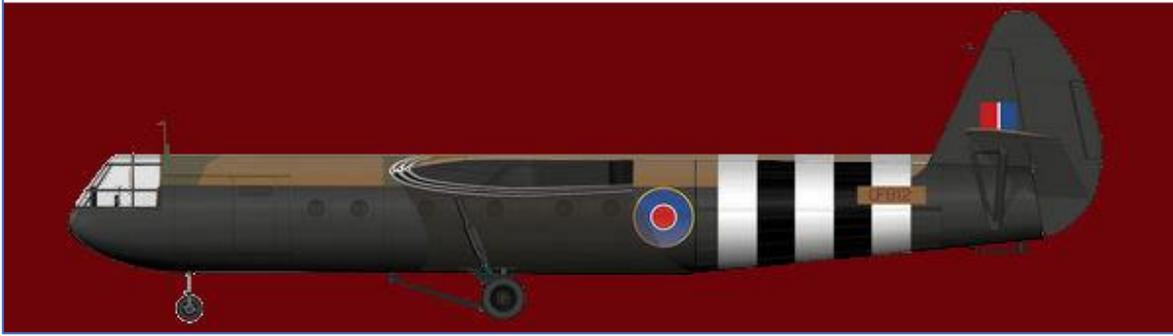




THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



The following articles were originally published in the printed version of the Journal in April 2004, Issue No. 12



The Airborne Engineer



April 2004, Issue No. 12

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Publication Deadline - August 2004 Edition

Members submitting material for publication in the August 2004 edition of the Journal, are advised that the closing date will be Saturday 3 July. Articles received after this date will not be published until the December 2004 edition. (Branch Secretaries please NOTE!)

Kindly ensure that you forward your articles direct to the editor - address as shown above.

Please don't leave it until the last minute or you may well miss the deadline!

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Association Chairman

Bunny Brown

Dear Members,

Well here we are at the opening stages of a new year, and hopefully a full and busy one for the Association.

Within this Journal you will find a booking form for the AGM/Reunion to be held once again at the Royal Court Hotel in Coventry. Those that attended last year will know what a grand venue this is. Please don't delay completing your application form and send it off with your deposit **NOW**. Last year several members left it until the last minute and were disappointed to find that all of the accommodation was allocated.

Our Association Piper, Frank Menzies-Hearn has donated the fees that he was awarded for playing the pipes at Brig 'Fergie' Semple's funeral for the purchase an AEA Golf Tournament Trophy. The Tournament will be held immediately following the AGM at Coventry. Bob Ferguson will be organising the event, so please contact Bob if you intend participating in this golf tournament. Full details, timings, format etc. will be published in the August publication.

Ray Coleman, our esteemed Secretary, is once again holding his European Football lottery. Please respond and sell as many tickets as possible. Ray has worked hard on this venture and the profits are to assist in the funding of good causes.

I certainly hope that the Branches are organising their annual events as usual. Having recently returned from the Yorkshire Branch Annual Dinner I can think of no better way to kick off the yearly social calendar. It was an extremely well organised and well attended event, and we heartily congratulate the Yorkshire Branch and in particular Bill Rudd, who three days later underwent a heart bypass operation (nothing to do with the stress of organising the dinner) I'm delighted to inform the membership that the operation was a total success and that Bill is well on the way to a full recovery. Probably all due to the amount of TLC that he's been receiving from his wife Dot.

Peter Yeates has been coerced into continuing with the Double Hills ceremony. The event takes place at Paulton on the 26 September. This being the 60th year since the glider crashed, killing everyone on board, while on its way to Arnhem. If possible please attend; it would be a shame that the memorial to these brave men should be forgotten. I hope to get around the different Branches throughout the year, work permitting, and meet up with old friends and new.

Attention- European Cup Draw

Ray Coleman Hon Secretary & Promoter

You will by now, I hope, be in receipt of tickets for the European Football Cup Draw. Please support our us by selling or purchasing the tickets. Excellent prizes to be won and it can be **YOU**.

We hope to raise funds to create an Airborne Engineer Exhibition we can be proud of in the RE Museum at Chatham. This will feature the illustrious service of Airborne Engineers during WW2 and since with a focal presentation depicting the outstanding service of Lt Col John Rock, RE the father of Airborne Forces.

We also wish to fund other deserving projects, as we have previously, which portray the distinguished service of the "Airborne Engineer."

We request that you sell or purchase as many tickets/books as you are able and return your counterfoils and payment to me as soon as possible but not later than **5 June 2004**. If extra tickets are required please contact me on and they will be forwarded immediately.

Double Hills Memorial Service

Peter Yeates

There is to be a large 60th Anniversary of Remembrance at the Double Hills Arnhem Memorial at Paulton, Nr Bath, Somerset. The service to remember the lives of twenty one Sappers of 9th Field Company (Airborne) Royal Engineers and two Glider Pilots of the Glider Pilot Regiment. They all died when their Horsa Glider crashed into the Double Hills Field on Sunday 17th September 1944. They were the very first casualties of Operation Market Garden. The Allied Airborne assault which was to "Bounce the Rhine" and hopefully end the war in 1944.

The Service and Parade will be on the 26th September 2004. Assembly is at the Recreation Field, Tennis Court Road, Paulton at latest 1400hrs. Assembly will move across to the Memorial Field by 1415Hrs. The Reviewing Officer will be received there at 1435 Hrs.

The Memorial service will commence with an Army Air Corps Flypast at 1444hrs. After the service there will be an inspection by the Reviewing Officer in the Recreation Field, and then a full March Past. Tea will be served afterwards at the Paulton Church Hall. Car parking is available at the factory car park opposite the Church and the recreation Field.

It is expected that a contingent will attend from 9 Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers and from the Army Air Corps will be present.

A special attendance of all Airborne Engineers and Army Air Corp Veterans is looked for.

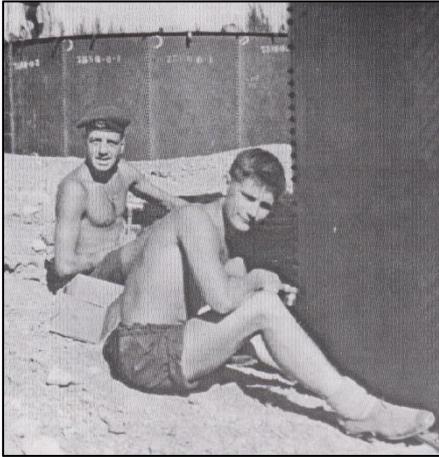
All details and queries can be addressed to Peter Yeates. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

High insurance costs and dwindling numbers on the Double Hills Committee did put the future of this memorial in doubt, however a new group has been formed to organise the Remembrance in September and hopefully all future years. The Memorial is built on the Prince of Wales land, and has been given in trust for the purpose of the Sapper and Glider Pilot Memory.

Contributions to enable this very important Airborne Sapper Memorial to continue are very necessary and extremely welcome and should be sent to Peter Yeates at the above address.

The Double Hills Memorial was first dedicated and unveiled in September 1979, this year the 60th Anniversary will be one of the largest organised.

Rogues Gallery



Tommy Tucker & Titch Hughes during the construction of the fuel storage depot at Amman airport



Dave Davies, Froth Beer, Mick Quariku, Tony Manley & (anchor man) Yorkie Davies – Northern Ireland 1970's



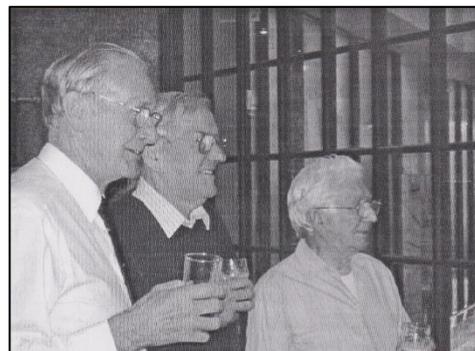
**The 'Choir' - Birmingham Reunion 1999
Tony Manley, Mick Marshall, Dave Rutter, Louis Gallagher,
Pete Bates, Dave Grimbley, Keith King, John Aldridge,
Poncho O'Donovan & Phil Poulton**



Reg Emberson - Cyprus 1951



**Bob Prosser, Norman Penny & Bert Gregory
Coventry Reunion 2003**



**Brian Gibson, Eric Blenkinsop & Sid Burrell
Coventry Reunion 2003**

Postal Vote- Comment

Steve Briggs - Ex-member 2 Troop 9 Independent Parachute Squadron RE

Further to the address in the last Journal by the outgoing President, Brigadier Ian McGill CBE, I feel it is necessary to offer the opinion of somebody from the non-commissioned ranks with regards to the result of the recent postal ballot, which clearly showed that the membership were not in favour of joining the Royal Engineers Association.

I served with 9 Independent Parachute Squadron RE for over 4 years between 1974 and 1979, from the age of 19, and can clearly say it was a defining time in my life. From over 60 candidates who started P Company just fourteen of us passed, three of whom joined 9 Squadron. I have subsequently passed the all arms commando course down at Lymington to join 131 Independent Commando Squadron, and lastly selection for 23 SAS.

In my opinion the reason why this motion to join the REA was defeated, is the unique bond, created through the blood, sweat and tears that passing P Company creates. This clearly sets us apart from other army units whether they be infantry or supporting arms, and indeed it is something for which we should be justifiably proud. Whilst on tour in Northern Ireland we were also proud of the fact that 9 Squadron were one of the few airborne support arms that the Para Regt would consider equal in an infantry role.

As the name suggests we should be fiercely proud of our independence and not dilute that image by joining a wider association with differing values. Although I have earned the privilege of wearing three different berets, my red beret will always be the one I cherish the most, and I consider the airborne family to be a lifelong commitment. The values within our organisation of being the 'best' and of having earned our berets through an arduous selection process does not go hand in hand with belonging to an association where no such selection takes place.

It is a subtle point, but I for one, have always considered myself an airborne soldier first, and an engineer second. Although I realise this may be a controversial position to take, I honestly believe this to be the view of most members, and may be why, the overwhelming majority of those that voted, did so to remain independent of the REA. I am sure this will always remain the case.

Frensham Pond Water Descent (circa 1958/59)

John (Tommy) Tucker

As many of you will know, Frensham Common is an area of mixed woodland and heath land with a very large lake, and that the common is located within easy striking distance of Hankley Common DZ.

The Sqn emplaned at RAF Lyneham, and for some reason our equipment included inflatable life jackets. Well you know the drill, RED ON, GREEN ON - GO - GO -GO.

Clear of the aircraft, look up, canopy OK, carry on - and there we were descending over the DZ and observing any problems below. Well, at least two of us had problems – I was heading for trees, so following the well-rehearsed drills, I raised my legs, crossed my arms across my chest and hoped! Moments later I am lodged in a tree and gradually sliding down when the toggle of my life jacket snags leaving me stuck up a tree with it fully inflated. Help arrived soon afterwards and I was extracted from my precarious position. The other (unknown) individual was fast approaching the lake. He executed the descent into water drills immaculately - lift yourself into the seat strap, release one side of the reserve, undo the quick release box, hands across the chest, estimate height above the water, inflate life jacket and drop clear of the harness into the water. The only problem being, the water was only 6" deep with about the same depth of mud or sand - and the unknown performed a perfect stand-up landing!

Now does anyone want to own up to this event, or do any of our members know who it was?

Dear Editor

Chris (Poncho) O'Donovan

I have long been an admirer of your independent and fearless editorial style; however I humbly ask that you compromise your integrity and apply a little spin in your future selection of photographs for our journal. Please include only photographs of paratroopers who look like paratroopers. While I accept that a certain amount of physical slackness and deterioration is inevitable with advancing years, we can forgive that, those who still publicly wear the red beret should give the appearance of the fitness associated with airborne warriors. If they don't wear red berets what are they doing in our magazine? Can you imagine my embarrassment when, after drawing the attention of my friends to the heroic exploits of Sgt Healey on page 19 of the last edition of our journal and after them having to put up with my constant incessant boasting of the calibre and Spartan nature of my airborne brothers, all they could do was laugh at the lardy lads on parade in the adjoining photograph. Were they wearing flak jackets under their No 2 dress or maybe they were the Sumo wrestling team?

The Ministry of Defence must be nearly bankrupt having to buy XXL parachutes and toilet seats for that lot. Lt Col Tickell told us at the last AGM dinner that the modern stretcher race is still as hard as it used to be, I hope that they have increased the stretcher's weight to reflect the weight of these tubby troopers.

Please, I beg of you, let's have them looking like Scobie and Geordie Bond as depicted on page 14. How can we have that appearance of physical condition sharing a magazine with an article such as Graham Sheward's triathlon account on p 26. The good old boys in their seventies look in better shape, dammit, even the Arnhem Vets look better! If you don't believe me have a look at page 17 of the December edition.

Where's Tommy Prince?

Charlie Willbourne



This photograph was taken on the occasion of the wedding of 2036724 Cpl Tommy Prince when I acted as his best man. The wedding took place at Chingford, Essex in late 1945 or early 1946 (we were both wearing ties, so that could give a clue). I have neither seen or heard anything of Tommy since the wedding and would dearly love to have news of him. I shared a slit trench with him in Normandy and in those circumstances you get to know a guy pretty well!

We attended the same parachute course at Ringway (No 62) along with other Sappers: - Sprs H Deans, DA Graham, G Hopkins, Jenkinson, W Irving, AW Peachey, T. Prince, Rose and LCpl J Windeatt. We all finished up at Beacon Barracks, Bulford, initially as reinforcements for 1st and 2nd Para Sqns RE in 1st Airborne Division, but soon became founder members of 1 Troop 3rd Para Sqn RE, 6th Airborne Division.

The members whose names are underlined; took part in the mad dash in the Jeep and trailer driven by our OC, Maj JCA Roseveare DSO, to demolish the five span masonry arch bridge at St Samson, Troarn in the early hours of D Day in Normandy. AW (aka 'Sam') Peachey was taken prisoner at this time and sometime afterwards LCpl J Windeatt lost a leg. Sam is still alive, living in the Wirral, but Johnny Windeatt died some time ago.

If you can assist in my quest to locate Tommy Prince, please give me a call on: [REDACTED] or drop me a line at the following address: - Charlie Willbourne, [REDACTED]

Airborne Cook Trailer

Sean McCargo

During the excellent weekend in Coventry, I got talking to some people who said that they were told that the old kitchen trailer that the Sqn had for many years, was in the Newcastle Military Vehicle Museum.

