



Airborne Engineers Association

Registered Charity No. 1009201

Newsletter

DECEMBER 1999

PRESIDENT

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Brigadier G.A. Hewish, MBE

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From our Chairman

Bob Prosser

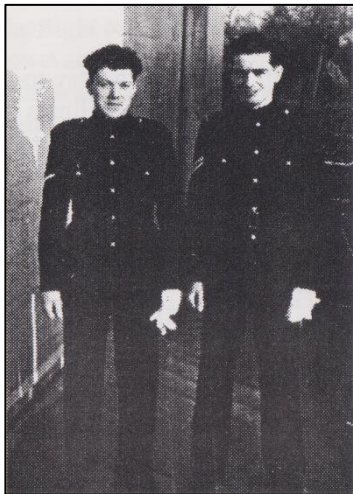
With the memories of laughter and music still ringing in my ears from the wonderful AGM/Reunion so splendidly organised by Bunny Brown and his committee of the Birmingham Branch, I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating all of those concerned for providing the Association with a thoroughly enjoyable and entertaining weekend. Well done to all of you at Birmingham, especially the good ladies who worked so hard behind the scenes in support of their husbands and partners.

A special vote of thanks and congratulations is extended to Tom Ormiston, who has kept the Association on a steady course throughout the 4 years as our Chairman. He has earned a break and a chance to prepare for his retirement. He will be a tough act to follow. I cannot match him for his youthful energy and good looks, but I retain all my enthusiasm and commitment and remain the eternal optimist.

Old friends and comrades have guaranteed their support; also there are many younger talented members in the regions with the potential to bring on the Association to greater heights of success.

I want to be in touch, so please do not hesitate to contact me regarding any business for the Association, my motto is - "Those who try to do something and fail are infinitely better than those who try nothing and succeed at it!"

Past and Present



Phil Taverner (best man) & Bob 1956



Phil & Bob (Birmingham 1999)

Secretary's Notes

by Ray Coleman

Firstly I would like to convey my gratitude to all colleagues that sent cards, wrote letters and to those who visited me during my recent hospitalisation. It really was marvellous and it undoubtedly raised my spirits and helped me through a difficult time. Thank you all once again.

Now to business. I will start with the marvellous AGM/Reunion organized by our Birmingham Branch colleagues. Bunny Brown and his committee did us proud. They ensured that we had good accommodation, good food and the finest company to be with. These ingredients ensured that we all had a wonderful time. I know that many of you have sent letters of appreciation, but I would like to record a unanimous 'vote of thanks' from the Association for all the hard work and consideration undertaken by the Birmingham Branch.

During the AGM a few changes took place; the most important item on the agenda was the appointment of a new Chairman. We said goodbye to Tom Ormiston, one of the finest Chairmen I have known. It was a pleasure working with him, and I have learnt and admired so much from his dedicated service to the Association. However, he is replaced by Bob Prosser; who I am looking forward to working with, as I can already see in Bob's approach, another excellent Chairman with the enthusiasm to pursue the continued wellbeing of the Association as his primary aim. We are extremely fortunate to have a man of this calibre as our Chairman.

I now have an assistant appointed - Charlie Dunk, who will help with the day to day administration of the Association. Charlie ably stood in for me during my illness and is well known to many of you. He will not only be of great help to me, but also to the Association, as he is a fully trained welfare officer.

With the amendments to the constitution accepted we are now able to give recognition for services to the Association by awarding Life Vice Presidency. Our first two nominees were appointed unanimously and our congratulations go to Bob Ferguson and Fred Gray. These stalwarts have done so much over the past ten years to mould our unique Association into the respected formation it is today.

Over recent months many colleagues have attended congregations such as Arnhem, Double Hills and Cromwell Lock to pay their respects to fallen comrades. We are all grateful for their thoughtfulness.

What must be recorded, as the best news for 1999. is that Col Chris Davies, our Association Vice President, has, after undergoing further treatment, been discharged from hospital on Wednesday 10th November. Together with all Association members may I extend hearty good wishes for a full and speedy recovery. From the views of those that have visited Chris, he has demonstrated true Airborne Grit in a determined effort to overcome his illness. We wish Chris and Jenny together with their family a Happy and Healthy Millennium.

Now as we progress towards Christmas and the Millennium, may I take this opportunity to wish you all a Very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Festive Season and Year 2000

9 Para Sqn RE - Summer Holiday

by Lt J Hawkins & Spr Cetti

It was to be a beautiful summer's day. The sun was up and children played. However, a storm was brewing and 9 Para Sqn RE were right in the middle of it.

Front doors were pushed in and phone calls made. The Squadron was being mobilised with a cry of "put your pants on and kiss her goodbye." Someone had decided to holiday somewhere different and Euro Disney was certainly out of the question.

The Squadron was soon deployed to Macedonia on Operation AGRICOLA amid rumours reminiscent of Arnhem. A Brigade lob onto Pristina had yet to be discounted. Pax application forms were at a premium and undergarments were soiled. War dodgers and mongers alike ran amok.

The flight over for most included a civvy jumbo jet ride and some "darling" hostesses. However, the promise of beer and chicks was short-lived. The Petrovac Training Area was limited on nightlife but high on mines awareness and route clearance training. Sgts Livingstone and Harratt utilising their experience from the mines cell in Bosnia coordinated this.

After five days our tour rep. aka the OC. suggested a trip to Camp Piper in Northern Macedonia. Not the delightful resort it was made out to be. Still no chicks or beer, but certainly lots of sun. Temperatures of 49 degrees centigrade in the shade were banded around, from where, no one knows - there was no shade in our field!

Plans contingency plans and amendments to alternative plans were made and unmade but the 'the storm' was yet to break. The original plan of securing the Kacanik Defile was superseded by a Tom Clancy and Boris Yeltsin production. They had formulated a nice World War III scenario. Russians were at the airport (aren't they always?) And more, many more, were inbound. We were going to meet them at arrivals without the 'taxi for Boris' placard or indeed, any complimentary peanuts.

The do or die' brief was given and the resulting frenzy were of epic proportions. In true Squadron style, we put on our best and picked a fine selection of mortar rounds and PE from the wide duty free selection and ... sat on a field with Kate Aidie; she's put on weight and let herself go. so she has.

