Borneo, The Falklands, The Gulf and the continuing war against terrorism in Northern Ireland, all has taken their toll. The price of winning those wars' was dear, not only those who died, but also those who survived. Some now live in endless misery because of their experiences, constantly relived in their minds.

For those who live with stress or depression, or any related illness, there is help available through the **Ex Services Mental Welfare Society**. If you know of any AEA member requiring such help, there are three (3) centres that can be contacted

1. Tyrwhitt House, Leatherhead, Surrey
2. Kingswood Grange, Lower Kingswood, Surrey. KT20 6UX
3. Hollybush House, By Ayr, Ayrshire, Scotland

Telephone numbers for these centres, are available from BT enquiries, dial 192

## Airborne Engineer Veterans visit Norway for the Liberation Celebrations

A party of twenty-five (25) British Veterans attended the Liberation Ceremonies in Norway on the 7th & 8th May 1995. All the Veterans were from various units of 1st Airborne Division and included six (6) Royal Engineers, as follows:

Leslie Bryant	261 Field Park Company R.E. (Airborne)
Ken Cole	9 Field Company R E (Airborne)
George Fairs MM	9 Field Company R.E. (Airborne)
Tony Hepper	HQRE 1st Airborne Division
Jack Hobbs	1 Parachute Squadron R.E.
Tony Houghton	1 Parachute Squadron R E.

A select number of ten (10) were later presented to HM King Harold V. These included two (2) Royal Engineers, namely George Fairs MM (Gliders) and Jack Hobbs (Parachute), excellent choices.

It was very satisfying to see a high proportion of Sappers in the party, particularly as all Royal Engineer units were represented. Compounding our satisfaction was the party presented to the King, included a higher ratio of Sappers.

Our Norwegian hosts organized a very full programme for the two-day period and were always extremely hospitable. The programme started with reveille at 05.15 hours on the 7th May and continued until late at night on the 8th May, when the official programme ended. An informal party did continue until the early hours of the 9th May, however!

All the Veteran Airborne Sappers were very smartly turned out, with blue blazers, red berets and medals. They were a credit to the Corps as the photograph confirms.



George Fairs MM, Leslie Bryant, Ken Cole, Tony Hepper, Tony Houghton, Jack Hobbs

The first day, 7th May, involved a day trip to Narrik. This involved a flight of just under two hours by charter plane and then a one and half hour drive by coach, from Evenes Airport to Narrik town. On arrival, a Remembrance Service was held in the church. This service was attended by the King of Norway. The Church was packed and although copies of, the order of service was in English, it was conducted in Norwegian and not easy to follow. The choir more than made up for this, as their singing was absolutely splendid.

The next event was the unveiling of a Liberation Monument by the King. The Prime Minister of Norway, Mr Gro Harlem Brudtland, also spoke. The Ceremony lasted about one hour and took place in the open, with clear blue skies and a cold wind. Lunch was then served for about four hundred people in a large gymnasium. Again this

was attended by the King, Prime Minister and many other VIP's. Everyone enjoyed the Reindeer meat and wine from Chile. After lunch, everyone enjoyed the splendid music from the attending Orchestra.

It was about 10pm when everyone returned to our hotel, tired but happy! However, some people did manage to visit HMS Cardiff, moored in Oslo harbour.

Liberation day, 8th May, started at 9.15am when the British party was taken by coach to join the military parade. After a short drill practice and a long wait, the British party formed up in four ranks of six abreast. Commanded by Brigadier Sir Louis Hargroves (South Staffs), we then marched for about half an hour through the streets of Oslo, to Akershus Fortress. At this point the streets were very crowded, with everyone cheering the parade. The standard of marching by the Veterans, was probably not up to the standard of the regular troops. However, considering the eldest was eight-four (84); it was a very creditable performance. The King took the salute and the parade assembled in the Akershus Fortress for the two minutes silence. After the silence, the King laid a wreath at the National Monument. The British party was briefly by the British Foreign Secretary, Mt Douglas Hurd. Then there was a large reception for everyone, hosted by the Norwegian Government. During this reception the ten selected personnel were presented to the King.

After the reception there was a period of free time, it was possible to go aboard the visiting warships in the harbour. As well as HMS Cardiff, there were ships from the United States, France and Canadian Navy's. The day finished with a splendid celebration concert in the Oslo Spectrum, again attended by the Royal Family, Prime Minister and approximately six-thousand (6,000) people. The Prime Minister gave a very moving address.