As I live very close to this place and that I had, in years gone by, towed this trailer many times behind a Sqn Land Rover, decided to check this out to see if it was the real thing. I saw the trailer at the museum, and would say I'm 99% certain that is our old trailer. There were many modifications to the trailer, mostly from what I could see, was to make it road legal i.e. indicators, stop and tail lights, and the towing frame had been modified. Again, I believe that this was to keep it road legal.

The museum has a display stand near the trailer that states that it had been "CAPTURED" in Egypt and returned to the UK with the 9 Indep Para Sqn and a brief history. The people at the museum tell me that it is on loan from The Imperial War Museum at Duxford! Now the strange thing is that when they telephoned the Newcastle Museum, they said that it was a British Army kitchen trailer from WW 2! However, the people at the museum say that the trailer was made in the former USSR.

The director says that he would love to get a photograph of the trailer in use with the Sqn that way he would be able to have local newspapers do a story on the trailer.

Maybe, Fred Gray has a photograph or more likely, Charlie Edwards.

We know where the trailer come from and where it is now, but who gave it to the Imperial War Museum at London or Duxford?

Someone in the Sqn must know what happened and someone must have either loaded it on to a vehicle or towed it away from the Sqn Equipment Park. It would be interesting to see who gave away part of the Sqn history.

As I Recall

Henry Hardy



July the fourth, American Independence day 1946. The day my independence went into cold storage when I was conscripted into the army.

To say my first month was miserable is putting it mildly. I hadn't wanted to join the army; if I had to be called up I would have preferred the RAF. The first week I was ill with vaccine fever which brought on an attack of bronchitis and I was in hospital for three weeks.

When I rejoined the training unit I discovered that all my new equipment, best uniform etc. had accompanied someone leaving to be demobbed.

For the remainder of my time in England I had to depend on hand outs from the Quarter Masters Stores, none of which matched; with the result that I was extremely conspicuous as I discovered to my cost.

At the end of six weeks primary training I was posted to the Royal Engineers No.9 training battalion at the "Verne Citadel", Portland, Dorset. This establishment had been a prison during the Napoleonic wars, but due to the all-round deterioration that had taken place since then, it had been deemed unfit for prisoners, and turned into a training barracks.

To this day, I have only to hear a gale warning being given for Portland on the radio, and I remember the wind and sleet lashing the grey stone buildings, and the rats scurrying among the swill bins outside the cookhouse. However, it's been renovated since my day and has reverted to a prison once more.

During the latter part of my training at Verne, we were paraded to a demonstration and lecture by an RE Parachute Captain and his sergeant assistant. It had been intended to harness the sergeant to a parachute on the parade ground, but in the prevailing conditions he would have been the first SNCO in the British Army to fly the Atlantic without an aeroplane!

Anyway, I got the general idea, and volunteered for the airborne Royal Engineers. If I were to draw up a balance showing the motives for taking such a step it would read, on the debit side. - Possibility of injury during training - being ill-treated if captured by Palestinian terrorists, (it was accepted that on successfully completing the parachute course, we would be automatically posted to Palestine). On the credit side. - The certainty of leaving "Verne" immediately without the prospect of being placed on the permanent staff there.

So I found myself, after undergoing a fortnightly physical hardening course at Aldershot, stationed at a camp near Bicester in Oxon called Middleton Stoney. Every morning we would march three miles through the country lanes to the R.A.F. Parachute School at Upper Heyford. Here, under the instruction of an RAF flight sergeant, and two corporals, we were taught and practised the business of parachuting.

Our first descent was from a basket suspended beneath a barrage balloon. Four of us and one of the corporals, climbed into the basket through a door in the side, and sat with legs dangling through a hole in the floor, with the exception of the corporal whose task was to fasten the static line from our parachute packs to the fixed point in the corner. The balloon was then winched up to an altitude of approximately 700ft from which, one at a time, we were despatched by the corporal, slid off our seats and dropped through the hole. The difference between descending from a balloon as opposed to an aeroplane, as we were later to discover, is simply a matter of slipstream.

From the balloon, only the rigging lines rattling against the back of your jumping hat as they are pulled from the pack mark the first 30ft. So at this time you are dropping like a stone until, blessed moment, the canopy opens flapping and crackling above you. Floating to the ground you arrive with a bump equivalent to that of falling downstairs and the realisation that you have completely ignored all instructions on the art of landing. This being brought home in no uncertain manner by the irate RAF flight sergeant standing over you.

After completing two balloon drops, synthetic training was continued with tension growing as the time for the first plane drop approached. We were in the gymnasium one afternoon when the flight sergeant was called to the phone. On his return we were marched to the stores to draw chutes, proceeded to the runway, and enplaned. This was it, now we were scared. I'd never been in a plane before, never even been near one.

My vitals had turned to water, literally, with a last despairing look towards the lavatory and along with the others I climbed aboard the rattling Dakota and hooked up the static line of the man opposite me and my own, to the wire running the length of the plane above my head.

We were airborne, the first stick stood in the door ready to go - and were sent back to their positions, not to jump after all, air experience only. They were sorting the boys out from the men this trip!

The next time up we did jump, and passing through the door into the slipstream is a memory which remains and associated with it the fright which gripped me after the first stick of four went through and the dispatchers hurled themselves at the door to pull on the lines with all their might. Someone stuck over the tail plane? No, they were retrieving the empty packs.

Six of the eight training descents behind me, number seven coming up. The night drop! The winter of 1947 was one of the coldest recorded, and I particularly recall one night in February, the coldest of the winter, and of course, the night we were to jump.

The air cracked with frost and the dropping zone was lightly covered with frozen snow. The moon was full in an almost clear sky, and I think we were all touched with a little awe at the magic of that night.

A bus had been laid on to take us from the warmth of the Nissen hut, with its pot-bellied stove glowing red halfway up the chimney pipe, to the aerodrome, where we once more drew 'chutes and stood shivering on the runway at the point where we were to enplane. The Dakota clanked and rumbled towards us sounding nothing like as safe, or mechanically sound as the bus we had just left. Soon we were climbing to the circuit above the dropping zone, watching the indicator lamps above the open door.

"First stick stand in the door," yelled the RAF corporal. The stick leader shuffled up; the red light was on. "Now a fast stick lads," pause, "green light" - "GO" he yelled, one, two, three, four, into the night they bundled. The corporals dragged the empty packs in, and the plane went round for the next circuit. I was number two in the second stick. Now it was our turn. Left foot leading, half a pace at a time, down the centre of the plane. Watch the lights, a yell, a slap on my back and I was in the slipstream, my feet up in front of my face, while the rigging lines played their tattoo on the back of my head. The canopy opened and I was out of the noise and rushing air, floating across that winter landscape like a dandelion seed that had lost all sense of season. I could see my stick leader; we were floating close together and I shouted elatedly to him. He dropped into the path of a gust of wind and was gone. I followed in the same path and was swept away faster to the ground. Twenty feet from the ground, my hands on the harness above my head, pull down now. Feet and knees close together. Side right landing, forward roll on hitting the ground, feet, legs, thigh and over on my back. Grab for the rigging lines, pull and spill the air to collapse the canopy. Blast, I'm being dragged along the ground and I've hurt my leg. Down comes the canopy as I stand and start rolling it up. Some of the lads are passing and together we make our way across the snow towards the NAAFI wagon and the bus. Cup of tea and a sausage roll then back to camp, still excited, but very weary.

Shortly after, we made our last training jump, and were presented with our parachute wings at the passing out parade. A gigantic booze up with the RAF lads at night and next day we started fourteen days embarkation leave before going to Palestine.

I never jumped again. My name was put in for training schemes, but they were always cancelled because of the troubles.

I was demobilised in 1948, and most of my army recollections are now fading, but I still remember from time to time, the cold night when I made my mark across a frozen field in Oxon.

Building the Roads for the Gold Rush

by Timothy Watkins & Simon Sherwood

Histories of British Columbia usually treat the deeds of the Royal Engineers with awe. And the accomplishments of these soldiers, both in engineering and in public service, were indeed remarkable. Yet often the Engineers themselves are portrayed as Victorian-era supermen, a “Noble band of British Heroes” transforming the wilderness.

The letters and journals of the Engineers put a human face of these heroes. Officers squabbled amongst themselves, enlisted men drank and deserted, and the work was plagued by accidents, often fatal.

What follows is a glimpse into the daily lives of the soldiers and their families, the real people behind the legend. The Royal Engineers were only a tiny military force in the midst of a vast gold rush. Yet they succeeded against all odds in laying the foundations for much of modern British Columbia. And it was road building, which became their most dangerous, most frustrating, and ultimately their most important task.

The story of the Royal Engineers and their roads begins in 1858. At the start of that year, the European presence in British Columbia consisted of some 300 colonists and a few fur-trading posts of the Hudson’s Bay Company. But in spring news reached San Francisco that gold was to be found on the lower Fraser River. In the next eight months, some 30,000 emigrants poured into the territory.

The new arrivals were mostly American, many of them ‘forty-niners’ heavily armed and desperate for gold. Conflict quickly broke out with natives in the Fraser Canyon near the gold-bearing gravel bars. Governor James Douglas demanded help from the Colonial Office in London. The answer to his plea was the Columbia Detachment of Royal Engineers; 160-strong. The Engineers were an elite corps, the repository of scientific and technical expertise in the British army. Officers did not purchase their commissions, as was the custom in the rest of the army, but earned their places by passing through Britain’s only military college.

The Detachment’s commander, Col Richard Moody, had drawn up plans for the restoration of Edinburgh Castle, which caught the fancy of Queen Victoria herself. Even the rank and file were skilled tradesmen. Among the soldiers selected for the Detachment were trained surveyors, carpenters, stonemasons, draftsmen, printers and musicians. The Royal Engineers were also among the best paid of Britain’s soldiers, the privates - called ‘sappers’ - earning the respectable sum of 1 shilling 2½ pence per day (about 6p).

All the men sent to B.C. were volunteers, lured in part by the offer of 30 acres of land (later increased to 150 acres) upon completion of service. Their wives and children were also welcomed; when the sailing ship Thames City brought most of these sappers in early 1859, its passenger list included 31 wives and 37 children, including three born at sea during the six-month voyage. It was hoped such measures would give the sappers a stake in the colony’s future and help prevent desertion.

The sappers were chiefly born in rural England, Scotland or Ireland, the children of miners and tenant farmers, the working class of Dickensian Britain. But what set these soldiers apart from the rank and file of other regiments was the Royal Engineers’ expectation that each man know a trade - stonemason, carpenter, wheelwright or tailor, for instance. This made them an elite within the army; men used to independent thought and action. This would be of first importance in British Columbia, where much of the work of surveying and road building would be done by small groups of three or four, perhaps under a sergeant or corporal, days away from the nearest office.

The Columbia Detachment was intended to provide a highly visible British presence in the colony, to counterbalance the pervasive American influence. The sappers were instructed to maintain a “high social standard of civilisation.” This role they carried out with enthusiasm wherever they went, building churches, founding public parks, staging theatrical productions, and even playing cricket. At the same time, the sappers were expected to carry out an extensive program of public works. They were to survey and lay out town sites, beginning with the capital at New Westminster and their own camp nearby known as ‘Sapperton and including such major centres as Yale, Lillooet and Vernon Forks (Princeton). But above all, the Engineers were in charge of building the roads so badly needed to hold the new colony together.

Some of these new roads were for military purposes. For instance, the Engineers worried an invading American army could blockade the Fraser River and cut off supplies to New Westminster. To prevent this, they built North

Road connecting the capital to Burrard Inlet and a road called the King's Way leading to False Creek. Both survive today, and a glance at a map of Vancouver will show how Kingsway still cuts diagonally through the neat grid of streets created by later urban planners.

Much more ambitious roads were needed to link the coast to the mining centres of the interior. Intense pressure was on Governor Douglas to provide cheap, safe and feasible passage to the goldfields. From New Westminster travellers generally caught a paddle-wheeler up the Fraser River. The journey upstream was an adventure in itself, as the steam boilers had an alarming tendency to explode, when the boats were not otherwise busy running aground. However, beyond Yale Lady Franklin Rock and the rapids above blocked progress.

But the season was not all pleasant camping by the river. It also brought the great nemesis of the Royal Engineers - mosquitoes. Mary Moody wrote to her mother that after ten days of irritation, she and her children had "surrendered" to the mosquitoes and fled to Victoria. Lt Wilson, surveying the 49th Parallel near Sumas, wrote: "I have a gauze bag over my head, and a short pipe puffing to try and keep the 'squitors off". Washing is a perfect torture; they settle en masse upon you perfectly covering every portion of the body exposed. None of us have had any sleep for the last two nights and we can scarcely eat, exposing the face is such a painful operation. One's hands are literally covered with them when writing and even when wearing kid gloves, they bite through the needle holes in the seams." "Worse, Wilson noted two of the mules had been blinded and six horses rendered unfit for work, their hides "one mass of sores."

To take up where the paddle-wheelers left off, the Engineers set to work improving existing trails to the interior on three routes - the Similkameen Road, the Douglas Road and the Fraser Canyon. The first of these trails ran east from Hope through the Cascade Mountains to Princeton and beyond. This route was considered critical to connect new gold finds in south-eastern B.C. to the coast. In July 1861 the Anglican bishop John Hills visited a camp of Royal Engineers along this trail in present-day Manning Park.

"It is interesting," wrote Hills, "to see the wondrous change produced in a country by a road." Describing the "tangled, rugged, pathless forest" which was the natural state of the land, Hills remarked that the coming of the Engineers meant a "...magic wand of skill and industry has passed over this chaotic mass. You see before you a beautiful road upon which you might canter a coach... Such was the pleasure afforded us today in tracing the progress of the transforming industry of this Noble band of British Heroes." Some of the 'Heroes' may have taken a less romantic view of the proceedings.

Hills visited with an injured sapper, whom he found in a precarious state after being crushed by a falling tree: "His name is Babbage, the pride of the Corps. He stood some 6 feet 2 inches, well made and of great strength. He was the best axe man and would use a lever which no other man could lift... A Leg -and an Arm were broke with numerous other crushing bruises. His end has been expected every day since... I visited him ministerially. He expressed his thankfulness, and regretted he had neglected religion. When at home, he had attended service always, twice on Sunday. On asking if he could not get some comrade to read the Scripture to him, he replied, 'I fear they are all novel readers here.'" Fortunately Sapper Babbage would recover, although it is unclear if he ever overcame his dislike for modern literature.