Only when the temperature had started to drop did three blokes - Bill, Boris and Tony have a chat over a few vodkas and decide that it had all been a big joke! Operation CERTAIN DEATH had been averted and our life expectancy had risen back above three seconds.

The original plan was then back on. The RAF had amassed 8 Chinooks and 6 Pumas (they obviously ran out of food for the BBQ), for an SH insert into the Kacanik Defile. Reminiscent of scenes from "Apocalypse Now" the helicopter force descended upon Kosovo at first light with 6 Apaches in support. Targets were engaged as the Chinooks attempted defensive flying hindered by under slung loads. On reaching the landing zone the adrenaline was certainly pumping as the three troop groupings went on to perform admirably. Notably the QM. Capt Gosling, was brought out of 'retirement' to head up the ad hoc 4 Troop.

With the vital ground cleared. 4 Armd Bde passed through the defile, followed by a plethora of vehicles including the media. NGO's, refugees and Smokey and the Bandit.

There can be no doubt that 9 Para Sqn RE were the first in and certainly gave Boris and Slobodan "One up the Kacanik".

9 Para Sqn RE Kosovo - The Initial Insertion

by 2Lt J E Fossey, Cpl D Balloch & Spr W Hall

At 0300 hours on Saturday 12 June 1999, the men of 9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers, filed out of the darkness of Piper Camp. Northern Macedonia, to begin the initial entry into Kosovo. We were to be an integral part of the largest, and trickiest, NATO operation in its 50 year history; initially transporting 5 Airborne Brigade by support helicopter onto a narrow stretch of Kosovan road, followed by 4 Armoured Brigade's forward passage of lines and the subsequent thrust north.

The build up to the operation had been extremely fast. 1 Troop, with the rest of the Squadron, had been located at Pretrovac Training Area near Skopje only 36 hours previously, carrying out intensive mine clearance and demolition training for the inevitable move north. On the receipt of orders to move to a forward assembly area, the Squadron hastily packed their equipment and were flown to Camp Piper in Northern Macedonia. The flight took us over the Brazdhe refugee camp; the quiet realisation that the facilities in the camps were better than the Squadron harbour area was not lost!

As the sun rose over the mountains, we along with the rest of the 1 PARA Battle Group were sat in a large cornfield awaiting our support helicopters. The Squadron had been told that this was now a peace support operation and not war fighting so the jungle hats and cam cream had disappeared to be replaced with clean faces and, of course, the maroon beret. The arrival of 8 Chinook and 6 Puma helicopters was similar to a scene from *Apocalypse Now*. This time, however, there was no "Charlie don't surf," nevertheless we all realised that we were seconds away from an historic moment. As the Squadron sat in the CH47s, 1 Troop heard the approach of 6 Apache gunships over the Tannoy, and a melodramatic US pilot's voice, "Hello Pegasus, this is Six-Shooter!" At 0500 hours one of the helicopters fired its chaff, signalling to the world's media that the lead elements of KFOR had crossed the border into Kosovo. Everyone was buzzing with adrenaline as we watched the hills and towns of Kosovo pass beneath us. All were keen to begin the task that could make or break COMKFOR's mission. If 9 Para Sqn RE did not manage to clear and open Route HAWK, the follow on elements of 4 Armd Bde would not be able to move through the Kacanik Defile and the strategic plan would fail.

1 Troop's mission was threefold. Firstly, we had to clear a 138m long tunnel of all explosives; secondly, a 136m concrete arch with a concrete deck had to be cleared and classified and finally all possible lay-byes and turning points had to be certified free of UXO and mines in order to allow the forward passage of lines of 4 Armd Bde. This task obviated flexibility, coordination and extensive planning. Every possible scenario was discussed before we went in. This even included the fairly unlikely event of finding VJ (Yugoslavian Army) Light Sensitive Munitions in the tunnel! This was thankfully discounted by our attached EOD detachment.

At 0524 hours our Chinook landed on Route HAWK, the main MSR north to Pristina, and 1 Troop took up an all-round defensive position on the road scanning the hilltops for any signs of activity. As the Tp CV and trailer were released from the Chinook, Cpl Mark Watson headed south towards his Section's objective, the tunnel. We had rehearsed the procedure of clearing the tunnel countless times before but it was still no easy task. Cpl Watson and LCpl Mugger Mills, using hi-tech trip-wire feelers (14 gauge wire) had to clear the outside edges of the tunnel. The theory being that if there were any PMR or MRUD mines the team would locate the wires without initiating any of the devices. Their progress was marked by white spray to prevent anyone going forward into an uncleared area. Luckily, our time consuming tasks had close infantry support provided by 8 Platoon, C Company, 1 PARA throughout. As in the days of Arnhem only a few of the Paras kept overwatch whilst the others set about making the tea. With the tunnel clearance going very much to plan the tension increased immediately as three slack trip-wires were found 20 metres to the south of the tunnel. On closer inspection, the wires fed into a small bean tin which had a rather prominent fuse attached! Sgt George Drysdale and Cpl Hawthorn, our EO advisors blew the device in-situ, making some of the more nervous Paras drop their tea!

South of the tunnel marked the changeover line and 3 Section continued the advance towards our next objective, the bridge. Fortunately, as the section approached the bridge, Cpl Dougie Balloch spotted a trip-wire, still attached to a dangerous device. This was confirmed when the wire was traced to the side of the road. An even bigger metal tin with an MUV Soviet made fuse could be seen under a pile of rubbish and dirt. 3 Section's 2IC LCpl Ginge Lambon spotted the other end of the wire: flattened grass a clear sign that the wire had been cut only recently by its owner. As the EOD team prepared to destroy what turned out to be an improvised claymore,

an EOD Mamba with its huge entourage of vehicles stopped at the southern end of the bridge! It turned out to be the Brigade Commander. Brigadier Adrian Freer, which prompted a hastily worded message sent to Zero by 2Lt Joe Fossey in the form of "Hello Zero, the Big Kahuna is on the bridge, over!" With the Commander waiting, the EOD team blew up the device and, as the vehicles headed north, the Troop continued south. After a quick glance we could see that the bridge was not rigged for demolition and, as SSgt Tom Armstrong took the Troop to clear the remainder of the route, the Troop Commander was left with the unenviable task of classifying the bridge. Special mention must be given to the Tiffy, SSgt Mark Walker, who as the Troop's dispatch rider, proved indispensable and was nicknamed 'REME McQueen' for his efforts that morning.