The programme for the two days was very full, ambitious and not easy to organize. The British party had an excellent Norwegian officer as a guide and he dealt with all problems efficiently. There was an infinite supply of goodwill on all sides and a corresponding determination to make the Liberation Ceremonies a success! A success was achieved and a wonderful occasion was enjoyed by everyone who attended, two days that will be remembered forever!



## 1st Parachute Squadron- 1943

A group of Sappers, minus their Red Berets, en-route to the UK from North Africa in 1943.



**From Left to Right -**

L/Sgt Norman Swift, Cpl Chick Weir, Spr. Bretherton, Spr. Ron Emery, Spr. "Shirley" Temple, Spr. Cyril Ayley, Spr. Reg Orton, Spr. Eric Booth, Spr. "Poacher" Paine, Spr. "Ginger" Good, Spr. "Tich" Heaton, L/Cpl Joe Simpson, Spr. "Black" Douglas, Spr. Bob Jones, Spr. Jock Middlemas, Spr. Dave Urquhart, Spr. Brady.

Norman Swift, Eric Booth, "Poacher" Paine, and Bob Jones are members of the AEA. Spr. Joe Simpson was to be awarded the "American Silver Star" and ten years later, Spr. Reg Orton the DCM in the Korean War. Reg also became 9 Squadron Sergeant Major in 1956 to 1958. Spr. Jock Middlemas is the father of Jim Middlemas, long time MT Sergeant of the Squadron. Unfortunately, Jim Middlemas recently passed away, the details of which are in the Obituary section.

## Airborne Royal Engineers-Victory Parade, London 8th June 1945

This detachment of Royal Engineers under the command of Captain D J Simpson MC took part in the Victory Parade.



### **Standing -**

Spr Dade (591 Sqn), Dvr. Haigh (249 Coy ), L/Cpl Thornton (2nd Sqn ), Spr Cooley (249 Coy.)  
Dvr. Simcock (249 Coy ), Spr Carr MM (1st Sqn.), Spr Simpson (2nd Sqn )

### **Sitting -**

S/Sgt Swift (1st Sqn.), CSM Harrison (2nd Sqn ), Capt. D.J. Simpson MC (1st Sqn ),  
Sgt Ellis (1st Sqn.), Cpl Stuart (2<sup>nd</sup> Sqn)

## Chelsea Pensioners

The following gentlemen are ex-Airborne Engineers and resident at the Royal Hospital Chelsea

Sid Burrell

Tom Duffy

Len Pearson MM

Bill Smith

Eric Shemtelbery

Jim Harding

Alan Gale

## Double Hills Arnhem Commemoration

Parade & Service, Paulton, Near Bristol, Avon 24th September 1995

Fifty-one years ago on a Sunday morning, 17th September 1944, Horsa Glider RJ113 crashed into a field near Paulton, called Double Hills. Twenty-one (21) Sappers of 9th Field Company (Airborne), Royal Engineers and 2 Army Air Corps Glider Pilots were killed when this Glider crashed. These were the very first casualties of the Operation called "**Market Garden**," which was General Montgomery's plan to end the war in 1944.

The 1st British Airborne Division troops; took off from RAF Keevil, near Trowbridge, Wiltshire on that fateful day. They flew over the Bristol Channel, turning back over the Mendip Hills in Somerset, lining themselves up for Arnhem in Holland. Glider No: RJ113 was being towed by a huge Stirling Bomber. Over the villages of Farrington Gurney and Paulton, the tow rope parted, the Glider broke up and crashed into Double Hills Field. Awful carnage prevailed and brave rescue attempts were made by the villagers, but unsuccessfully, as all the men died. The village has never forgotten when the war came to Paulton that fateful Sunday morning.

A fine stone memorial and small garden was built, funded by local people and comrades of those who died. The memorial and garden were duly unveiled by the wartime General, Commanding the 1st British Airborne Division (Major General Urquhart) in September 1979. Every year since, a Parade, Service and March Past takes place to remember the fallen. The land on which the memorial stands, is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall. It was consigned in trust by HRH The Prince of Wales, to the Chairman of the Double Hills Committee, so the remembrance service may take place annually.