Meanwhile, the chief obstacle to speedy communication with the Cariboo region remained the narrow and dangerous Fraser Canyon above Yale. The government's original solution was to urge steamships to make a left turn at the Harrison River, chugging upstream to Port Douglas at the north end of Harrison Lake. From there miners had built the Douglas Road, a rudimentary path winding from lake to lake until it arrived at Lillooet, bypassing the roughest part of the Fraser.

The sappers thus started in at Lillooet continuing this road northward, making Lillooet 'Mile O' on the upper road to the Cariboo. But the professionally trained Royal Engineers were not impressed with the amateurish Harrison route. They did persevere for a time making improvements to the Douglas Road under vexing conditions. First, the lower Harrison River near its junction with the Fraser kept silting up. The Engineers solved that problem with a series of cedar pilings and underwater bulwarks, forcing the main stream into a narrow channel, which scoured itself, clean. It was a brilliant solution, and some of the pilings survive today. Unfortunately it meant that Sapper Sturtridge had to stand chest-deep in icy water for hours supporting these pilings as they were driven into the riverbed. Lt Mayne of the Royal Navy called this "a very moist occupation," and Sturtridge was often so numb he had to be pulled out of the river. Colonial officials would later complain at the size of the unlucky soldier's medical bills when he developed acute rheumatism.

At the same time, Corporal McKenney's party was building piers in the numerous remote lakes along the route and writing testy letters to headquarters complaining about the wild fluctuations in water levels. An even worse job went to Sapper Duffy, exiled to the remotest section of the route, who contrived to freeze to death on a stretch still known as the Duffy Lake Road.

Meanwhile other Engineers were improving the trail up the Fraser Canyon north of Yale. However, changes here had to be hacked out of sheer rock faces and slides were a constant danger. One nearly buried Sapper Colston, who staggered back to Yale in shock with his hands badly mangled. The British army, true to form, charged Colston for his pickaxe lost in the avalanche.



Lt Charles Wilson

Murder, gunplay and riot were also commonplace, "As you can imagine," wrote Lt Wilson, "where there is so much young blood and no female population there are sometimes very fierce scenes enacted and the bowie knife and revolver which every man wears are in constant requisition. In Victoria, he commented casually, "the whiz of revolver bullets round you goes on all day and if anyone gets shot of course it's his own fault."

Following one such shooting the Engineers took charge of a native accused of murdering an Irishman. One evening the prisoner, wearing only a blanket, "watched his opportunity and darted away from his guard. They were armed with revolvers, and rushed after him firing. But the revolvers had been loaded for some time and hung fire." Sapper Meade tried to leap on the escaping figure, but "the Indian cleverly threw his blanket over Meade, and sped away down the bank towards the river." The naked man is presumed to have drowned trying to swim the half-frozen Fraser River.

Lt Lemprie recounted another adventure in law enforcement in October 1859. Three men had been found murdered downstream from New Westminster. A posse of sorts set off in search of the native suspects:

7 and Capt Luard each went in command of a boat with armed men and started up the River. There was also a party of Yankees all armed; one man had no less than 3 revolvers on his waist belt. When we arrived at the Indian ranch we took 3 Indians whom we had some suspicion of. The Yankees wanted to hang one of them right off the bat and requested Capt Luard, the magistrate and myself to go away a short distance saying 'That it would be all over by the time we got back and that no one would be any wiser' however Captain Luard told them that was not the way we did business. They then said they would put it to a vote, endeavouring to get our men to join them. We immediately made our men fall in, put the prisoners in my boat and returned to our Camp."

The next day there followed a grisly sequel to this incident. Mrs Croat, wife of one of the sappers, had lived in fear of Indians since her arrival from England. Hearing news of the murders down river, she became convinced a native attack was imminent and in a fit of temporary insanity cut the throats of 3 of her children and then her own. Two of children fortunately survived. The incident however demonstrates how real could be the emigrant's fear of the wild and unknown.

May 6. 1863: ..slept at the [Alexandria] mission last night, my horse ran away out of the field and I had to tramp home a distance of 26 miles." Sgt John McMurphy on the Cariboo Wagon Road.

Royal Engineers' Vittles'

"Our fare (while surveying) consisted almost exclusively of bacon and dampers, with tea and coffee. Now and then we might be lucky enough to shoot a grouse."

Dampers were "cakes of dough rolled out to the size of a plate, and one or two inches thick. They are cooked either by being baked in the wood ashes of the fire, or fried in the pan with bacon fat"

These few excerpts from B.C.'s archives may serve to give the reader some sense of the drama and turmoil, which the Detachment endured. Yet despite it all, their work got done and done well, and the colony flourished. In the end, perhaps, a little awe may not be out of order. With newer and bigger gold strikes in the Cariboo country, the colony's attention turned north with growing urgency. Even after the sappers' improvements, neither the Harrison route nor the narrow trail north of Yale would be adequate for the growing quantities of freight that needed to pass.

Finally Royal Engineer officers persuaded the Governor to give up on his beloved Douglas Road. They proposed instead to replace the trail above Yale with an 18-foot wide wagon road, right through the heart of the Fraser Canyon. The Engineers would themselves construct the first stretch, working up the west side of the canyon to a spot near Spuzzum where a bridge to the east bank was planned. They began blasting a roadbed out of the sheer cliffs with gunpowder. Explosions and rock slides meant the men were in constant peril. Then began the backbreaking labour of hauling logs into place to make cribbing over crevices and ravines.

How did the men cope with the toil and danger? Sgt Major Cann may have given us a clue when he wrote to his commander from a camp above Yale on June 12, 1862: Sir, I require as early as possible for the Yale Waggon Road, 1000 Feet of Fuse and 6 Crow Bars. We are also out of Rum. Captain Grant told me before he left for Lillooet that he had sent by express for Rum which has not yet arrived, so I borrowed 3 Gallons from a Merchant at Yale.'

Meanwhile Sgt McColl had selected a site for the Spuzzum crossing, which was then built by private contractors. The Alexandria Bridge, a later structure built on the very spot chosen by McColl, survives today as a rest area in the heart of the Fraser Canyon. North of the Canyon, most of the construction was done by entrepreneurs who bid for the right to build sections of the Road, being paid by the mile and with the right to collect tolls. These early public-private partnerships worked largely because the Engineers served as an incorruptible force of building inspectors. The road was rapidly extended north past Williams Lake, eventually reaching Quesnel and the gold fields beyond.

By the time the Detachment was disbanded in November of 1863, their road network was largely complete. The hard work had taken its toll - some 15 sappers had died by 1863, and 11 more had deserted. But most of the men were honourably discharged, settling in B.C. to become innkeepers and policemen, builders and businessmen. All could point with pride to the work they had done in the colony, and especially to their crowning achievement, the Cariboo Road.

The Royal Engineers Living History Group is an informal group of history enthusiasts, dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Royal Engineers and their times. Using period uniforms and equipment, they seek to interpret to the public daily life in the colony of British Columbia some 140 years ago. Each member has chosen an actual historical figure to research and portray, including officers, common soldiers and civilians. The group is privileged to attend as guests at sites including Barkerville Provincial Park, Fort Rodd Hill and Fort Langley National Historic Sites, and San Juan Island (U.S.) National Park.

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Responding to X9

Jack Braithwaite G3PWK

In response to his comment published in issue No 10 (August 2003) I thought that X9 would realise the PWK stands for Practical Wireless King!

73 ES BCNU Jack - Hope that will get him thinking!

“Knowing Your Place”

A 9 Squadron guy, a Parachute Regiment bloke and a Royal Marine were standing before ‘God’ at the throne of Heaven.

The Lord looked at the three and said, “Before granting you a place at my side, I must first ask you what it is you believe.”

Addressing the Bootneck first he asks, “What is it you believe?”- The Bootneck looks ‘God’ in the eye and states passionately, “I believe the Corps to be the pillar of all things. Nothing else brings so much professional fulfilment and the desire to attain the highest peaks, I have devoted my life to being a good marine and getting the best from the team.”

‘God’ considers this, looks up and offers the Bootneck the seat to his left.

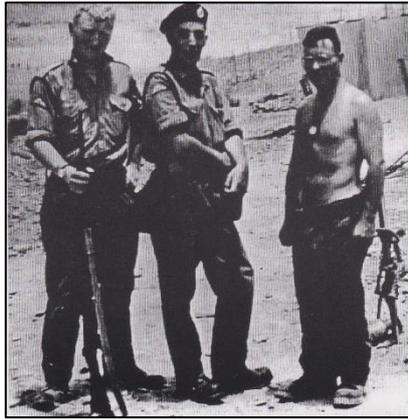
He then turns to the ‘meat and veg,’ “And you airborne, what is it you believe?” The ‘veg’ stands tall and proud, “I believe courage, honour and the regiment are the fundamentals of life and I’ve spent my whole career providing a living embodiment of these traits.”

‘God,’ moved by the passion of the speech indicates the seat to his right.

Finally he turns to the 9 Squadron bloke, “and you Sapper, what is it you believe?”

“I believe ...” says the 9 Squadron guy “that you’re sitting in my seat.”

Rogues Gallery



Pete Owen, Loz Irwing & Nev Collins

Aden 1965

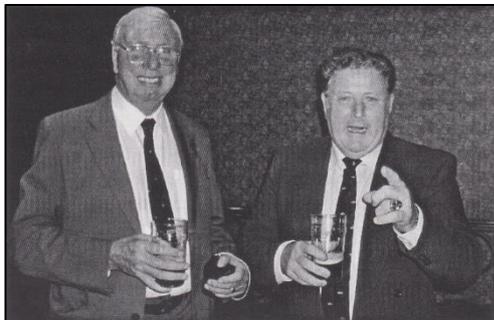


A selection of Airborne Warriors that the girls in the NAAFI Club couldn't wait to get their hands on!

Abingdon - having just received their wings,

**Bev Camp, Chris Chambers, Geordie Wilkinson,
Eddie Corthine, Neil Westbrooke, Dai Rees &
Ralph Holmes**

(Are they really the Magnificent 7?)



Don Doherty & Sean McCargo - Coventry 2003



Hong Kong 1974

The 'Boys' who Sustain, a fine collection of the Sqn's ACC lads:

**Tovey, Fox, Reg Varley, Nash, 'Canada' Frost,
Squatting: Shallcross & Dave Davies**

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2003

held at The Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry at 1030 hours Saturday 1st November 2003

1. Opening Address

The President, Brig IDT McGill, CBE opened the meeting by welcoming all 107 in attendance to this superb venue. He stated having seen the programme we are all assured of a great weekend and he thanked everyone present for making the effort to attend.

2. Apologies

There were 21 notifications of apology.

3. Silent Tributes

The members stood for one minute in respect to the following colleagues who have passed away during the past year:

Col Eric O'Callaghan, MBE, MC; Ian Robbie; Dick Robb; Ken Hannabus; Albert Sweetlove: Brig Fergie Semple, MBE, MC and Lt Col AD Hunter, DSO*.

4. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2002

The minutes of the AGM 2002 held in Blackpool were passed as a true record of proceedings.

Proposed: Tom Ormiston - Seconded: Mike Pallott - Agreed Unanimously

5. Notification of "Postal Vote"

Dave Rutter, Chairman of the Sub Committee appointed to count the returning votes regarding our considered affiliation to the Royal Engineers Association stated that the "Voting Papers" had been despatched to every Association member for which we had a current address. The papers had been forwarded by two methods.

Firstly, 642 were enclosed with the Association Journal of which 475 were returned. Secondly, 389 were posted to members who did not subscribe to the Association Journal of which 119 replied and the final tally/result is as follows:

Votes for affiliation to the REA	173
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Votes against affiliation to the REA	406
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5 voting forms were returned announcing the death of a member

1 voting form was returned with only the covering letter enclosed

9 voting envelopes were returned with only Journal subscriptions enclosed

The proposal is therefore not carried

6. Chairman

The Chairman stated that the Association has had a good year. Many functions at various locations had been held and branch officials and members had excelled in projecting the image of our Association and he hopes it will continue throughout his term of office.

7. Treasures Report

In the absence of the Hon Treasurer Major Dick Brown, RE (on duty in Canada) Dave Rutter presented the report of the Association accounts as at 30 October 2003.

Assets		Liabilities	
Cash in hand	██████████	Journal	██████████
Instant account	██████████	Museum fund	██████████
Savings account	██████████		
Value of shop stock (at cost)	██████████		
Value of property (depreciated 20%)	██████████		
Total assets	██████████	Total liabilities	██████████
Working Capital	██████████		

Proposed by Lou Gallagher and seconded by Stan Marley, that the accounts, **subject to audit**, as presented be accepted.

Agreed unanimously

8. Membership Secretary Report

Chris Chambers stated he has now issued Membership No 1160 but confirmed recruiting recently has been rather slow and felt that the uncertainty of our proposed affiliation to the REA may have had a restraining effect. However, the future looks encouraging with the formation of 23 Regiment within 16 Air Assault Brigade and he already has sound connections to work on. Once again Chris thanked those members who have forwarded names of comrades to him to contact and he assures everyone he always pursues all information given.

9. Election of Officers

The following members were elected as officers of the Airborne Engineers Association:

President	Vacant	Hon Treasurer	Major Dick Brown, RE
Vice Presidents	Bill Rudd, MBE & Tom Brinkman	Membership Secretary	Chris Chambers
Chairman	Bunny Brown	Editor of Journal	Dave Rutter
Hon Secretary	Ray Coleman	Archivist/Historian	Fred Gray
Asst Hon Secretary	Don Doherty	Entertainment	Birmingham Branch (for one year)

10. Election of Representatives

Prior to the elections, Brig IDT McGill CBE, relinquished the Presidency. A full explanation of his decision will be published in the December edition (No 11) of the Airborne Engineers Association Journal.

The under mentioned personnel were unanimously accepted and shall be members of the Advisory Committee.

1 Squadron	R Jones	9 Squadron	OC, SSM, Cpls Mess
3 Squadron	R Sullivan MBE	Aldershot Branch	M Metcalfe
4 Squadron	E Richards	Birmingham Branch	G Barrett
9 Field Coy (Airborne)	T H Carpenter	Chatham Branch	E Blenkinsop
131 Squadron	B Brown	Edinburgh Branch	R A Drummond
South West Branch	R Runacres	591 Squadron	A F Jackson
Yorkshire Branch	M R C Pallott		

11. Confirmation of Trustees

The following elected officers were appointed as trustees for this Association:

Mr Bunny Brown, Mr Bill Rudd, MBE & Mr Tom Brinkman - Agreed Unanimously

12. Constitution

The adaptation of the Association Constitution by the subcommittee has now been completed. The Executive and Advisory Committees have ratified the document as instructed by members at the Annual General Meeting 2001. The Chairman stated it is a fine document, well presented and expressed our thanks to Bob Ferguson, Peter Bates and John Aldridge for the work they have done.