The 9 Parachute Squadron clearance teams, together with 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn to our south, cleared the Kacanik Defile in less than 5 hours and declared the route 'open'. Only then did the so-called "first men in Kosovo" enter the country, along with the rest of the KFOR contingent.

Lipljan and the Maroon Carpet

by SSgt (SQMS) Blacow

After the initial 5 AB Bde insertion into Kosovo, 9 Parachute Squadron was given the task of dominating the grid square and laying down a maroon carpet in the small town of Lipljan just to the south west of Pristina. The internal security role was welcomed by the Squadron as it meant leaving behind the toolboxes and getting on the street.

Capt 'Digger' Hewson drew up the initial patrol plan with the aid of the 2IC Capt Eugene' Ross and SSM Adam 'the Z' Frame. Shortly after consultation with the new Sheriff of Lipljan, Maj 'Wyatt Earp' Tickell, the master plan was put into action. The first patrols on the streets were met with a short burst of automatic in the general direction of SSgt Ken 'Blanket' Blacow the SQMS, who was at the time taking in a spot of "cheese and wine" in the shape of tea in a rusty airborne mug and a liberated carrot. Undeterred he quietly finished his tea, and then secured the area.

The Squadron soon dominated the town and settled down into normal patrol routine, carrying out VCPs, foot and mobile patrols and generally assisting the RMP in policing the town as well as lifting war criminals and a huge array of Eastern Block weapons.

All callsigns achieved a great deal during their time on the street. A whole load of weapons and equipment was seized, including several SKSs, AKs (47 and 74), AKMS, RPKs, a Dragunov, several mines and grenades as well as sacks full of ammunition. The prize for the most ingenious VCP was awarded to Cpl Jerry 'Horsefoot' Worsfold and his Support Troop lads using two JCB backacters as cut-offs. The field troop callsigns also had a rewarding time. It was quite amazing that Cpl 'Mars Helley' and his team could drink as much local 'kava' as the chick off the Gold Blend advert. Obviously they were just carrying out their duties in enhancing and fostering civil and military' liaison and co-operation.



Tensions are still running very high within the local community regarding the ethnic divide however the Squadron has definitely helped in bringing the two sides together, whilst paradoxically keeping them apart! Who knows, after the tour the Sheriff may get his new badge. Eugene will no doubt get an excellent confidential, the Z will get a new spay job and the SQMS will get a new carrot.

Members of HQ & Sigs Wing

Aldershot Branch

by Fred Gray

Sadly the Branch has lost a further two members since the last newsletter. Bryan Andrews, who had been ill for a number of years, died during the month of September. Bryan served with the Squadron during Operation Musketeer (Suez) in 2 Troop. Many members of the Association attended the funeral service, and he will be greatly missed by all his friends and branch members. John Coleman, formally of 2nd Para Squadron died in October after many years of ill health.

On a happier note, we have been able to welcome three new members into the branch. Ralph and Margaret Pedder, formally with 131 Para Engr Regt TA. Captain Chris and Jean Gosling, until recently the QM of 9 Para Sqn and Phil Tavener, who served with 9 Sqn in the Canal Zone and later in Cyprus and Suez. All are warmly welcomed to the branch and we look forward to seeing them at our meetings and social events.



During August and September we had visits from two overseas AEA members. George Bell and his wife Phyllis were over from New Zealand, and prior to their departure 'down under', attended a BBQ hosted by Bette and me.

The BBQ (front right Phyllis & George)

Ron (Pinky) White with Rene came over from California for the annual re-union of the 1st Parachute Squadron at Donington. Ron and Rene were able to attend the Sunday lunch following our September meeting. Also in the UK and staying with Derek Taylor our branch Chairman, was Dave Rance who now resides in Canada. Dave came over for the AEA re-union at Birmingham. Many of you who attended pre-para training in the early 60's will remember Dave, as he ran the pre-para selection.

We have decided that our Christmas Dinner will be held after all the fuss and bother of the Millennium has died down, probably in late January'. Members of the branch have been invited to attend the Christmas Dinner of the Aldershot Branch of the REA in November. This will be second year that the invitation has been extended, and it is hoped that closer links and goodwill with the REA can be established.

After very serious bouts of illness, two of our stalwart members, Ray Coleman and John Smith are well on the way to re-gaining full health. Ray, having spent a long period in hospital, was well enough to attend the AGM in his capacity as Secretary, and enjoy the ambience of the evening. Although he had to sit out the more serious energy sapping dancing that was going on during the night. John Smith would like to extend his thanks to all those friends that sent get well cards and letters during his stay in hospital. He is now back home and expects to be able to resume full activities in the very near future. We look forward to seeing them both at our next meeting in December.

Our most recent visitor, on Tuesday 9th November, was that of Taff Brice. Taff came over for the Rugby World Finals, and before returning to South Africa blessed us with his presence. Many of you from the early 60 's will no doubt have done a deal or two with Taff (cheap petrol!!) Many stories could be told of his exploits, but this is not a time for character assassination. Great to see you Taff, come back soon.

Chatham Branch

by Eric Blenkinsop

Looking Back - Sunday 22nd August

Well, what a truly memorable occasion this turned out to be. The Five Bells proved to be an excellent meeting place, with a warm welcome and good wholesome food. Apart from a thoroughly good turn out from our own members and their ladies; we were privileged to share the company of other AEA members in Dave O'Dwyer and John Tucker. All had a good time. But there was more to come courtesy of Bert and Dee Fordham at Rose cottage. A truly rambling cottage and garden, which was so captivating. What more could one wish for on a lovely warm sunny August afternoon, than tea and cakes on the cottage terrace with friends. But, there was more to come! We were then privileged to visit Bert's 'playroom' containing a very large model railway layout with superb backdrops and details. On into his bedroom which contained a cabinet simply full of model military memorabilia.

Back down to the terrace and on into the garden, which contains a very old apple tree, laid over at 45 degrees and supported by a stout wood bench. The tree was simply laden with apples - and the trunk of the tree is completely hollow! The days experience can only be described as "Magic."

Chatham REA Weekend 10th - 12th September

This year's event when compared with previous years was rather low key in terms of attendance. No doubt due to the limited availability of single accommodation. However, we did meet up with two AEA members. Gordon Royall on the Friday' evening and Frank Tew on Saturday morning.