**The Service will assemble in front of the memorial at 2.15pm. A fly past will commence the service proceedings at 2.44pm, then a short service, followed by wreath laying and March Past through Paulton Village.**

## News Items

### Veterans Visit Thrills Class 6

George Fairs MM and Bob Sullivan MBE, went back to school at the invitation of twins, Adam & Mark Dewey. The youngsters at Manor County Junior School, Farnborough, wished to be told what life was like during the war. Adam & Mark wrote to the Aldershot branch of the AEA to ask if the AEA could provide speakers about the class topic.



George and Bob's visit thrilled the children of class six (6) and surprisingly the topics were about rationing, evacuation of the children to the country and the blitz. Our two Veterans anticipated questions on the war itself! Nonetheless, George and Bob coped admirably and it was thoroughly enjoyed by pupils and staff! **Well-done lads!**

## Watch Out- In Australia!

The following letter was received from Roy Jackson, formerly of 9 Squadron, now living in Australia.

Lou Gallagher gave us the pleasure of his company "Down Under," namely Melbourne in the state of Victoria Lou, as is his want, engaged himself in that popular Aussie pastime, namely drinking copious quantities of good Aussie beer! His visit coincided with ANZAC Day, so he joined the ranks of the British Airborne Association, marching with other members of 9 Squadron, namely Roy Jackson, Gareth Doyle and Brummie Gee. After the march we all adjourned to a pub for a snack and a pint of beer!

After a couple of hours, Lou, Gareth plus some 22 SAS and Aussie SAS decided in their drunken haze to go for a feed in China Town. They all ended up in a Japanese eating house, would you believe! After they had their fill, they decided to visit another pub. Somehow or other, Lou became detached from the rest of the lads. Naturally the "hunt was on" for Lou.

Some local police who were patrolling the area, were informed of an obnoxious liquid running down the gutter in China Town. They (The Police), traced the putrid yellow substance to one Louis Gallagher, who had decided to leave his mark in Melbourne! After long negotiations, the Police decided not to lock him up and let him go back to the UK. They believed this was better than the continual pollution of the City!

Lou of course, strongly denies the accusations made, primarily because he cannot remember, due to his alcoholic induced haze, nonetheless it's true! Lou has now decided to visit Sydney (God help them) and then up to see Frank Brady, a warning order has gone out to Frank!

By the time this letter finds its way into homes in the UK, Lou will have been deported back. **Cheers Lou!**

## Overseas Visitors

Henry Witcherley, one of our members from Queensland, Australia, paid us a visit during May. Henry arrived before the VE Day Celebrations, which took place in Hyde Park. He brought with him greetings from our members in "Oz" to be passed on via the Newsletter.

While here, Henry visited 9 Squadron and met up with the A/O Capt. Bob Mathews. From the office of Capt. Bob, he telephoned "Jan the Shop," who then met up with him at the Squadron. After a "bit of chat" and a couple of photo taking sessions, they went out to lunch.

Henry enjoyed his visit to the "Shot" as he was posted here many years ago. He also managed to meet up with "Ollie" Atkins and some of his buddies from 2 Squadron, where I believe a good time was had by all!

On Airborne Forces day, we were delighted to meet George Jones and his good lady from Western Australia. George and his good lady are on a "Round the World" trip, which they are thoroughly enjoying so far! **"Are you wearing your socks yet George?"**

**To all our Friends Abroad, We hope you are happy and healthy!**

## Awards

Capt. P V Fountaine RE of 9 Para Sqn RE. was presented with the **QCVC** on Airborne Forces Day, **for his sterling work on Operation Gabriel**, the UN Humanitarian Relief Operation in Rwanda. The presentation was made by Major General H W R Pike DSO MBE Major General Pike was deputising for the Colonel Commandant, The Parachute Regiment. General RA Smith DSO OBE, who was on duty in Bosnia

## Donation of Memorabilia

The Airborne Engineers Association wish to record its sincere thanks to Eric Richards. Honorary Secretary, 4th Parachute Squadron R E Club, for his most generous gesture Eric has donated for the "John Rock" room, the 50th Anniversary (Dutch) Flag, commemorating the Battle of Arnhem. The flag is mounted on a Scroll, depicting the complete history of the Airborne Forces from its conception in 1940, until the battle of The Falklands in 1982

## Mile Swim Challenge

A one mile swim challenge, Ken Hart and Bill Rudd of the Yorkshire Branch are taking part in this challenge on the 13th June 1995, in Ripon swimming baths Funds raised will be for the **Marie Curie Cancer Care**, the largest cancer care charity in the country

Marie Curie provides free nursing care for over 16,000 patients a year and maintains 11 hospices, with the Swimming Development and Education Fund If any branch or individual member would like to sponsor the efforts of Ken and Bill, please send cheques made payable to:

**"Swimfit" c/o Ken Hart 14 Gallows Hill Ripon North Yorkshire HG4 1RF**

All donations to be received by the 14th August 1995 **Any assistance would be appreciated!**

## Obituaries

### 9 Independent Parachute Squadron RE

It is with great sorrow we have learned of the death of **Jim Middlemas**. He died suddenly on the 18th June 1995, in Oman. Jim was sixty-one (61) years of age.