The Chairman confirmed that a copy will be held by each branch and each branch representative and can also be purchased by members at a cost of £5.

NOTE: Later, doubt was raised over the authenticity of the new document. The Hon Secretary assured the members that the committee had complied with their instructions as recorded in Minute 9 of the AGM 2001 at Bristol. As a result of this action the document before us is therefore the undisputed Constitution of the Airborne Engineers Association. After a protracted debate it was suggested that the document be fully discussed at Branch Meetings and if any amendments are considered necessary they be forwarded for consideration at the next Annual General Meeting under the normal constituted procedure. Also, the Constitution may be published with the Association Journal for the benefit of all members.

13. Association Journal

Dave Rutter gave a comprehensive report of his work in publishing our excellent Association Journal. He continues to look for companies/people to advertise to help alleviate the cost. However, the Journal has remained at £5 for the past six years and therefore with printing costs, stationary and postage rising, it is almost certain that at the next AGM he will be requesting an increase of £1. He noted that to date 85 subscriptions require renewal and as many are in attendance he will, as always, be available to receive their payments. The Chairman, on behalf of all members, thanked Dave for his outstanding contribution.

14. Date and Venue Of Next Annual General Meeting

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on the weekend of 29/30/31 October 2004 at The Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry.

Arnhem

Tom Carpenter

On September 17th 1944, No 2 Platoon of 9th Field Company (Airborne) Royal Engineers with other units of the 1st Airlanding Brigade, in some 150 gliders had landed on Landing Zone Z slightly west of Wolfheze, Holland, the time was about 1315hrs.

No 2 Platoon, commanded by Captain E. O'Callaghan MC had been assigned the task to seize and hold the railway bridge which crossed the Lower Rhine just to the south of Oosterbeek. The Platoon, less a reinforced section, under the command of Lt R. Timmins had been deployed to assist No1 Platoon in its task at Wolfheze. One of No1 Platoons Gliders had gone down en-route with 21 Sappers and 2 Glider Pilots just south of Bath Somerset. The platoon moved out towards Heelsum, here joining up with the column of Lt Colonel Frost which was taking the low road running along the river towards Arnhem, passing south of Oosterbeek on the "Lion Route." Progress was slow at this point as the route was closed in by a wooded area and the infantry had to deal with a number of enemy strong points. By late afternoon we were within sight of our objective and elated to see it still intact, it was about 1700hrs.

Breaking away from the main column at the viaduct which carries the railway over the Benendropsweg, the Platoon left all surplus equipment i.e. folding bikes, motor cycles jeeps etc. and rapidly moved along a track, which ran along the base of the railway embankment. From the road to the river was some 1000 metres which was rapidly covered and we were soon moving up on to the first span of the railway bridge which ran over the flat polder land. The platoon was at this point joined by other troops who had moved across the flat polder on our right flank.

These troops turned out to be some of Lt Peter Barry's 9th Platoon of C Company. We were quite surprised to see them, as at our briefing we had been told there would be no infantry support. Leading elements were now some 40-50 metres on to the bridge when the Germans blew it at a point destroying the centre and four spans. A few seconds later could have cost us heavy casualties. Small arms fire was coming from the south bank as we rapidly left the bridge to take up defensive positions in a drainage ditch, which ran parallel to the embankment. No 2 Platoon seemed unscathed but the infantry had suffered casualties.

As darkness was closing in Capt O'Callaghan who had not been able to reach the company by wireless transmission decided that the platoon would now be better deployed in Arnhem. It was now very dark and very lights and flares occasionally lighted up the night sky over Oosterbeek about one mile north.

Collecting all our equipment we began our advance towards Arnhem. Slow progress was made towards the Ship Bridge, which was some 1000 metres downstream of the main road bridge. We were crossing a square when one of our comrades shouted "Ambush" and M.G.'s opened up from our rear. Once again we were lucky our casualties only amounted to the loss of our folding bikes, which were left in the centre of the square, which was still under fire!

At the Ship Bridge a section of which had been removed, there were signs of recent action with enemy dead and wounded. Movement now was becoming more difficult as signs of German opposition were stiffening. Every intersection we had to cross was now covered by enemy machine guns firing at a fixed height. We were held up near the Old Town Gate of Arnhem, which was again a large square we had to cross. It was about midnight on the 17th when the night sky was lit up. the ground shook and the crackle of explosives filled the air. We thought that the bridge had blown and here we were the wrong side of the Rhine. What had happened was two sappers of 1 Para RE had used a Flame Thrower to neutralise a pill box on the bridge and instead hit an ammunition storage shed. It was in the very early hours as we negotiated the square, drawing fire as we moved rapidly into a large villa type building then through the rear garden towards the bridge, moving into a timber yard which was part of a factory which produced coffins and clogs. It was from here and the surrounding buildings that 2 Platoon fought and was gradually whittled down as casualties mounted and by the early hours of Thursday 21st September hardly a man had not been wounded. The remnants of the platoon, now about ten men, were in the gardens at the rear of what had been 2nd Battalions and Brigade HQ, but now a blazing inferno. At about 0100hrs an attempt to break out through the encircling enemy position led by Captain O'Callaghan and an infantry officer came to grief in the narrow back streets.

The section detached to No.1 Platoon was sent to capture the Wolfheze Hotel and soon took casualties including Lt R Timmins who was killed in the grounds of the hotel at about 1800 hours on the 17th.

Fifty Years On- Plaque Unveiled To The Memory Of Fallen Sappers

On Wednesday 14th September 1994. two ex-Sappers of No 2 Platoon 9th Field Company RE were invited on behalf of Colonel E. O'Callaghan MBE. MC and Veterans of 9th Field Company RE to unveil a commemorative plaque to the memory of 2 Platoon's Sappers who fell as a result of action around the Arnhem Bridge in September 1944.

Mr Arthur Cottle, who is a nephew of one of the named below, commissioned the Plaque.

The municipality of Arnhem were most helpful when approached for a site for the plaque. They felt that it should be placed in a quiet entrance to the Eusibius Grote church, which itself had suffered in 1944. Now restored, it's spire once more overlooking the John Frost Brug and the surrounding countryside.

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

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

Our thanks to the Burgomeister of Arnhem and to Mr Jan Boon who organised the unveiling ceremony on behalf of the municipality of Arnhem.

As inscribed on the Plaque:

From Comrades In Memory of Royal Engineers Sappers - No Known Graves

Sapper	Arthur 'Gappy' Cottle	Age 25	
Sapper	Joseph 'Joe' Close	Age 24	
Sapper	Ronald 'Ron' Russell	Age 24	
Sapper	William 'Bill' Rogers	Age 29	
Sapper	Robert 'Bob' Trowse	Age 23	
Sapper	Bernard Turton	Age 25	
and			
Corporal	Robert 'Taffy' Evans	Age 26	Now Oosterbeek Airborne Cemetery
Sapper	John 'Jack' Everitt	Age 23	Now Becklingen War Cemetery Germany

Para/Glider borne Engineers

In Action 17th-21st September 1944 Arnhem Road Bridge Of 2 Platoon 9th (ABN) Fd Coy. R.E. 1st Airborne Div

Lest We Forget

Some reasons to be grateful- if you grew up speaking English

Don Newman - Perth, Australia

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes; but the plural of ox became oxen not oxes. One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese, yet the plural of moose should never be meese. You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice; yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.

We take English for granted. But if we explore as paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend?

If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

Sometimes I think all the folk who grew up speaking English should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The farm was used to produce.
- 3) The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- 4) We can polish the Polish furniture.
- 5) He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- 6) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 7) Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
- 8) The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- 9) There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
- 10) They were too close to the door to close it.
- 11) The buck does funny things when the does are present
- 12) The wind was too strong to wind down the sail.

Let's face it - English is a crazy language.

There is neither egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger, neither apple nor pine in a pineapple and English muffins weren't invented in England.

What a Difference a Few Years Make



Paul Dunkley, Alex (Froth) Beer & Phil Poulton - 1969



Phil, Paul & Alex - 2004

What ever happened to the mops of dark hair? They've obviously not heard of the 'Atkins' diet!

Ramisi Bridge- Kenya

Captain Tim Robertson (now Lt Col retd)

It was while the Squadron was serving a four-month tour in Ireland in the summer of 1970 that we received the news that we had been lucky enough to be chosen to take over the commitment of exercise "Wilfred", an engineer project in Kenya, from 33 Fd Sqn who had been called upon to do an emergency tour as Infantry in Londonderry. The project entailed building two reinforced concrete abutment walls founded on mass concrete bases, spanned by an 80 feet double single Bailey bridge to provide access across the Ramisi River in the Shimba Hills, a country region south west of Mombasa. Also 500 feet of approach road was required up to each abutment wall.

62 CRE had carried out the final engineer recce between 22nd July and 5th August 1970. We received their detailed plan in November. In mid-November the OC Major J. B. Awford, the QM, Capt. Les Neave and SSgt Pete McCabe, the Plant Sergeant, went with WOI Thomas from 62 CRE to carry out the administrative recce for the project.

When the OC had briefed the Squadron and shown his colourful slides to illustrate the journey out and staging points as well as the exercise area, it was with eager expectation that the squadron proceeded on Christmas leave.

The journey out was much as we expected with a long, three leg, air move, followed by a most enjoyable coach ride south to Mombasa through the Tsavo National Park, staging at two game lodge hotels.

The advance party had left ten days before the main body and so, when we arrived on site on the 15th January, the camp was a going concern. The advance party had worked hard, turning a wilderness of shrub among the cashew nut trees and coconut palms into a well laid out tented camp. Before we arrived, locals had built the "Banda," a 100 feet x 30 feet maktiti roofed shelter, which dominated the camp. This provided shelter for the cookhouse and servery at one end, with the bar and canteen at the other, leaving plenty of space for additional seating.



Save water - bath with some friends

After the main body arrived we spent the first week completing the camp set-up and providing as many comforts as we could afford. 1 Troop, under Lt Mike Warren, provided all the camp lighting while 2 Troop, led by SSgt Bob Runacres, made a good job of the water supply, providing all domestic water, including some excellent showers, from the Ramisi River some 300 yards from the camp. This water, although passed by the MO as fit for drinking, was rather evil tasting due to some saltiness and the amount of treatment required to eradicate bilharzia and other bugs, and for this reason

drinking water was brought in from nearby Msambweni.

3 Troop, under command of Lt Peter Williams, prepared the concrete batching plant, provided concrete for floors and showers and under the supervision of Sgt Tony Roberts, had fun erecting the timber structured squadron office with only an advertisers sketch to work from. The result was a Part 1 order forbidding anyone to lean against the Squadron Office!

The project was officially started on 20th January although the plant troop had by then done some excellent work during the camp preparation, and the diversion track across the river was already in operation.

The first task was to build a culvert in the area of the bridge centre line to divert the river away from the west bank and to provide a working area to place the spoil from the abutment excavations. Owing to the bilharzia danger all work in the river was carried out with local labour supervised by Sqn NCOs.

The project then got under way in earnest. 1 Tp were given the task of running work on the west bank, 2 Tp on the east bank, with 3 Tp providing the concrete and looking after the approach roads, while Capt Tim Robertson carried out overall control with assistance from WOII Goude, who was on loan for the project from 62 CRE.

Excavation began well using the two D6s plant machines to cut away the banks in the area of the two abutment bases. However, towards the end of the second day we encountered what was to be a major stumbling block for some weeks. The two D6s cut through the hard surface on the west bank to expose a quagmire of wet silty clay in which they continually got bogged down. This was just after we had been told the news that the plant contractor, who was to supply us with an RB19, two concrete mixers, two dumpers and a compressor could, in fact, let us have nothing other than apologies.

This left us with 2 D6s and a Michigan backactor to dig a hole 30 feet by 17 feet some five feet below river level in wet silty clay. Despite considerable efforts with revetting, pumping, and local labour working knee deep in mud, the problem proved unsurpassable until the arrival of a Massey Ferguson hydraulic excavator, which we managed to hire in Nairobi. This machine came all the way from a project in Uganda and its arrival on site on 16th February came as a real morale booster.

By digging deep drains all-round the hole and by excavating from an improvised timber raft built from locally cut trees the excavator finished the hole in two days. Throughout the time of excavation the area had been kept as dry as possible by continuous 24-hour pumping from two large sumps into which drains were cut. When the lean mix base was finally complete on 19th February morale took another upward swing. Meanwhile the story had been very different on the east bank. The initial excavation was in good soft sandstone, which the D6 with its rippers easily took out. Lower down the rock got harder but, with the use of compressor tools and a small amount of explosive, the required level was soon achieved. Here the foundation was three feet above river level so de-watering problems did not occur and the lean mix base was laid by 2nd February. Thereafter things went very smoothly. 2 Troop were lucky to have an experienced steel fixer in their team and the second lift of concrete on the abutment wall had been finished by the time we poured the lean mix base on the west bank.

Our problem on the excavation of the west abutment base had, by now, put the project considerably behind schedule. However we were fortunate in obtaining very high early strengths from our concrete and this fact, coupled with our good progress on the east bank, allowed us to rewrite our works schedule so as to make up for lost time by working shifts and by pouring successive lifts every five days as opposed to every seven. We also cut the number of lifts on the main wall from four to three by redesigning the formwork.

Until now our working day had been from 0600 until 1300 hours in order to get most work done before the heat of the day. Where necessary we also worked an afternoon shift from 1330 to 1700 hours.

With our redesigned programme and the worst troubles over; progress was rapid, thanks to a lot of hard work by everyone, especially the carpenters who, with a regular commitment for formwork for both sides, found themselves much in demand and did a splendid job to keep abreast of the new schedule.

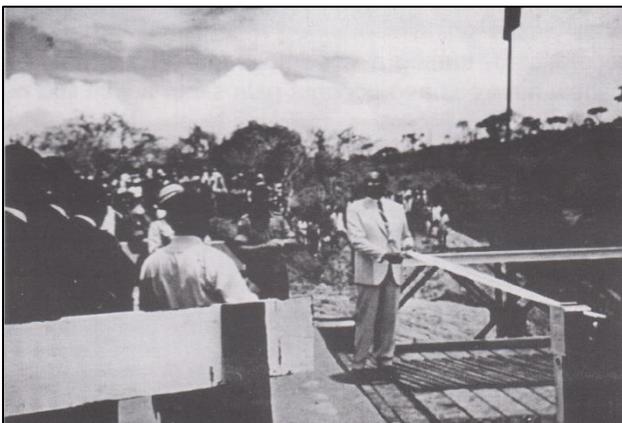


The plant boys were kept busy back filling the abutment as they went up and made good progress with the approach roads on either side. In addition they also found time to level and grade a football pitch for one of the local schools, help some local farmers clear areas for their crops, and cart around materials for another school running a self-help project.

By 11th March the two abutment walls were complete. Such was the quality of our concrete that only three days were needed to give sufficient strength to launch the bridge but, to be absolutely safe and to allow us time to finish the earthwork under the bridge, we allowed five days. On 16th March the Bailey bridge was constructed under the direction of Lt John Moss and Sgt Tony Roberts. The build, from rollers placed on the top of the abutment walls, went without hitch in front of a gallery of astonished locals, several visitors for the day, and the local press. It was a great moment when the bridge was finally jacked down to span the gap exactly.



All was not over, but things moved fairly smoothly as the end dams were cast, a culvert was put in the approach road, the road was brought up to level, the wearing surface was laid and the banks were landscaped and compacted by local labour, leaving the bridge ready and the project finished in good time for the official opening on 31st March.



The opening ceremony was quite an occasion as the Vice-President, Mr. Arap Moi, came to cut the tape. This caused quite a stir among the locals and there was feverish activity to smarten up the approach to the bridge camp and prepare for the great day. We kept in step by providing a guard of honour and suitably decking out the bridge with flags and bunting.

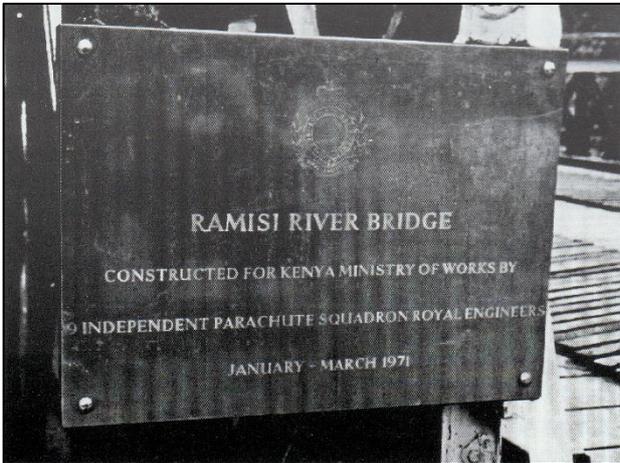


Although we worked the project for a seven-day week each man got one day a week off, which the majority spent at the Silversands leave centre in Mombasa on the sandy shores of the Indian Ocean.

Enjoying a few Tuskers at Silversands

Our hours of work gave us plenty of time for sport in the afternoon and soon volleyball and soccer leagues were underway in which the local village of Eshu entered teams. Our soccer team played matches in Mombasa and against another local village, Msambweni, but perhaps our most successful games-players were the rugby team who, having beaten Mombasa Sports Club twice by

handsome margins, beat Kenya Harlequins in Nairobi and then walked off with the Christie Cup for the all Kenya seven-a-side tournament. We were finally beaten 11-6 in a very good hard fought game against the Scorpions, the top Kenya invitation side.



We also fitted in some parachuting. Our free-fallers made a most successful trip to Nairobi where after a couple of days training they jumped at the Wilson Air Display. I, together with eleven others from the squadron, were lucky to complete a two-day visit to the Kenyan Army Parachute Company who were on exercise. Our two days gave us time for a trip into Tsavo National Park, a good evening out with the Kenyan 'Toms' and a parachute descent from a Kenya Air Forces Caribou. Thirty-six Kenyans and ourselves jumped in sticks of eight watched by the Chief of the Kenyan Defence Staff, General Ndolo, and several other VIPs, including Brigadier Eric Mackay, MBE, Chief Engineer, STRATCO, who was

visiting us at the time.

It was with sad hearts but full of happy memories and a wealth of experience that we made the trek to Nairobi to fly home just in time for Easter.

Ramisi Bridge- 33 Years On

Peter Bates

Ramisi River Bridge: Built by 9 Indep Para Sqn RE and officially opened by Hon D. Arap Moi Vice President of Kenya. This is what the envelope said with its first day cover stamp duly franked by the British Forces Post Office. It was this envelope I took with me on holiday 30 years later to the Nyali Beach Hotel in Mombasa. I had walked along the beach to Silver Sands holiday camp and was saddened to see that the Kenyan army had taken over and let the place deteriorate to what looked like a dump. The one thing that had not changed in the intervening years was the beach sellers. They still pushed their carvings, beads and shells with big smiles never accepting no for an answer. The Nyali Beach Hotel has seen better days; however, the staff were friendly and the food good. The swimming pool is still the centre of the hotel with an additional sign forbidding persons jumping or diving off the terrace. I had already bored the socks off the family with stories of the Mombasa tour including diving into the pool from the terrace. Don't you dare was the reply when I mentioned I might. I did dare on the final day before breakfast! It took me that long to get up enough courage to leap! The pool cleaner shook his head in sympathy of such a stupid trick but little did he know the memories it brought flooding back!

I enquired at the hotel's information desk, explaining that I needed to find the bridge and would require a driver who knew the area of the Shimba Hills. Good to their word two days later on 31 March, Omar together with car stood outside the hotel. Omar knew of the bridge but had bad news - it had been destroyed by El Nino in 1998 and there for would we still want to go. Of course was the reply and off we set. Through a vastly changed Mombasa we trundled, the roads in need of repair and maintenance. The population has exploded in the intervening years with tens of thousands of people coming into the city for work.



Original Ferry

We crossed the river using the new much larger ferry and headed south past vast numbers of stalls selling everything known to man. After what seemed a life time Omar turned off the road onto a dirt track towards Eshu.

The 'track' was hellish and brought back memories of the daily 3ton truck excursions down to the sea during which you were covered in dust and shaken half to death. Omar would stop regularly, shouting and waving to people who could help us in our quest. Eventually we were told of a lady who had a shop in the vicinity of the bridge who may be able to help us. This news

raised my somewhat jangled nerves, as we appeared to be going around in ever decreasing circles. Very shortly on the side of the track was 'the shop' owned, we were told by Christine. Omar and I went in to the gloom and there behind a makeshift counter was an old lady. Omar explained to her who we were and what we were seeking. Yes she said her name is Christine and she remembers the bridge being built but also the big day of the official opening by the now President Moi. She confirmed that the bridge had been destroyed but there were large amounts of kit around which the local government had reclaimed and stored. She then said that Willy Kantoga (whom many of you will remember lived in a hut overlooking the bridge) had moved away with his daughter Grace. His son Tito went to work for the UN. Willy had sold his land but the hut remains.

Christine continued to talk about the soldiers in red berets and the times when they would stop their vehicles to give lifts to people.

We bought some cokes and thanked her then drove down to the remains of the Ramisi Bridge. As we left she stopped Omar and said there is another bridge just a quarter of a mile from the one that has been destroyed and she suggested we look at that as well as it had been built at the about the same time.



We got into the vehicle and drove on and there around a bend stood the bridge! Not destroyed but standing in all its glory. Omar said our one was some ½ mile further on and consequently drove on. There in the valley alongside the track were dozens of bits of Bailey bridge some stacked neatly others strewn around like rubbish. I did not recognise the bridge supports and told Omar that the first bridge was the Ramisi. He was not convinced saying the remains were the larger of the two bridges that were built about the time I was talking about.

We were running out of time and had to return to the city and therefore I made a decision to take a souvenir in the form of a panel pin from the remains of the bridge but feeling the intact bridge was the real Ramisi Bridge built by those young members of 'Awford's Flying Circus.'

The Para Barrow- Part 2

John (Titch) Hughes



I too was part of 2 Troop in 1959 on a feasibility study with the Para Barrow. I'm 7th on the right in Tommy's picture in December's journal. Unlike Tommy I have a picture of the said Barrow, myself seated in it - Willy Wiltshire on the right and Arthur (Jock) Simpson and Taff Gillespie at the rear.

I teamed up with Taff to make our way to Aviemore; we stopped off at my home in Hull and set off on Sunday morning to arrive at 1500 hours on Monday. As well as Tommy Tucker and Anson Westbrook we also arrived late which resulted in extra guard duty.

My main memory of the exercise was cleaning my teeth in the freshwater stream which ran down to the

Loch, when I looked up I heard some laughter, looking up stream I saw John McGregor and Spud Taylor relieving themselves in the stream! - Typical 9 Squadron behaviour.

My everlasting memory of that trip was at the weekend when we attended a local dance in the church hall. Cliff Higgins, who had a liaison with one of the daughters of Morag, The witch of Aviemore, was miffed to find out that she had a regular boyfriend. The dance was 'dry' but we had smuggled in some cans of lager, in our jumping smocks, quite rare in those days.

The boyfriend was pestering us to give him a can, Higgins said he had some more in the Land Rover and disappeared outside, strange, as we had walked down to the Hall. On his return he gave the boyfriend a can who took a big mouthful and then said 'Its Nae bad - just a little warm for my liking' - You've guessed it 9 Squadron again...

Referring back to Tommy's article there is a picture of Joe Brine, I came across Joe a couple of years ago whilst visiting my mum who was in residential care. Joe was working as a handyman. He was delighted to see me and was fit and well.

I still do not remember what happened to the Barrow - It's probably still on 'Ben Mcdui.'

Harry Dunstan

Bob Sullivan

The December 2003 edition of the AEA Journal featured an article about Corporal Harry Dunstan entertaining members of 3 Para Sqn RE in a Normandy quarry before meeting his untimely death during mine recovery operations. The story more than surprised me because Harry never went to Normandy; furthermore I met him in Palestine after the war, when he was a Troop Sergeant in 9th Airborne Sqn RE.

Perhaps my own recollections of Harry and the events that happened around that time may help re-awaken long memories for some of the 'old and bold.'

We first met at Hardwick Hall before going on to Ringway, and later in May 1943 joined 3 Para Sqn together in Bulford. Harry came from the West Country and was a regular having enlisted as an Army Apprentice sometime before the war started. He enjoyed a night out in the pub (when funds permitted) and entertained us with his singing and other 'party pieces.' Most popular was his impersonation of a 'golf ball hitting a sheep,' which included the blowing of the infamous 'raspberry.'

Unfortunately, a couple of months before Normandy started; he got into trouble with the OC Maj Roseveare. This followed on from a complaint to HQ about high-spirited behaviour of some Sqn members during a night out in one of the nearby villages. Harry, as the most senior rank of those involved; was held responsible and punished by being posted out of 3 Para Sqn. It was rumoured that he transferred to the 1st Airborne Division, who had recently arrived back in the UK from overseas.

I also left the Sqn in March 1945 after being wounded on the Rhine Crossing. Following discharge from hospital I joined 9th Airborne Sqn RE in Palestine during December 1945 and became reacquainted with Harry, but our reunion was short lived; as he left about 3 months later to return to the UK. That was the last time that I saw him, but very recently I have learned that he is still alive and living in Cornwall.

The mention, in the December edition, of the old quarry brings back memories. After the Sqn had completed its 'D' day tasks of destroying bridges across the River Dives, it remained under command of 3 Parachute Brigade and fought as infantry at the Le Mesnil and Breville. After about 2 weeks of heavy fighting, the Brigade was relieved and the Sqn enjoyed several days rest in the quarry prior to it reverting back to the CREs command. From that time we used the quarry as a rest area and base, although it was very seldom that more than one troop was in residence at the same time.

The mention of the quarry kitchen brings to mind the cook, Pte Kerry ACC and his helper Spr Alfie Hicks. Sadly both were killed in separate incidents shortly before the 'break-out' and advance to the River Seine. I also remember the night that Cliff Sadler and Cpl Hooper (Sqn clerk) were both seriously injured and crippled when bombs landed in the quarry during an air attack.

My troop also watched the 500 plus heavy bomber raid on Caen by a combined force of US and British aircraft. We had a grandstand view from a vantage point above the quarry. It was an incredible sight to see the 'Yanks' fly in large box formations and the RAF following individually in a continuous stream of aircraft. The German ack-ack was deadly accurate and they succeeded in hitting and bringing down a number of aircraft - mostly Yanks!

About 20 years ago. during a visit to Normandy, Cliff Sadler, Ken (Ginger) Mallett and me; searched for and managed to find the old quarry. By that time it was completely overgrown and full of trees and bushes, leaving no sign of 3 Sqns occupation. Cliff Sadler joked that we should try and find his leg that he lost there back in 1944.

Finally, although I have no knowledge of the Corporal who entertained 2 Troop in the quarry, the name of the NCO killed during mine lifting and clearing operations was Cpl Harold Rowbotham. He joined the Sqn at the same time as Harry Dunstan and me and came from West Yorkshire and left a pregnant wife and young daughter. A little older than most of us, he was a regular and had soldiered in Hong Kong before the outbreak of war. His grave lies in the War Cemetery at Ranville.

Alive and Kicking

Harry Dunstan

Ed: Following the publication of the December issue (No 11) I received telephone calls from Bob Sullivan and John Minter concerning the wellbeing of Harry Dunstan. Bob explained that Harry could not have been killed in Normandy as he recalls him as part of the force that went to Palestine. John Minter further explained that he and Harry had kept in touch since the end of the war. Having received Harry's address from John I wrote to him enclosing the December issue of our publication. His reply reads as follows:

It was with great pleasure that I read your letter, which accompanied a copy of the December 03 issue of the Airborne Engineers Journal. I hasten to assure you that I am alive and reasonably well although not as lively as those comrades mentioned probably remember me, being now 83 years old. Capt John Minter of course would remember me; we have kept in touch since the war years. After serving in Palestine I left the army in June 1946, and was fortunate in obtaining a grant which enabled me to study for a mining engineers degree at the Camborne School Of Mines. Then followed work at Kolar Gold Field, S India for 6 years, then 2 years at English China Clays, 11 years with Alumina Jamaica (part of Alean) involved in opencast mining of bauxite (the primary ore of aluminium) and finally 12 years again with English China Clays, most of which was in studying and developing overseas projects, mainly in Europe but also including Brazil (Sao Paulo and the Amazon basin), and some work in New South Wales and S Africa.

I retired in 1980, and devoted most of my time to boat building; I spent years rigging a 38ft hull as a ketch, and then explored the coast in it. About five years ago I tried my hand at writing, and recently published a book: "Memoirs and Stories" (about 74,600 words). The memoirs include 'Boyhood on a farm,' 'Apprentice Trade Training at Beachley, Chepstow, 'The Phoney war and Dunkirk' and 'The Airborne Normandy Invasion,' then there are stories based on various experiences abroad.

The memoirs only go as far as 1944 but if you think the book would be of interest I will send you a copy for the Association. (They have been returned to the printer for a correction but should soon become available).

Yes I did like singing so I was happy to know that people remembered -- but I don't remember the Raspberry - surely they mean Gooseberry?

Further correspondence has been exchanged between Harry and Harry Howell. Harry Dunstan's letter (dated 30 January 2004) contained the following:

Did you ever come across SSM Mo Lambert? He only recognised one religion: the ROYAL ENGINEERS. A very brave soldier. I remember being issued with green socks, green towels, and green underpants - in readiness for jungle warfare. We were destined for JAVA, but the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima and VJ Day changed all that, and were sent to HAIFA instead. I too remember the tour of the Holy City, also I was in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, and visited the Church of the Nativity, and the Fields where there were crowds moving up and down, but no shepherds or flocks!

What is Life?

Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body. But rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming-WOW-WHAT A RIDE!

Setting the Record Straight

Harry Barnsley

Many thanks for publishing my observations in our journal, I was surprised at the response to them by our members who phoned agreeing with me, but one or two did brand me as a grumpy bad tempered old fart. But I suspect they were a couple of Para's who have infiltrated our association because it's better than the PRA. So to those few I would say, "Cobblers," and I hope their chickens' die!



Harry Barnsley & Ralph Brooks (Korean Veteran) who served with 131 Para Engr Regt - 1955 till 1959

So let's put the record straight, I take nothing from the Para Regiment, they take a lot of beating, and I would concede that they are nearly as good as the Airborne Engineers; except for the fact that we can do their job, but they can't do ours, and I would agree that like the rest of the British fighting forces, are the best in the world. The only ones who wouldn't agree are of course the Yanks who are the masters of "Bull", who sat on the fence in two world wars; till they had to come in so that they could produce the rather dubious films afterwards, like the one about how they captured the enigma machine, which was the work of the British Navy, and

their version on the Battle of the Bulge where they conveniently forgot to mention that the British 6th Airborne division and other British forces were there too, and now there is a strong rumour that they are working on the script for a film of how they got out of "Dunkirk".

But I am straying from my purpose in writing this letter, which is to enlighten those who sneer at us, by lifting the "bushel from our light," and blowing our trumpet.

The Royal Engineers was definitely formed by the year 1537 but were then call the Engineers Corps, and no doubt some form of specialist group existed long before that to make and operate more primitive "Engines of War". But with the advent of the discovery of Gun Powder from China things commenced to become more "High tech," and primitive cannons evolved that maybe led to the forming of the Royal Artillery. But that is pure conjecture on my part.

So in comparison with the forgoing, the Parachute Regiment was not formed till 1940 after the appeal for the famous 5,000. So without appearing to be derogatory in any way, the Para's are a young Regiment who have collected quite a bundle of battle Honours to date. But there are some of those honours claimed which were performed by other units of the army, the most outstanding being Pegasus Bridge, which was taken by three glider loads of Ox and Bucks and a handful of "Royal Engineers" and the expertise of the glider pilots.

The destruction of the four bridges over the river Dives was performed against odds and without the promised Airborne infantry cover, by my squadron the 3rd Para Sqn of Engineers, but all those tasks were completed on 'D' day.

Operation Freshman, which involved glider borne troops of the Royal Engineers in 1942 who were tasked to blow the heavy water plant at the Norsk Hydro plant near Ryuker. All 37 sappers were volunteers for the 9th Field Coy (Airborne) RE when all survivors were executed by the Gestapo.

The Tragino Aqueduct was another task, which involved the RE, was led by Major J Pritchard of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, when seven officers and 31 other ranks, quite a number of whom were sappers (all volunteers) were flown to Italy to blow the Aqueduct.

One could go on in this vein, but let us not forget other brave units like the Commando's and the Marines who had a go at everything that was asked of them. Even the Pioneer Corps did some great work during the second World War.

I take nothing from the Paras, they are a great lot, I mix with them a great deal in an ex service capacity, and owing to the fact that there is no branch of the AEA anywhere near me, I belong to the local branch (Swansea) of the PRA, together with two other members of the AEA, and we all get along fine. It's when we attend Armistice parades, or having a drink after a funeral, some dick head will come out with a derogatory remark, like, "Oh you are not a Para then"! - Or, "Oh you are with that shower are you." Such remarks infuriate most sappers.

Many regiments were born in the Engineers, the RAF started with ballooning (shades of Ringway) in the RE, the REME also sprang from them, and I would venture to say that if God made the world, and all that is on it, in seven days; then surely he must have been a sapper, and a Welsh one too, because when he finished he had so much earth left over, he piled it up in heaps down here, and while my pride is motivating this pen, and before my halo gets too small, I would like to pose a few questions:- What regiment was formed in 1537 and became an Engineers Corps in 1877, to become the senior reserve regiment of the British Army and was granted its present title in 1896, it bears two crowns on its badge and also two Royals. Oh and I nearly forgot, what bravery makes a special ale for them called 'Double Royal Ale?' The prize for the first correct answer is a large tin of Blanco, the second prize is an illuminated copy of a Sergeant Majors blessing.

I was proud to wear the badge of the Royal Engineers, I still am when the occasion arises, and I found during the hostilities that our unofficial motto, "First In Last Out," was very true, and on reading some of the stories from young sappers in our journal, things haven't changed much. My advice to the old fossils like me who take the journal, is to keep tap dancing and taking the pills. In conclusion I would say that to be a Royal Engineer is something, but to be Welsh as well is almost Sacrosanct (CUSEGRU).

Ed: Belated good wishes are extended to Harry Barnsley on celebrating his 89th birthday on 16th February 2004.

The Hills are Alive

Graham Sheward

On a beautiful October Friday morning the ever intrepid four, Lindsay, Barbara, Anne and myself set off in Lindsay's motor to join Keith, Meryl and John Gwillam at Llanberis in North Wales,. We were going to attempt the 'Snowdon Marathon.' Lindsay referred to it as being the toughest in Europe. "What! No one told me that!" Oh well I thought, at least we'll see some beautiful countryside. (On a nice day)

Keith and Meryl got caught on the M6 and did not arrive in Llanberis until very late and missed out while we went off for a meal at a very nice restaurant. Following the meal, we went off to a bar to enable Barbara to find a cure for her cold, which was giving her a hard time. A (good looking) barman suggested a well know Caribbean cure that came in several double glasses. Did it work? Well she finished the race!

The Race

We had arranged to meet John at 9am, but the girls were late and the slow 1¹/₂ mile walk to the start point turned out to be at first, a fast walk turning into a run, arriving just before the race started. The weather was pleasant with a clear sky and little or no wind. It was in fact, just perfect. The route took us straight up the Llanberis Pass giving us a perfect view of mount Snowdon.

All set off at good pace for the start, John, Lindsay, Barbara and myself were together, while we failed to see Keith (me thinks he was being just a bit sneaky keeping out of sight.) Each of us had decided to do our own thing, so John soon drifted into the distance followed by Barbara and myself. Barbara battling bravely against her cold while I was just out for a good day. To my amazement on reaching the top of the pass I found Lindsay was there taking photos and looking full of the joys of spring.

We started running down the hill as far as the Pig track then turn down to the A498, all downhill run for over 6 or 7 miles - it was wonderful. As the road levelled out Lindsay passed me and drifted into the distance. About this time Meryl on her bike caught me and asked after Keith. After chatting for a while she went off to catch Keith. At the small village of Beddgelert the crowds were out shouting for us. It was fairly flat for a while, but then it started getting steep again.

As I reached 17 mile point, my poor overworked legs gave up on me. Not to worry, a great day for walking, a bit of a shame about all those who passed me. although many of them I caught again on the big hill up to the slate quarry. About this time John was still powering towards the end to do one of his usual strong finishes. Lindsay had moved into top gear and was on target for a fantastic time, while Keith having got back to full strength was hot on her heels. Meanwhile brave Barbara was still going well. The hill started as a narrow small road, fairly steep, which got steeper, narrower and rougher as we got higher. Soon getting to the slate works and finally to the top where we got a very fine view of Anglesey behind us, but it was forward that we were now looking, and Electric mountain was in sight. Soon the Lake came into view, and I was running again - at last Llanberis; now it was all downhill. There was just one small problem, the hill down was very steep and the ground rough! The strain on our legs was not welcome but the finish was close. Once in the town it was only 150 metres to the finish but we had to run all round the town including up some more hills, and to save face I had to run! It seemed to take ages to get to the finish but at last there it was. Anne was there with her ever-welcoming smile. Lindsay looking as fresh as ever and Keith looking relieved that he had got in before me. Finishing just behind me came Barbara, a great effort.

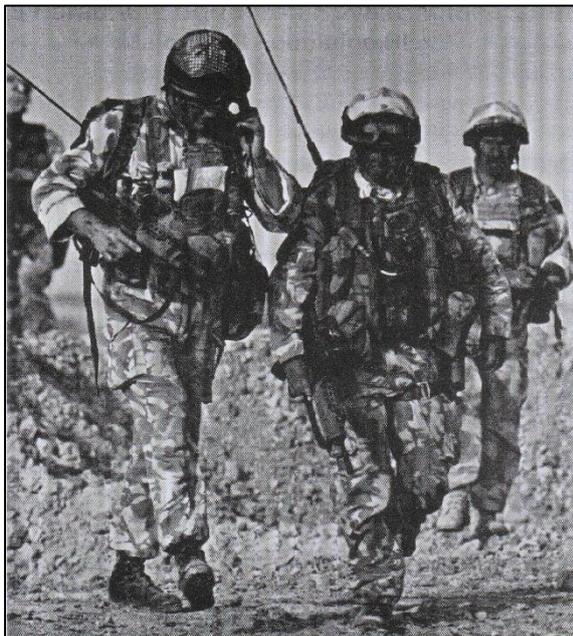
Back to our rooms for a hot bath then the six of us went out for a super meal and excellent time in the restaurant, which was full of marathon runners, hobbling about.

Times to complete the event? Well, the important time was that we all had a very good time.

9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers

Major Paul Fountaine RE

Op Telic 1



9 Sqn Para TAC Gp, moves as part of 1 Para BG's TAC. Activity shown in morning of 6 April '03.

OC Maj Paul Fountaine, OC's signaller LCpl Cross & SSM Fitzsimons - (calling forward the MGOB)

Advance to contact clearance operation along route 'SWORD' which saw BG exploit East of North Ramayla Oilfields, toward the town of Qaryat Nasr. After overnighing on the perimeter of the town, A & C Coy Gps (supported by 1 and 3 section, 1 Tp 9 Sqn) cleared through to the much larger town of Ad Dayr, a former Iraqi Div HQ. The BG, including 9 Sqn (-) consolidated in Ad Dayr, before moving a considerable distance north, to occupy the Maysan Province, with the remainder of 16 Bde. During the clearance operation, the Sqn cleared a number of anti-tank mines that were holding up the assault, built an MGOB with the 'reserve' Tp from Ech, commanded by the Sqn QM (Dick Brown) in addition to extensive UXO, EO and further mines clearance. Having

supported this operation, 2 sect, 3 Tp (who had been 'sprung' from 3 Para BG to support the main effort) returned that evening and prepared for 3 Para BG's entry in Basra. A busy old time!

9 Para Sqn- A Team Effort!

Amazingly, during Op TELIC 1 there were six current and ex - Officer's Commanding of 9 Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers serving in the Gulf, with the very same number of current and ex - Squadron Sergeant Majors - quite a feat for a single squadron. The opportunity for a chance of a lifetime photograph never presented itself, however, a small group did manage to join the GOC 1 (UK) Armd Div, Major-General Peter Wall CBE at Basra International Airport (BIA) on cessation of war fighting operations for a Squadron family photo!



From left to right: Col Iain James OBE - CRE 1 (UK) Armd Div,
Maj Paul Fountaine - current OC 9 Para Sqn
Maj-General Peter Wall CBE - GOC 1 (UK) Armd Div,
Lt Col David Hudson MBE - CO 36 Engr Regt
Lt Col Chris Tickell MBE - CO 23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt)

Absent from the photo were: Lt Col Rob Ryder - NCC HQ Qatar, Lt Col Colin Walker MBE - QM 36 Engr Regt, Capt Dick Brown - QM 9 Para Sqn, Capt Geordie Borthwick - TQM 23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt), Capt Paddy Denning - PSAO 131 Indep Cdo Sqn (V), WOII (SSM) N Fitzsimons - SSM 9 Para Sqn, WOII (SSM) A Pearson - SSM 12 (NS) HQ Sqn (Air Asslt), SSM 9 Para Sqn (des)



(Also present in the second photo are: Capt John Clark, ADC to GOC and Lt Col Colin Walker MBE, QM 36 Engr Regt).

London Marathon – Appeal

On the 18th April 2004, 12 men from 9 Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers will run and march the Flora London Marathon on behalf of The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. The men will be in uniform and will each be carrying 30lb of equipment. The twelve personnel have paid a large percentage of the entrance fee themselves, with the remainder being found from within Squadron funds. The purpose of this letter is to request support from individuals, organisations and local businesses to help us reach our target of raising in excess of £15,000 for this most worthwhile cause.

Please help us achieve our goal! Through this quite extraordinary feat, which will see the young men of today's Squadron working hard to help our older comrades, we hope to make a difference. Every little will help.

Cheques should be made payable to 'The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal' and sent to [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Your help is greatly appreciated.

Many thanks, The Team. Registered Charity No: 219279

Branch News

Aldershot

Betty Gray

Now that all the Christmas Festivities are well into the past, we can now get on with the business of the New Year. We ended the old year on a high note with our annual Christmas Dinner being held well after the decorations had been taken down and New Year resolutions being only a distant memory. The dinner was held in the Holiday Inn, Farnborough, known to many of the Squadron as "The Queens Hotel." John and Glenda had put in a tremendous amount of work ensuring that everything went according to plan on the night. Everyone who attended said how much they had enjoyed the evening and passed on their thanks to John and Glenda. Our guests for the evening were Captain "Jugsy" Unsing and SSM Al Pearson accompanied by their ladies Jacki and Toni. Wally Clift managed to do his usual thing by persuading all present to part with just under a total of £100 for the donated raffle prizes. A healthy sum that will look good in our accounts and keep the treasurer smiling. Our next big concern is the move from Rhine Barracks across Queens Avenue to Buller Barracks. All the association property in the John Rock Room will have to be packed and boxed ready for storage in our new home. The Squadron have promised we will not be short of accommodation for the period they remain in Aldershot before their move to Cambridgeshire sometime in the future. The move to Buller should have been completed by the time you receive this edition.



At long last the branch have been able to present Derek Taylor with a bronze Airborne Soldier. Derek was the Chairman of the branch for ten years in which he hardly missed a meeting.

Derek receives his Airborne Soldier from Fred Gray

Reg Emberson is now back to full health after his lengthy stay in hospital due to an accident in his wheel chair. Luckily Reg was fit enough to play the part of Father Christmas once again at 9 Squadron's Children's Party. Reg now has the job as resident Father Christmas and he said that if anytime he can't do it, his son will readily step in.

On 30 April the Squadron, along with all other regular units who have been granted the Freedom of Aldershot are to march through the town starting at approximately 0930 hours. In addition the associations of those units, have been invited to march a shortened route ending at the Princess Hall for a reception. All members of the AEA are welcome to take part in the parade, which will probably be the last one for the Squadron before their departure to foreign parts, (Cambridgeshire). Please support this event if you can. Details can be obtained from the Squadron SSM or from Fred Gray. A minimum of fifty members is the target, so get your medals polished up and dig out your old red beret. As from our last meeting on the 28th March, Don Doherty has volunteered to take over as Branch Secretary. So please kindly send any future correspondence to him.

Birmingham

Nev Collins

The branch held their 13th annual Diner on the 6th December 2003 at the Holiday Inn near Birmingham International airport. The Master of Ceremonies for the evening was Nev Collins. Our President, Maj Bernard Hooper proposed the loyal toast and read the Queen's message. The toast to absent friends was proposed by our Chairman, Brian Care and our vice Chairman, Gordon Page, proposed the toast to our guests. The Association Chairman, Bunny Brown, responded with a short (hooray) witty speech during which he welcomed some of the long distant travelled visitors, among whom were the Association Secretary, Ray Coleman, Scouse Newell from the Yorkshire branch and in particular, Wally Gee who was over from Australia having taken refuge in England until the Aussies had settled down after their defeat by England in the World Rugby Finals.

Other visitors sharing in our festivities were a group from the Birmingham Parachute Regiment Association and a team from the Warwickshire Fusiliers.

The dinner night was a tremendous success and we extend special thanks to Roger Howies and his team for organising the event.

Chatham

Eric Blenkinsop

As promised we start off our newsletter with the AGM at Coventry where the branch was well represented. We were all of the same opinion that the whole weekend was a tremendous success and our most sincere thanks go out to Mike and Sue Holdsworth for their organisation. The highlight for many of us was the entertainment provided by the superb duo on the Sunday night. We hope that you have booked them for next year Mike!

So now back home in Chatham we held our first lunchtime meeting on Monday 17 November, which was most successful. It has the disadvantage of ruling out our members who still have to work for a living but allows our out-stationed members to travel during daylight hours. But as they say "You cannot have everything." Why Monday you may ask? Well that way we are able to enjoy a very substantial 2-course lunch at a very reasonable cost. We have always been soldiers of fortune at heart!

Our programmes of meetings throughout the year are as follows.

We meet at the WOs & Sgts mess Brompton Barracks always on the third Monday of each month. March to October inclusive evenings 19.30 for 20.00 hrs except for August when by tradition we go to the Five Bells at South Chailey for Sunday lunch followed by tea at Orchard Cottage with Bert & Dee Fordham.

November to February inclusive mornings 1130 for 1200 hrs followed by lunch in the mess. The exception is December when we celebrate our Christmas lunch at the King Charles Hotel. Again being mercenaries we can swap Xmas cards. Any AEA member who is in the vicinity at the time and would like to join us would be most welcome.

Our lunchtime meetings in January and February have been most successful being well attended and very productive. At the January meeting we were able to welcome the Association Secretary Ray Coleman who was on a mission to the RE Museum. Also with us was Frank Menzies-Hearne who was there to meet up with an old school pal from bygone days in Bedford one of our out-stationed members Terry Porter with his wife Elaine. At this meeting we were also able to establish a John Rock Airborne Engineer Display subcommittee necessary to progress and develop the permanent display in the RE Museum. The committee was structured as follows:

Chairman	Lt Col J Grosvenor	Branch President
Treasurer	Bob Seaman	Branch Treasurer
Designer	Nick Gibson	FOREM Rep
Designer	John Stubbs	Branch Archivist
Co-ordinator	Eric Blenkinsop	Branch Rep

The highlights of the February meeting were as follows: Our treasurer Bob Seaman confirmed that we are group members of FOREM (Friends of the Royal Engineers Museum) and confirmed that Rebecca Cheney the Curator of the RE Museum had accepted the invitation from our President to become an honorary member of the branch.

Our Pilgrimage to the 60th Normandy Anniversary Celebrations in June is now well on track and we are looking forward, as ever, to another remarkable experience.

Yorkshire

Bill Rudd

The branch continues to keep its head above water with our by-monthly meetings and a Sunday lunch in-between. New members are like gold dust and in short supply, therefore we welcome Bob and Jill Coles to our family and hope to see them on a regular basis, although Rob does spend a lot of time away. A message to all our ex 9 5qn who live in shooting distance of York, beds are available, at no charge, to stay on meeting nights, so come on lads make the effort, it's your Branch and more important your Association.

Our Xmas Lunch arranged by Yorkie Davies was well attended by 56 members; wife's and guests, a great success and many thanks to Lorraine bunk the party carried on in Castleford until well post-midnight.

Our Annual Dinner was held in the WOs & Sgts Mess 38 Eng Regt RE on the 21st Feb 04, a grand total of 106 attended, a superb 5 course meal with enough wine to sink a battleship was served and dancing continued into the early hours of the morning. Our main guests for the evening was, The Mayor of South Tyneside Linda Waggott and her husband Paul along with Ion Smith and his wife Angela (RSM) 23 Air Assault Regt RE, also resident RSM Stuart Ferguson (38 Engr Regt). What made the evening such a success was our visiting members and wife's from Birmingham, Aldershot and not forgetting Lou Gallagher and the terrible twins (Dave & Tony). The rumour is that the ex-master chef enjoyed the double bed with our editor! Although I did hear DR complain that he did not sleep very well! Many thanks to all who attended to make it such a memorable evening.



Bill enjoying the company of Mayor Linda Waggott



Lorraine Dunk & Ray Coleman at the dinner

Several members including myself will be attending Chris O'Donovan's Wales weekend in May, please Chris no rain this time?

By the time this goes to print I will be on the recovery stage from my heart bypass, keep smiling.

The Way I See It

X9

The Letter

Let me make something as plain as Day to the writer of the letter sent to the Editor concerning X9:

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit,
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a word of it.

What you should remember Ron, is that the mind is like a parachute, it works a lot, lot better when it is open!

The Word

I reckon 'Dickie' Fleck thought he held the record for the longest word published in the Journal with the name of that Welsh town. Not so Dickie, how about this one!

The result of the postal vote on the subject concerning the Airborne Engineers Association Joining the Royal Engineers Association.

Quite a mouthful huh Dave! Sorry Dickie!

I must apologise to Jimmy Simpson for the Jabba the Hutt Quip. Jimmy you do not come close to the title when compared to Dave Rance! Dave, the title is yours! Must be that rubbish Canadian beer that did it.

The photo of the presentation of French Wings intrigues me. Why is everyone dressed in the newer style camouflage jackets with the exception of the person on the right who is wearing a Denison smock? Any answers? The guys doing the "Full Monty" bit does not so much intrigue me as make me wonder why such a narrow censorship strip was needed!

Alfie McLean, you must send me the name of your tailor!

The Para Barrow

I sure remember the Para Barrow, one of the many pieces of useless equipment thrown at us by the War Office. It worked great as a rubbish bin in the MT yard! It was later redesigned and became a Supermarket trolley!

Incidentally the reason Joe Brine is riding the Sqn transport is because he was the only one with legs long enough to ride them big old Granny bikes! Only 2 Troop could be daft enough to take a bicycle to the Scottish mountains!

A Day at the Beach

Fred, you always were pretty much a walking disaster and it seems that things haven't changed! You couldn't stay on top of a cow and now you can't stay up in the air! If I remember rightly you had quite a few disasters while you were in the Sqn. C'mon Fred, tell us about them! How about your disaster in Aden? Don't be shy!

Baz Henderson's photo of the "parked" cars reminds me very much of a Sqn MT Admin under Dennis Scott!

Loved the Frau Muller's cat article. The Sqn's equivalent of King Rat! A touch of humour amid untold adversity. We may never know who stole the Bells but I am sure someone could clear up the mystery of who ate Frau Muller's Pussy...cat!

Return to Soqotra

Tommo Thompson, the Sqn's own Don Quixote but unlike the original Tommo is not attempting to put the world to rights. What he is doing that is very Don Quixote is pursuing his dream. The only way to realise a dream is to pursue it. I know I've had a few digs at you about your long-winded prose but I have to admit they make interesting reading. I only hope Tommo that you are not chasing the Impossible Dream! I sincerely hope you find what you believe you will find. One more from the Sqn who overcame adversity and looked the world straight in the eye!

PRA Members

Strange, there is Merv Potter, who wrote a great tribute to the Canadian Engineers for their deeds at Arnhem, who is President of his branch of the PRA. On the other hand there is the young Harry Barnsley from Wales and a member of his local branch of the PRA ready to "General Wade" them! I am sure Harry that when the Sqn is referred to as "that shower" it is no more than a masked compliment and not an insult. By the way Harry, let us know when you renew your subscription in two years' time!

The Cook Trailer

Reading Willie Wiltshire's contribution a few issues back prompted memories of the cook trailer. What a colourful history that trailer has. It is amazing it ended up in any kind of museum considering those involved in "acquiring" it. It's a miracle to me it didn't end up with the two missing bells! To be honest, when it "served" in the Sqn it made Charlie's stew taste like ...well...Charlie's stew! Hope all is well Charlie.

Harry Dunstan - This guy sounds a very popular fella. Can anyone enlighten me on his "Raspberry" party piece?

Arnhem Oak

Once again it is heart-warming to see these heroes of the past gathering to remember their fallen comrades. Their deeds alongside the rest of the Airborne Brigade are a legacy to us all. I'd like to thank "Pinky" White for telling how the Arnhem Oak came about. A very interesting account. Tell me Pinky, why Pinky and not Chalky?

The Photo

Gordon Smith now a KIWI having sent in a photo of me has finally blown my cover. Due to my cover being blown X9 will simply fade.... but wait, although the likeness is there I have to say that the person depicted in the photo is not me because I do not smoke! Try again Gordon! While you are at it, get some of your fellow KIWIs to contribute to the Journal!

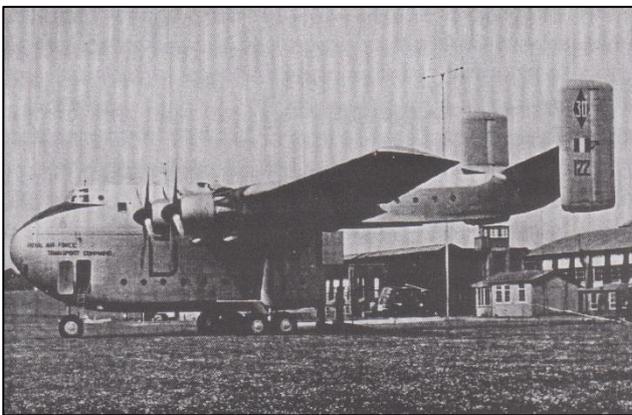
Journal Advertising

You will note that we carry adverts on the inside front, inside rear and rear cover of our publication. Space is soon to be available on these pages and I would be only too pleased to advertise your company/business in our magazine.

Obviously there is a small charge and the monies received assist in keeping down the costs of your Journal. For further information or financial quotes kindly give me a call

Save XB259

Dave Lincoln



The last Beverley XB259 is now in the hands of the Liquidator. The Yorkshire Air Museum wants to relocate it to Elvington, where dedicated aviation enthusiasts can care for it. Funding a project such as this is only able with the goodwill of all who wish to preserve a unique piece of aviation history for future for future generations. All possible avenues for funds are being explored to ensure the required target is met. We can help by raising some of the money necessary to achieve this. The Beverley Association has pledged financial assistance from current funds, but more is required.

The Yorkshire Air Museum are looking to preserve the aircraft for the future and have founded an initiative to that effect, they believe the locating of the aircraft is secondary to its preservation. We believe there is approx. £23,000 left in the preservation fund which would be instrumental in preserving the aircraft whether it is used to defray part of the transport costs or for further restoration.

If the aircraft survives it will have to be moved, the costs of transportation are high, and a great deal of specialist equipment and manpower would be required. The figure of £130,000 has been suggested, a considerable sum, but not unachievable. To this end our Beverley Association is appealing to you directly to make an individual donation to help secure the aircraft's future.

A roll of all those who contribute will be kept and available for inspection. The individual donations will of course remain confidential. There is only one Beverley left, let us ensure it survives for the future, in order to bear testament to its historic past.

Please send donations to: [REDACTED] Please mark the donation XB259.

Snowdonia 2004

Chris (Poncho) O'Donovan

Our annual foray (folly?) into Snowdonia is set to run again this year. As usual it will be on the third weekend of 14th - 17th May. The deposit is paid, the transport is booked and the sheep are putting on their makeup. Format is much the same as previous years: arrive Friday, hills and dinner on Saturday, hills and BBQ on Sunday and disperse on Monday morning.

There is going to be a bit of an activity change this year, instead of wandering into the hills to get lost on our own we have engaged an ex-Sqn lad, Matt Wells, to lead us into the unknown. Matt runs an outdoor adventure business in North Wales trading as Outlook Expeditions. For thirty quid a skull he is going to lead us on a gorge climb and assures me that we should get cold, wet and scared.