6th Airborne Div RE Reunion Saturday 11th September

This year was once again a most memorable reunion, which presented an opportunity' to meet up with many friends from bye-gone days. One particular couple is Bill and Sheena Dickson, from Sidney, Australia, who. each year vow that this will be their last visit.

Double Hill Sunday 26th September

Several of our branch members, accompanied by their ladies, attended the service for the first time. It was agreed by all. that it was a wonderful and unforgettable experience. The warmth and friendliness of the occasion captured for many of us the Welcome Club spirit and atmosphere that existed in every town and village throughout the country during WW2. As stated by Valerie Austin, this is indeed a Living Memorial.

It is so symbolic of the role of the Airborne Engineer and the Glider Pilot throughout the years, that we who served, and those that are still serving, are truly indebted to the Double Hills Chairman, his committee and the villagers of Paulton for its creation. Our thanks are extended to the Long Range administration of the Yorkshire Branch for enabling us to enjoy a fully rounded weekend.

Chatham Branch Meeting - Monday 27th September

It was fortuitous that this meeting was well attended thereby enabling us to provide a suitable welcome to John O'Connor on his first contact with the Association and the Chatham branch. John served in the Sqn with 3 Tp 1953 - 1956, most of which time was spent in the Canal Zone. He was kept goal for the Sqn football team, so quite naturally, became the 'sports store man' succeeding Norman Penny, (anything is better than carrying a P.I.A.T.)

AGM/Reunion - Birmingham 15- 17 October

Congratulations are extended to Bunny Brown and his committee for a most excellent event. It was a thoroughly enjoyable occasion, and the warm welcome extended to us all was greatly appreciated.

Looking Forward

Our Branch Christmas lunch is to be held in the King Charles Hotel (Old NAAFI Club) on Sunday 12th December 1230 for 1300 hours. If anyone is in the locality and would like to join us please ring our Branch Secretary, Ron Gibson [REDACTED]

Mystery Choir Boy - Published in the Last Issue



George Jones - formerly of 1 Tp circa 1951-58

Branch Padre - Rev Bernard D Foulger

Birmingham Branch

by Bunny Brown

Now that the dust has settled and the hangover is cured from the AGM/Reunion, the Branch can now look forward to our annual Christmas Dinner/Dance. This is to be held at the Forte Posthouse Birmingham Airport. This is usually a well-attended function with normally 120 members and their guests gracing us with their presence - but we shall have to see just how many are fit enough following the AGM!

On the behalf of the committee may I extend sincere thanks to those who 'phoned or wrote letters of thanks for us organizing the Birmingham AGM/Reunion. It made our efforts so worthwhile. On reflection, it was more than worth the effort to see some of the guys who travelled from foreign parts, Dave Rance (Canada) Terry Disley (USA) and McCargo (Ukraine). If they can make it, why can't we all?

The Branch goes into the Millennium with our AGM in January - New Committee? Who knows? We will continue to meet at the Ivy Leaf British Legion, Sheldon, on the first Wednesday of the month.

The Branch extends Christmas greetings and a Happy New Year to all, but a special wish is conveyed to Col Chris Davies, John Smith and Harry Mennie, whom we hope will make a full and speedy recovery' from their illnesses. That's all for now, but is you're in Brum for any reason, give us a call we can always arrange a few beers and funny stories.

LOOKING FORWARD TO BLACKPOOL NEXT YEAR

Ay Up Lads (Yorkshire)

by Charlie Dunk

Dunks, late again and had to be reminded by Dave Rutter, that my "copy" (us journalists say things like that you know!) for the newsletter is overdue. Thank goodness for "e-mail" (is that sexist?) it means I can get it typed up and sent off very quickly, and no one will know that I was last again.

I am sure that many of you will remember that the Yorkshire Branch used to meet at Harrogate but due to restructuring of the TA this facility was removed. Thanks to the efforts of one of our members, Mike Pallott who is a PS AO in the TA (I hope I have that right) we now have our meetings in the TA Centre at Mindon House, Wakefield Road. Pontefract. Should you ever be in the area please give either Bill or myself a call and we will let you know if there is a meeting on around the time you will be there. As 98% of our branch membership comes from the south of Yorkshire, it is hoped that those members who found Harrogate and Ripon a little too far to travel will make the effort to attend the meetings. Our branch can only be as strong as the members that attend.

A few of us from Yorkshire managed to make it to the Double Hills service. Bill Rudd provided the transport; I provided the driver (me). On the Saturday evening prior to the service. Bob Prosser arranged for a meal in the Golf Club close to where we were staying. It just so happened that Bob's brother was a member and the Captain of the Golf Club was ex Indian Army Airborne - (Chris Chambers pounced on him really quick with membership details). Unfortunately the rain had not stopped all weekend and the service on the Sunday was held in the church rather than at the Double Hills Memorial due to the bad conditions. All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable weekend.

Then just a few weeks ago the Birmingham Branch hosted the AGM. Yorkshire once again represented by many members who travelled down. By the way from Castleford to Birmingham is about 150 miles but you have to add on another 50 for the five times you have to drive around the city centre to find the hotel car park! (That's a joke Birmingham...or is it?) I would like to congratulate one of our members Bob Prosser on his election to Chairman of the Association. On a personal note I was very pleased to be asked (and voted in) to be Assistant Secretary' and Welfare Officer. Should you or anyone else you may know require some assistance please do not hesitate to contact me. For my sins I am also a caseworker for SSAFA Forces Help - so if I can't help directly I will know someone who can. My home telephone number is [REDACTED].

Unfortunately immediately after the Birmingham bash, a few of us from Yorkshire had to go and sample the delights of Blackpool and in particular the Norbreck Castle Hotel where we will be hosting the AGM in October 2000.

The agreement is made on 30-10-1999 between The Yorkshire Branch - of the Airborne Engineers Association trading at Yorkshire (herein after called YB - AEA) of the one part and The Airborne Engineers Association trading at Aldershot (World Wide) (hereinafter called "AEA") of the other part. It is hereby agreed:

- a. YB AEA agrees to provide to the AEA the Service described below on the terms and conditions set out in another part of this newsletter.
- b. The Service shall comprise the provision by YB - AEA of an Annual General Meeting (hereinafter called AGM)
- c. This AGM will with immediate effect be known as

"AEA Blackpool 2000 Reunion"

Full details of this weekend are published in this newsletter. The staff at the Norbreck were very hospitable and kept us up until 3 a.m. on Monday morning. I should point out that we upheld the traditions of the AEA and were the last to leave the bar. This looks like a very good venue for the AGM - a more importantly the price is right.

Here's one that may put a smile on your face. One of our members Matt Newall lives in sheltered accommodation in Leeds - due to his membership of many WW II associations he spends very little time at his home. The warden of the accommodation has suggested that a flag should be made and flown whenever Matt is at home!

One for your diary if this arrives in time, Saturday 11 December 1999 at the Chestnut House Hotel. Darrington starting at 1200 hours is our branch Christmas Lunch - we would be happy to see you there - if you want to come please phone Bill or myself.

On that note may I take this opportunity on behalf of the Yorkshire Branch to wish all of you, wherever you are in the world a Very Happy Christmas, New Year and of course the dawning of a new Millennium.

Northern Ireland Branch

by Phil Chatterley

Subsequent to my article in the April 99 edition of the AEA newsletter which made reference to 9 Sqn as the 'thinking man's SAS, I would like to thank those who have contacted me. These are, Dick Barton (Edinburgh Branch) for his support and the minutes of their meetings and to the Secretary of the North West Branch for their meeting minutes. Sorry I cannot reciprocate, as we do not hold 'official meetings' just 'get togethers'

To Tom Downey who was just 'passing through', sorry I was not in to bid you welcome Tom. To Eric Matthews who requested details of a mate of his from N.I., sorry, but without a National Insurance number we've had no success. A special thanks goes out to the following for getting in touch, (without them there would be no N.I. Branch) Paddy Hosick who made contact after receiving the above copy of the newsletter. Chris (Poncho O'Donovan, who wrote to me on the 8th April to declare himself as 'also living on the island' and to 'George L' who came to the house wanting clarification on the 'thinking man's comment' - and then disappeared into the darkness (as you do!).

To cut a long story short, we decided to meet for a 'get together' (and catch up on 20 years) at a clay shoot event on the 1st September (photo evidence below suitably masked for security purposes). 'George' won by a narrow margin; he shot less holes in the air than anyone else! Following our successful Clay Shoot event we have planned or are involved in the following 'get togethers'

1999

21st November - Parachute Regiment & Airborne Forces Memorial Service - N.I.

1st December - Lecture evening - the guest speaker will be Fredrick Forsythe, author of the 'Day of the Jackal'

Christmas Lunch - George is organising this event. Location, date and menu - classified under the Official Secrets Act!

2000

5th February - N.I. Branch AGM

10th March - Annual Dinner - in association with the Parachute Regiment Association N.I.

During 17/28 April - North Wales long weekend. Following some, or even all of the Welsh 3000' peaks (that's 1000 metres for those who have gone metric). We'll be starting at the top of Snowdon (Poncho is organising this one!!) If any other members of the AEA would like to participate in the year 2000 events please do not hesitate in contacting us.

Apologies from the 3 members (including myself) who could not attend the AGM at Birmingham, it sounds as if we missed a 'cracking good do'. However we were well represented by the presence of Mick (Lofty) Marshall and Chris (Poncho) O'Donovan who represented the Branch on my behalf, thanks Chris.

If any of the Branch secretaries know of any other 'Airborne Engineers' residing in Northern or Southern Ireland



who would also like to "come out of the closet" please do not hesitate in contacting me. Once again we promise not to blow their cover.

More news of our 'get togethers' will be submitted for publication in futures issues of the newsletter.

Festive Greetings and a Happy and Prosperous New Millennium is extended to all Airborne Engineers.

left to right
Standing: George L. Paddy, myself and Poncho (sitting)

Airborne Engineers Association Annual General Meeting & Reunion

Norbeck Castle Hotel, Blackpool 13th-16th October 2000

As Chairman, and on behalf of the committee of the Yorkshire Branch, we are delighted to host the Airborne Engineers Association Annual General Meeting in the Millennium year.

The following information is to give you the details, facilities and itinerary' for the weekend. The price, which includes the Annual Dinner on the Saturday night, and for those staying Sunday night, a sightseeing tour of the illuminations by private buses will be arranged, all the more reason to stay for the full weekend at the amazing price of only £89-00!! All evening functions will be in our own private function rooms, which include bar facilities. Payment Please complete the booking form enclosed in your newsletter and send a £25-00 per person deposit.

It is anticipated that the weekend will be oversubscribed, so get your booking in early - if possible, no later than 1st August 2000. A National Express special Reunion travel package is available (attached to the booking form) which should be completed and sent direct to NORBRECK CASTLE HOTEL.

A raffle will be run in aid of charity . It would therefore be appreciated if you would bring along a suitable prize. Lastly, all motorways lead to Blackpool, so let us make this a memorable millennium AGM Reunion. The Yorkshire Branch looks forward to seeing you all there.

Itinerary - October 2000

Friday 13 th *	Guests check in - registration desk in reception. 3 course carvery dinner In house entertainment Ballroom for social evening Overnight en-suite accommodation
Saturday 14 th	Full English breakfast Annual General Meeting Gala dinner - Ballroom Entertainment Overnight en-suite accommodation
Sunday 15 th	Full English breakfast Nostalgic Forties theme hot/cold buffet Overnight en-suite accommodation
Monday 16 th	Full English breakfast Guests depart

This is an outstanding offer for the price, so to avoid disappointment, book as early as possible.

Bill Rudd
Chairman

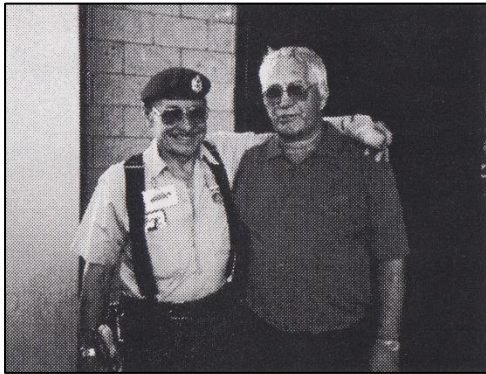
Viva Las Vegas

by John (Tich) Hughes

While reading an issue of the AEA newsletter I noticed the name of George Tipping in the Birmingham Branch article. George and I were buddies in the Sqn during 1957- 1960. We shared a 2-man bivouac in the Jordanian Desert and various other exploits i.e. Cyprus and North Africa.

I contacted the Birmingham Branch secretary and within 20 minutes had George's telephone number. Benidorm to Las Vegas. George and I hadn't seen each other for nearly 40 years. He now lives and works in Las Vegas with his lovely wife Jackie, daughter in law, Sue and her husband David and two lovely grandchildren, Kristina and David and Jackie's mum.

After numerous phone calls and corresponding for a couple of years, my wife Linda and I arranged to visit him in May of this year - taking with us George's "Jordanian Medal ". On arrival at Las Vegas airport we could not miss George, and there he was standing to attention wearing his original "Red Beret," which was looking a bit worse for wear - the beret not George.



All had a wonderful time!

L - R George & Tich

43 Years On

by Ern (Tommy) Handley

When I joined the AEA in 1998, I little realised that in 1999, I would be making a 12,000-mile trip to New Zealand to meet someone that I had not seen for 43 years. But I did. thanks to the invaluable help of our Membership Secretary Chris Chambers.

I joined the Sqn at Malta barracks in 1949, and Bob Gillispie joined in 1950. We soon became great mates, and when he got married in the Garrison church at Moascar, I had the pleasure of being his 'best man.'

On leaving the services, Bob and his wife immigrated to New Zealand in 1956, and shortly after we lost contact. Despite efforts on both of our parts, we failed to make further contact. We more or less resigned ourselves to never seeing each other again.

In 1993, Bob joined the AEA. and immediately made enquiries if I was known within the Association. However, at that time I had not joined. When I later became a member I used my proper Christian name of Ern Handley and not my nickname of Tommy, which others had always known me. However, Chris realised that Ern and Tommy could possibly be the same person, and after checking the dates that Bob and I were in the Sqn phoned this information to me, and contact between Bob and I was soon re-established.

Audrey and I flew out to New Zealand on 1st September and the meeting with Bob after all this time was quite an occasion. Bob met us at Wellington airport suitably attired in Red Beret and carrying a placard with "9 A/B Sqn". How could I fail to spot him!

Whilst staying with Bob and his wife, we paid a visit to George Bell and his wife, who made us very, very welcome. I also met up with Bob Usherwood, who is ex Airborne REME and a friend of Phil Taverner. Bill Malin, who is secretary of BAF (NZ), had a chat over the phone with me, and asked that I convey his best wishes to everyone, and hoped we all have a Happy Christmas.

Audrey and I returned to the UK on 13th October after a truly memorable trip made possible through the Airborne Engineers Association and Chris Chambers - Thank you.



L to R Tommy & Bob

British Airborne Forces (NZ)



Belated congratulations are extended to Vic Rhodes on his appointment on to the executive at their AGM/Reunion held in Rotorua back in April - which as Vic quite rightly pointed out, it's a good idea to have a Royal Engineer (Airborne) on the executive committee, for you can find mine fields anywhere!

L to R:
Phil - 2 Para/22 SAS,
Vic - 9th/1st A/B Sqn,
Bill - 6th A/B and
Simpson - 1st A/B

Double Hills Commemorative Ceremony

by Peter Yates

The Double Hills Memorial was unveiled by Gen R.E. Urquhart and dedicated in September 1979. 20 years later on Sunday 26th September 1999 the 21st ceremony was held to remember those first 23 casualties of the Arnhem battle who were killed when their Horsa Glider RJ113 crashed into this field of England called Double Hills, Paulton, Somerset. The Airborne Engineers who died with their Glider pilot comrades are buried at Weston Super Mare. Members of the Airborne Engineers Association SW Branch hold a ceremony of Remembrance the morning of the Double Hills ceremony.

The past 2 years have been too wet to hold the service in the field and the service and wreath laying took place in the Paulton parish church. Within the congregation were elements from 9 Para Sqn RE. The service would not be quite the same without their presence. Within the church an aircraft engine noise resounded, this was the historic Beaver aircraft from Middle Wallop as it flew across the memorial field site in salute at exactly 1444 hours.

Representatives laid wreaths in front of the altar where the Airborne Engineers Association, British Legion and other standards had been laid up. Their chairman Col Nicholls represented the Glider Pilots, and the Glider Pilot's Committee member, an Arnhem veteran, Bill Higgs, read the lesson.

HRH Prince of Wales (the Double Hills Memorial is situated on Duchy land) sent a special anniversary message with instructions that it should be read out at the service - "This piece of land called Double Hills is especially important to me."

As the years go on and we look to the 21st century. it is important that we who grow older should involve the children as we do at Double Hills, with 12-year-old Sophie Wilson reciting the poem dedicated to those who died. "They did not die in the battle's din."

Chris Chambers - Membership Secretary

Since the August Newsletter, a further (14) members have joined our ranks and file, they are as follows

Simon Rogers	9 Para Sqn Re	1987 - 1995
George Chong	9 Indep A/B Sqn RE	1954
Raymon Manion	131 Para Engr Regt	1963 - 1969
Alan Edwards	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1953 - 1959
Frank Spencer	261 A/B Pk & 1 Para Sqn	1943 - 1947
Graham Campbell	131 Para Engr Regt/ 22 SAS	1958 - 1966
Michael Doran	3 Para Sqn RE	1943 - 1946
Robin Clow	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1965 - 1973
John Bradshaw	11 Para Sqn/20 Indian AB Div	TBC
Raymon Peters	9 A/B Sqn RE	1946 -1948
Michael Willis	9 Para Sqn RE	Serving
James Simpson	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1956 -70
Stanley Pepper	9 Para Bn/131 Para Regt RE	1943 - 75
John O'Connor	9 Indep A/B Sqn RE	

To all New Members

“Welcome to the Association”

Pegasus

The demise of Pegasus has brought a mixed response of anger and sorrow from many AEA members and other Airborne Forces Associations. The recently formed 16 Air Assault Brigade has as its symbol, a shoulder flash which is in the shape of a shield retaining the Airborne colours of maroon and sky blue featuring a bird of prey swooping down.

The reason for dropping the Pegasus is not clear and no explanation was given - it happened so fast, taking everyone by surprise, and now' that the deed is done it has to be accepted - the new emblem is here to stay! One can only assume the change of image is felt appropriate as we face the dawn of a new century'.

It is very sad for those who wore the Pegasus with pride, knowing that this particular shoulder flash was not a general issue badge - one had to earn the right to wear it!

The good news for us is that we chose the Pegasus as our Association emblem/logo - it's on our Standard, blazer badge and Association tie. So the Pegasus will be very' much alive and kicking for as long as the AEA exists!

Most other foreign Airborne Forces have adopted the maroon beret which the British Airborne have made famous since its birth in WW2. So let's hope that the beret will not also become a casualty of change for changes sake.

The above comments are my own personal opinion and in no way meant to insult or belittle the new brigade formation, which, I am certain will do the business when and wherever it's required. For the quality of the Airborne soldiers who are part of it will always be of the highest standard!

Membership

The Association will have celebrated its 10th anniversary by the time you receive this newsletter. Sadly we have had to bid a final farewell to 25 members during the past year. They will remain in our thoughts and prayers.

The membership continues to grow at a steady pace, and as always I must thank those of you that sent me details of potential members. At this point I must offer a special welcome to Spr Michael Willis, who is 22 years

old and a serving member of 9 Para Sqn RE. In Michael we have a family connection, because his father Mick (guardian angel to Louis) also served in the Sqn, and is a member of the AEA. Let's hope Michael can encourage some more of the Sqn lads to join us.

AGM Birmingham

Congratulations are extended to the Birmingham Branch who hosted a superb AGM/Reunion. A tremendous amount of hard work went into this event, and we thoroughly enjoyed your efforts. Well done!

The AEA Shop

My wife. "Jan the shop" would like to thank you all for your support, and hope that you will continue buying the items on offer - the shop is the only real income generated by the Association - so please keep on trading. Do please check the latest price list in this newsletter, as there has been a couple of price changes recently. To Jean Metcalfe, who helped Jan with the shop sales in Birmingham, we extend our most sincere thanks.

Christmas & New Year greetings have been received from Ken & Margaret Bowen (Stoke on Trent), Frank & Helen Brady, Don Newman. Mal & Joan Scott and the Airborne Sappers Association (Australia) and from Phyllis & George Bell (New Zealand).

Finally, Jan and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Very Happy Peaceful & Prosperous New Year. We look forward to seeing you again at future functions in the year 2000.

Happy Landings
Chris

4th Parachute Squadron Club

by Eric Richards

The 4th Parachute Squadron RE (1942044) Club . held their Annual reunion dinner on Saturday 24th April 1999 at the Falcon Hotel, Uppingham, Rutland Col George Harris RE presided, together with 16 former Sqn members plus 13 ladies and gentlemen.

Our guests of honour were Capt & Mrs Robert Boyle of Bisbrooke Hall, Glaston. It was at 'Bisbrooke Hall' that 2 & 3 troops of the Sqn were billeted prior to leaving for Arnhem on Monday 18th September 1944. 1 Troop were billeted above the local village pub. the 'Three Horse Shoes, HQ and Officers Mess, Sqn Office were in another large house at the other end of Glaston village. Our departure airfield was Spanhoe an American Air base, which was located nearby.

Located in the village church is the Sqn Roll of Honour which lists 19 killed in action and 54 wounded. Most of those that survived were taken as POWs.

During the dinner, Eric Richards presented Capt. & Mrs Boyle a large Pegasus statuette suitably engraved, "Boye & Family of 'Bisbrooke Hall' from the former Officers, NCOs & Sappers of the 4th Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers Ubique'

1st Parachute Squadron RE

The 1st Parachute Squadron Club held their annual re-union at Donington on the fifty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem. This was the thirty- eighth such re-union. Eighteen former members of the Squadron attended with family and friends. Four members of the Squadron were amongst those remembered during the toast to "Absent Friends.' Sgt Joynson, Colin Cameron, George Payne and Stanley Halliwell. Guest of Honour was Colonel John Hinds RE. During the evening Peter Stainforth presented 9 Parachute Squadron RE with a regimental pennant of the 5th Parachute Battalion of the German Army. The 1st Squadron had fought against this battalion during the N. Africa campaign and the CO of the battalion had presented the pennant to Peter Stainforth in 1970.

On Sunday morning at a very well attended service Tom Hicks read out the names of the fallen. Colonel Hinds laid a wreath underneath the plaque dedicated to the Squadron. Photographs were taken under the Arnhem Oak, and after tea and an assortment of homemade cakes at Sissy's everyone said their goodbyes until next year.

Spreading the Word

As many of us are well aware, there are thousands of former Airborne Engineers spread throughout the country', and indeed in foreign parts. If each member took it upon himself to place a small advert in their local paper to advertise our existence, we could probably recruit a considerable number of new members.

Our current membership, in the UK alone, is spread from Cornwall to the Highlands of Scotland and across the Irish Sea. to the Isle of Man. Ireland and the Channel Isles. Why not give it a try in your local community?

The Aldershot Branch Summer BBQ



Association Shop

Items available & applicable prices

Description	Price	Post & Packing
Association Tie (Pegasus Logo)	£12-50	75p - UK
Association Blazer Badges	£12-50	60p - UK
Association Jumpers Maroon or Blue with Pegasus Logo Embroidered 'Airborne Engineers' Sizes 38 - 48	£24-00	£2-60 - UK
Association Sweatshirts Maroon or Blue with Pegasus Logo Sizes Med-Large-X/large	£16-00	£2-60 - UK*
Association Polo Shirts Fred Perry Style Maroon or Blue with Pegasus Logo Sizes Med-Large-X/large	£15-00	£2-50 - UK*
Association Tee Shirts Maroon only Pegasus Logo Sizes large-X/large	£8-50	£1-00 - UK
Association Shields	£16-00	£2-60 - UK *
Book 'The 9th' by Tom Purves Former member of 9 Indep Para Sqn RE	£14-00	£3-50 - UK*
A Memoir of 9 Parachute Squadron RE Falklands Campaign 1982 by Maj. C.M. Davies MBE RE	£12-00	£1-50 - UK
Stick Pins (Para Wings)	£2-60	60p - UK
Anniversary Ties Double Logo Pegasus & Wings	£15-00	75p - UK
Christmas Cards (pack of 6) Association badge on the cover	£3-25	60p - UK
Association Cuff Links (per pair) As lapel badge - but much smaller	£8-50	£1-50- UK

* Recorded delivery

Would overseas members please send cheques in £ pounds sterling, with a little extra to cover postage, from your local bank or an International money order from Post Office.


Cheques should be made payable to: "Airborne Engineers Association"

My thanks for your continued support - Merry Christmas

Yours aye,

Jan

Have you visited 9 Para Sqn's website?


The above address for those of you on the internet, is 9 Para Sqns own site. May I suggest you visit this facility, which is of course available to all members with the appropriate means. Please sign the visitors book so we can see how many of you have logged on to it.

The Ballard of Eldred Grocock

(by the Newcastle Poet)

When he was a lad, young Eldred Grocock,
Would spend his summer day.
In the peak district of Derbyshire,
Where he used to sport and play,
The moor land was his cycle track,
The footpath was his walk.
He watched the rabbit and the fox,
Saw pheasant, grouse and hawk.

When he grew up and left his school,
A miners job he found.
Digging dusky diamonds from,
Their seams below the ground.
He missed his pleasant moorland life,
Which never changed with age,
But he found that in the coalmine,
He could earn an honest wage.

Although his job was hazardous
Working underground
He thought that something even more
Adventurous could be found
He decided on an army life
A life so full of vest
He joined up with the Para's
And wore their badge upon his chest

He jumped in Cyprus, Malta
Kuwait and Singapore
And then in Scandinavian lands
He jumped a few times more
Then Eldred met a fine young girl
Within whose life he'd fit
So he left his Regimental pals
And went back to the pit!

For a few more years he toiled away,
Working with the coal.
But government redundancies
Soon found him on the dole,
He looked around for something new,
To while away his time.
Until he found that selling fudge
Suited him just fine.

He spent his time in craft fairs,
And in the shopping malls.
He sold his fudges to grannies
And little boys and gals.
Every day his store was full.
With fudge fresh from the dairy.
People would come from miles around,
To buy from Eldred Grocock - the Fudge Fair

But Eldred was an entrepreneurial
And soon found another niche
And used different material
To help him get rich!
Now' he makes and sells
Smiling garden gnomes
And takes them up to Jockland
Where they keep them in their homes.

In the land where men wear skirts,
Eldred sold his wares
Wore a lot of dirty shirts
As he travelled around the fairs
But one day very sadly
Eldred heard about a hospice
And gave his money gladly
That was just a drop in a very deep abyss.

(by another Newcastle Poet)

So Eldred used his Airborne initiative to try and find a way,
That somehow would help the children and get other people to pay!
He decided to cycle from Canada to Mexico's sunny shores
And left his wife back home to carry out the chores.
85 miles per day, he cycled in his quest
An ex Para he was at his very best.
Now Eldred has completed this enormous task.
There is only one more question that we all must ask?
Did you think of fudge fairies and smiling garden gnomes.
As you cycled through foreign countries and other people's homes.
Well Eldred Grocock there is nothing more to say.
Eeh! lad we think thee's wonderful, and we promise all to pay
And give as much as we can to make it a terrific day,
For all those little children whose night has turned to day!

"Eldred Grocock, congratulations on completing the Canada to Mexico Cycle Marathon"

Statement of Financial Affairs

As at 15 October 1999

Expenditure/ Losses	Current Period	Previous Period	Income/Gains	Current Period	Previous Period
Membership/ Badges/Cards		████	Membership		████
Postage		████	Donations		████
AGM 97 Guests		████	AGM Lunch 96		████
Donations		████	Interest		████
RE Band/Museum		████	Shop Profit		████
Presentation		████	Reunion 1998		████
Raffle Expenses 98		████	Payment Wreaths		████
Function/General		████			
Reunion 98		████			
Refund Reunion 98		████			
Property Frame		████			
Postage	████		Donations	████	
Reunion 98	████		AGM 98	████	
Standard Expenses	████		Interest	████	
Historian	████		Membership	████	
Flowers	████		Raffle 98	████	
Wreaths	████		Shop Profit	████	
Double Hills	████				
AGM 99	████				
Engraving	████				
Donation	████				
Total expenditure C/F to Page 2	████	████	Total income C/F to Page 2	████	████

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 15 OCTOBER 1999

Purchase Cost £	Previous Period	Fixed Assets	Current Period	Purchase Cost £
		Investments at Market Value		
		Capital Property'		
■■■■■		Total Fixed Assets		■■■■■
		Current Assets		
	■	Cash	■	
	■■■■■	Current Account	■■■■■	
	■■■■■	Deposit Account	■■■■■	
		Debtors		
	■■■■■	Stocks on Hand-Shop	■■■■■	
■■■■■		Total Current Assets		■■■■■
■■■■■		Total Assets		■■■■■
		Current Liabilities		
	■■■■■	Newsletter	■■■■■	
■■■■■		Total Liabilities		■■■■■
■■■■■		Total assets minus Liabilities		■■■■■
		General Purpose Fund		
	■■■■■	Balances as per last balance sheet	■■■■■	
	■■■■■	Add excess income	■■■■■	
■■■■■		Accumulated General Purpose fund		■■■■■

Obituary

Stanley Halliwell, one of the most celebrated members of the 1st Air Troop and later 1st Parachute Squadron died in November 1998 aged seventy- nine. Stan joined the fledgling 1st Air Troop in November 1941 and fought throughout the war with the re-named 1st Parachute Squadron until captured in 1944. He was the last survivor of the eight Sappers who took part in the Bruneval Raid in 1942. He served with the Squadron in N. Africa. Sicily and Italy. He also took part in the parachute assault at Depienne.

During the Battle of Arnhem he was taken prisoner whilst trying to capture a German tank. He was underneath it when an anti-tank missile hit it. Following his capture, the Germans sent him back across the bridge with a message to Lt Colonel Frost offering surrender terms. Despite having promised to return with the answer, he immediately rejoined his troop to carry on the battle. Stan was again taken prisoner and sent to Germany where he remained until released by allied forces in 1945. He still has his POW ID photograph and ID discs, which he liberated from the camp office. After the war he worked in the family building business until retirement in 1984. Stanley attended the 1st Parachute Squadron re-unions and rarely missed, but ill health prevented his attendance in recent years. All his comrades from the Squadron will sadly miss him. To his daughter Jane, and sons Alan and Phillip we offer our sincere condolences.

Last Post

Bryan Andrews
Bob Codd
John Coleman
Tony Hepper
Walter Scott
Tom Lewis
Eric Lancaster
Geoff Norton
Basil Ponder
Bill Wilson
Len Raggett
Andre Stirling
Adino Tunningley
Ernie Warrender
Tom Duffy

“May they rest in peace”