Jim joined 9 Parachute Squadron in 1953 and served the whole of his career with Airborne Forces. He served with 131 Para Engineer Regiment TA at Kingsbury, for two years, during the late sixties. However, nineteen years were spent with the Squadron. His first tour abroad was the Canal Zone in 1953 and he subsequently served in Cyprus, Kenya, Libya, Singapore, Suez, Canada, Bahrain, Jordan and Aden. For most part he was the MT Sergeant and it was in that capacity, he will be remembered by his many friends. A very experienced person in the MT field, there were very few problems he could not overcome. This long military experience stood him in good stead in civilian life.

Jim left the army in 1974 and immediately took up employment with the Costain Group as a store's manager. For many years he worked in Hong Kong, Dubai and the Oman, often meeting friends from the Squadron. He intended to settle in the Philippines, where he had business interests. His untimely death has ended those dreams.

Jim has been brought back to his birthplace in West Lothian. He lies buried next to his father, who served in the 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Squadron in North Africa and Arnhem. Our condolences go to his mother, Mrs Isabelle Middlemas, sister Moira and brother Alistair, son James and daughter Janet. He will be sadly missed by his many friends.

### 9 Independent Parachute Squadron RE

**Charlie Huggins**, aged fifty-eight (58), died suddenly of a heart attack on the 14th February 1995. Charlie served in 9 Sqn from 1956 to 1960.

### 1st Parachute Squadron/9 Airborne Squadron/117 Park Squadron RE

**Bill Fullen**, died at the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle on the 1st May 1995. He joined the 1st Parachute Squadron RE in 1943, later transferring to 9 Airborne Squadron RE. Bill finished his service with 147 Park Squadron, until his demob in 1948. Over the last fifteen (15) years he worked for British Gas. On his retirement, he spent most of his leisure time, gardening and producing fruit & veg for himself and his local landlord (also and AEA member). Bill leaves a daughter, Christine, who has our heartfelt sympathy.

### 3 Airborne Squadron/9 Independent Airborne Squadron RE

**Justin McCarthy**, Mac died on the 8th June 1995. He was a member of 3 Airborne Squadron RE, from 1946 to 1948 and 9 Independent Airborne Squadron RE from, 1948 to 1953. He kept in touch with many old comrades until his untimely death. Our condolences go to his wife, Vivian and his sons and daughters.

### 2nd Para Squadron RE

**Joe Harrison** joined 2nd Para Squadron RE when it was reinforced in North Africa, by a third troop. He was promoted to SSM shortly before the unit landed in Taranto in Southern Italy. He remained with the Squadron, during its advance up the spine of Italy, with 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade Group, during the winter of 1943. He participated in the Brigade's Airborne landings in the South of France in August 1944. In October 1944 he was involved in the advance to the Turkish border, before being withdrawn to Athens. This was to assist in coping with the partisan insurrection against the Greek and Military Authorities

He remained with the Squadron during its subsequent preparations in Italy, for a succession of planned operations behind enemy lines. These operations were subsequently aborted, because of the speed of the allied advance in Northern Italy, during the spring of 1945.



He returned to England, with the Squadron, in the summer of 1945. After its disbandment, he was posted to 249(Airborne) Field Company RE, subsequently being promoted to Warrant Officer 1st Class.

He lived in retirement in the Isle of Man, where he died on the 26th March 1995, at the age of seventy-nine (79). His funeral was attended by many local members of the Royal British Legion and Airborne Forces Associations.

## Association Shop

Items available and applicable pricing!