Bookings are quite brisk; all married accommodation is taken but there is plenty of singles space available to us. If you decide to join us then please let me know as soon as possible as we need to plan for rations, transport and bar stocks.

Other activities include site-seeing Rambling with Barney, Golf with Lofty Bates and possibly dinghy sailing courtesy of Jim Stokes of Indefatigable (sailing has to be pre-arranged). Keith King is organising a limited stock (10) of souvenir T-shirts.

If you can make it e-mail me, [REDACTED]

AEA Wives and Friends send “Teddies to Love” to Botswana

Ruth Barrie (Aldershot AEA)



Having for some time been knitting teddies for an overseas charity, I found out that none of these delightful little knitted teddies are not, as yet, reaching Botswana.

Botswana being very close to both John and my heart after spending some years working there in the 70's and again in the 90's. I decided not to just talk about it but to do something positive, hence my campaign to engage as many people as I could in the knitting of a 'Teddy to Love'.



Ruth , Jeannette , Else-Karin & Madge (Ruth's mum)

To my absolute delight wives of AEA members, their friends & ex-pats from Norway have been knitting furiously and I now have 250+ teddies (in their own individual bag) ready to be sent to Botswana. Maggie Stephenson did a wonderful job in persuading many of her friends in Salisbury into knitting a teddy or two, as did Jeannette Rutter and Else-Karin Waldeland, an ex-pat friend from Norway.

Thanks to a kind donation from The United Kingdom Botswana Society for the postage, the first consignment of 100 teddies was sent in early March to The SOS Children's Village and The Holy Cross Hospice in Gaborone.

On confirmation of their safe arrival I will be sending a further consignment, hopefully to Francistown, Botswana. My appreciation and thanks go out to one and all for their help in getting this venture off the ground and I hope not only to be able to send more teddies to Botswana but hopefully, Swaziland.

So - if there are any knitters out there who would like to assist in this worthy course or any ideas of how we can raise sponsorship money for postage, please let me know

General News from Western Australia

Don Newman

George Jones - continues to play host to many UK sapper friends those met over the last year that come to mind Tom Thornton, Don Doherty, Wally Waite and Fred Gray. Mick Turner - as far as is known, is still out here somewhere.

Terry McGrath - (brother of Joe) still doing very well in hardware.

Bud 'Ginger' Grocock - bought a holiday home out here but now is apparently having second thoughts !

Bob 'Percy' Waddell is still chasing a lawn mower to help put a crust on the table.

Jim Crozier- is now working bush, crane/plant operating ? Was last seen at Xmas.

Ken Barnes - sends his regards to all former Sqd cooks. For family reasons his future intentions are to move east to New South Wales .

Andrew Dye - 9 Sqd Iraq Vet, met him whilst he was on a Recce out here last year, he has hopes to emigrate, might even be here.

Eddie Carnegie- a recent arrival from the UK, met him at the Pegasus AGM in Feb 2004..

Self - Now reading Ghost Force by Ken Conner, Secret History of the SAS. Gee we live and learn. 1TRRE was at Malvern in Feb 1950, I was there, I was with SAS when they moved into same camp on return from Malaya 1959 according to KC the camp had been 'derelict' since World War II. FACT.

The Comrade

Presented to Danny Hill, an original pilgrim, by his friends and comrades of the West Australia Airborne Association. With our deepest respect and regard.

Signed by John R. McNaughton 10th February 2004

Was it the years or the polish you lent?
The letter you read me when you had one sent,
The Beret we wore as brothers together?
The but end we shared at the end of our tether,
Deeper than this lay our blood brotherhood,
A fiercer love burning and less understood,
It was pain, the discomfort and curses (and tears)
Nights of bleeding, screaming (and prayers)
Leaping through darkness, 'gainst terror unknown
Are memories we cherish together, alone?
Fears we had smothered and tried to disguise
Were present and naked in each other's eyes;
The dirt on your face that streaked when you cried,
Had captured my heart when you fought by my side
We are the Pilgrim master we shall go,
Always a little further, it may be
Beyond the last blue mountain
Barred with snow,
Beyond that angry or that glimmering sea



Don Newman,
John McNaughton (ex CSM 3 Para) supplied labour on Hamala
Camp project - 1961 3 Troop Bahrain,
Ken Allsopp (ex RASC Para),
Seated: Danny Hill, who on a previous visit late 2002 was
presented with 'beret & wings'- former 'L' Detachment.

You will be aware the SAS were the forerunners of airborne forces as such, under command of 'David Stirling,' and here in Western Australia we have in our presence one of the original members of the first parachute unit formed - L Detachment of the SAS Bde. 2694342 Daniel Hill (One of the original 'Pilgrims')

Ed: extracts of a letter addressed to the Hon Sec SAS Association dated 20 Feb 2004

Daniel Hill joined the Scots Guards in 1930 and served out his allotted time with the Regiment. On completion of his service he was then transferred to the reserve and he joined the Ayrshire Constabulary. In 1939 he was recalled to the colours and rejoined his regiment. He then joined No 8 (Guards) Commando and saw service in North Africa. He then joined No 3 Sec. "G" Group, L Detachment and 1st SAS Bde under David Stirling.

Danny took part in the first SAS raid in the Gaza area of North Africa on the 16th November 1941 in support of the 8th Army offensive which occurred two days later on the 18th November and was taken prisoner by the Germans. He survived the war finishing up as we understand, extremely sick, in a POW camp in Yugoslavia. On return to the UK Danny underwent extensive hospitalisation and eventually was discharged. He then returned to his pre-war service with the Ayrshire Constabulary where he served for a total of 30 years. Danny and his wife Mary, whom he had met in the hospital in Ayre, emigrated to Western Australia, where he is still living.

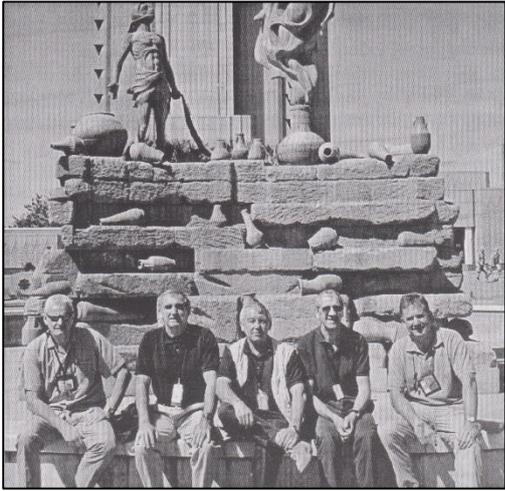
Danny, who is 90 years of age, was recently admitted to a nursing home, in Western Australia suffering from severe dementia and it is apparent that it is there that he will remain. This illness makes it extremely difficult for Danny to now communicate at all, and his memory is practically non-existent. It is quite distressing to see Danny as he is now, as he was in his prime a very well built 6' 3" proud Scots Guardsman/SAS soldier.

Two weeks ago five members of the AFAWA visited Danny for whom we have the greatest respect and esteem. The members were Dave Carr 22 SAS (our Association piper) Bob Nicholson 3 Para and Australian SAS Regiment, myself (John McNaughton) Ken Allsopp 22 SAS and Para Bde and Don Newman 22 SAS and Para Bde.

Dave Carr, the piper, much to the great pleasure and delight of the Hospital staff and the other patients, played us into the nursing home. We then had a short ceremony where we presented Danny with a framed copy of that very lovely soldiers poem "The Comrade" written by Osborn Cook a former member of 3 Para. We also presented him with a framed copy of the creed "The Golden Journey to Samarkand."

After the presentation, the piper then played a medley of Scottish tunes, Scotland the Brave, Highland Laddie, Mari's Wedding etc. Danny although very sick appeared to enjoy the pipes and even tried to join in. We were extremely proud to be there!

Rogues Gallery



Greetings from Baghdad

Dave Trotter, Paddy Lindsay, Geordie Lightowler, Dave Knowles & Bob Cole - take in the delights of Bagdad!



Chez Sheridan & 'Big' John Thornley - Antrim 1970s



Jim Friar, Harry Tempest, ?, - Brecon Beacons



**A 'Gathering' of RSMs - Former and serving 38 Engr Regt
Hughie Orr, RSM Stuart Ferguson, John Dickson & Bill Rudd
Yorkshire Branch Dinner Night - February 2004**



Now did I tell you about the time?
David Breese enjoying a quiet drink and chat with colleagues

The SAGA of Freddy Heads

Eric Blenkinsop

Fred commenced his army career as a “Darland Boy” at Fort Darland, Gillingham, Kent and due to the expediency of wartime events his career was refined at Beachley Camp, Chepstow. On reaching manhood he lost no time in becoming a Paratrooper.



Freddy Heads, Harry Mosley & Ted Jones



1 Troop 3rd Para Sqn RE - en route to Baltic from Normandy

Ford, Frank Quait, Bill Dickson, Ernie Harrison, ?, ?, George Hopkins, ?, ?, Peter Conway, Steve Crane, Jock Ferris, ?, Alan Graham, ?, ?, ?, Lofty Garbutt, Patterson, ?, Ken Mallet, Ted Ones, Freddy Heads, ?, ?, Jim Rogers & Cpl Jock Gibson



Overnight stop courtesy of a kindly German farmer who inadvertently! also supplied the camera.

After the Rhine crossing - Frank Quaitte, Freddy Heads, ?,?,?, Wilf Jones, ?, Sgt Henderson, Ken Mallet, Lt Wade MC, Phil Butler, ?,?,?,?, Ernie Harrison & Jock Gibson



Bridging the Elbe April 1945

Peter Conway, Jim Rogers, Tubby Dickson, Lofty Garbutt & Steve Crane



Now in 5th Para Bde in Far East - Dutch East Indies & Malaya

3rd Para Sqn then returned to the UK via Palestine to Perham Down, then to Carter Barracks, Bulford as 3rd Airborne Sqn RE. Moving on to BAOR with 2nd Para Bde Gp to St Georges Barracks, Neumunster in 1948.



The advance party of 9 Indep AB Sqn RE arrives at Britz Norton en route for Malta barracks Aldershot where they are based until 1951.

Later that year the Sqn moved yet again, this time to Hameln where it was formed as 9 Indep AB Sqn RE.

?, Lofty Games, ?,?, Gordon Ramsey, Ron Day, Jim Masters, Ticky Wright, Horace Stokes, ?,?, Wally Linham, ?,?, Bert Stevenson, Freddy Heads, Tex Witherington, ?, Dennis Parkes, Mac McPherson, Biff Evans & Vic Scanlon



1950 Ballon Jump – Weymouth

In 1951 the Sqn sailed from Portsmouth on the aircraft carriers HMS Warrior & Triumph under sealed orders. When at sea the destination was changed from Abadan to Cyprus, but in November the Sqn moved on again, this time to the Canal Zone.

In November 2003 the sport on every ones lips was rugby union following England's tremendous achievement in winning the World Cup. Well, it was a similar situation in 9 Sqn in the Canal Zone as the rugby team, despite being a minor unit, swept all before it in the major unit competitions. But rugby was not the only sport that the Sqn excelled in, there was swimming, water polo and shooting where we successfully challenged the major units.



The sqn hockey team were in excellent shape and that was before the arrival of the 3 Troop Commander, Capt Dennis Eagan an Olympic medallist.

Chas Elford, Capt Pat Munro, Tom Smith, Freddy Heads*, Bob Knowles, Capt Peter Wade, Maj Lyall-Grant, Jenny Wren*, Wimp Martin*, Bily Fellows* & Roy Whittaker

* denotes 3 Para Sqn Normandy Veterans

Freddy returned to the UK in 1953 to become PSI at 302 Fd Pk Sqn TA at Hendon, soon after, together with Wimp Martin, he became one of the first Army PJs. Freddy and Doreen retired to Blackhall Rocks protecting our North East coastline

Membership Report

Chris Chambers

Since my last report a further 10 new members have joined our ranks:

Robert 'Scobie' Davies	9 Indep Para Sqn/ 22 SAS	1971-1993
Kez Watters	9 Para Sqn / 51 Fd Sqn (Air Asslt)	1998 -still serving
Capt Simon Carvel	23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt)	2003- still serving
Maj Andy Clee	51 Fd Sqn (Air Asslt)	2003 -still serving
William Bridge	9 Indep Para Sqn	1960-1962
Simon Lambon	9 Para Sqn / Pathfinder Platoon	1995-still serving
Lt Garreth Dent	9 Para Sqn	2002- still serving
William Dick	131 Indep Para Sqn	1974-1984
Lt Jonathan Whatley	51 Fd Sqn (Air Asslt)	2003- still serving
Mark Cunliffe	9 Para Sqn /49 Fd Sqn (Airborne Element)	1988-2003

"Gentlemen, Welcome to the Airborne Engineers Association"

Airborne Engineers Association – Constitution

"Enclosed, as a loose leaf insert in the April 2004 edition of the Airborne Engineers Journal you will find your own copy of the Association Constitution"

Association Shop

Description	Price	P& P (UK Post Rate)
Association Ties (Pegasus logo)	£13.00	£1.00
Association Blazer Badges	£14.00	£1.00
Association Jumpers (sizes 38-48) Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo embroidered 'Airborne Engineers'	£25.00	£3.10
Association Sweatshirts Maroon or blue logo - Med/Lge or XLge	£16.50	£3.10
Association Polo Shirts - Fred Perry Style Maroon or blue logo Medium/Large or XLarge	£15.50	£2.50
Association T Shirts - Maroon only - Lge or extra-large only	£9.00	£1.80
Association Shields	£18.00	£3.30
A Memoir of 9 Para Sqn RE in the Falklands Campaign 1982 by Maj C.M. Davies MBE (now Colonel)	£12.00	£2.10
Anniversary Ties (silk with Wings & Pegasus logo)	£15.00	£1.00
Association Cuff Links (slightly smaller than the lapel badge)	£8.50	£1.60
The Shiny 9th (1939-1945) by Patrick Pronk The history of 9 Field Company (Airborne)	£9.00	£1.80
The 9th (1787-1960) by the late Tom Purves (Special offer while stocks last)	£7.00	£3.80
Bow Ties (silk woven bow ties with Wings & Pegasus logo)	£9.50	£1.00

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 the Post Office. Cheques should be made payable to: "Airborne Engineers Association"

Please note my address when submitting your orders:



My thanks for your continued support,
Jan