Description	Price	Postage & Packing UK
Association Ties	£12.00	£0.50p
Association Blazer Badges	£10.50	£0.50p
Association Jumpers Maroon with Blue Pegasus & words "Airborne Engineers" (Sizes: 38" - 48" to order)	£18.00	£2 40p Recorded Delivery
Association Sweatshirts Maroon & logo as jumpers-Sizes: Med/Large/X-Large to order	£13.40	£2.20p Recorded Delivery
Association Polo Shirts Fred Perry Style, Maroon with Logo- Sizes: Large/X-Large	£13.60	£2 20p Recorded Delivery
Association Shields	£13.50	£2 25p Recorded Delivery
Book "The 9th" by Tom Purves	£14.00 Membership Price	£3 50p Recorded Delivery
Stick Pins c/w Parachute Wings	£2.60	£0.40p
Christmas Cards c/w AEA bade on cover-Packs of six	£3.25	£0.50p

Cheques should be made payable to Airborne Engineers Association

\*\*\*\*\***Stop Press**\*\*\*\*\*

Regrettably some items listed as shop stock, have increased in price. This is due to price increase from the manufacturer. Their message was as follows: "We regret to advise, the price of raw cotton and cotton yarn for the manufacture of T-shirts, Sweatshirts, Polo Shirts and Rugby Shirts has increased dramatically this year. This is due to increased demand worldwide and subsequent production shortages. We therefore have no alternative but to issue a new price list, effective from 1st May 1995 **Thanking you all for your continued support!**

Until next time, I remain

Yours Aye!!

Jan

## Committee Members

Position	Member	Address	Code	Phone
President	Geoff Field			
Vice 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			
North West	Alan Marshall			
Northern Ireland	RSM R Brown			
Shop	Jan Chambers			

## Diary of Events 1995

Date	Event
8 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup> September 1995	REA Veterans Weekend - Chatham
9 <sup>th</sup> September 1995	6th Airborne RE All ranks' reunion
11 <sup>th</sup> September 1995	Armistice Day Parade, 22 Engineer Regiment, Tidworth Military Cemetery
24 <sup>th</sup> September 1995	"Double Hills" Paulton Nr. Bristol.
21 <sup>st</sup> October 1995	Yorkshire Branch AGM

# Airborne Engineers Association Annual General Meeting

## 21st October 1995

This meeting will be in the Officers Mess, Deverell Barracks, Ripon on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 1995. It is anticipated members and their wives may wish to arrive pm Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 1995, due to travelling distances.

Accommodation: This will be "spider accommodation IE: clean sheets and blankets at £2.00 per night. Catering: is covered by Civilian Contract and we have kept the charges to a minimum. A full weekend will cost £24.50 including all meals and two nights' accommodation.

Bar: This will be run by the local TA Sgt's Mess from Harrogate

The AGM will commence at 1430 hours and you are asked to be seated by 1115 hours.

Coach Trip: A shopping trip to Harrogate has been arranged for the ladies on Saturday afternoon, when the AGM takes place. Please indicate if your lady wishes to go on this free trip, in order we can book the correct size of coach.

Your return forms should reach me by the 1st October 1995, (clearly stating "Single or "Double" room) in order to arrange accommodation, catering and coach size. The form should be accompanied by your cheque, made payable to "The Yorkshire Branch AEA". Should you require confirmation, please enclose an SAE. Please return FORMS to:

Mr W. Rudd MBE, 5 Redbank Close, Ripon, North Yorkshire. HG1 2LG.

Accommodation		Friday 20/10/95	Saturday 21/10/95			Sunday 22/10/95	Coach Trip
Single £2.00 per person	Double £2.00 per person	Supper £3.00 per person	Breakfast £3.00 per person	Lunch £4.00 per person	Social & Buffet £8.00 per person	Breakfast £3.00 per person	Numbers
Name:							
Address:							
Tel No:							
Date:				Signed:			

## REA Veterans Weekend

8th/9th/10th September 1995

Your return forms should reach me by no later than 21st August 1995, in order to arrange catering and coach size. The form should be accompanied by your cheque, made payable to "The Chatham Branch AEA."

Should you require confirmation, please enclose an SAE. Please return FORMS to:

Mr Graham Harrison, 2 Fairfax Close, Rainham, Kent. ME5 9SZ

Enter number of persons attending in the box provided, against each function.

Buffet/Dance-Friday 8/9/95 @ £5.00 per person	
Ladies Dinner-Saturday 9th September 1995 at the Victory Club PAY ON THE EVENING-a la carte menu	
Coach to Chatham Victory Club @ £8.00 per person	

Name:	
Address:	
Date:	Signed:
Tel No:	Branch: