



THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



For All Airborne Sappers

June 2023, Issue No. 60

Thank you to everyone who has provided the content for this issue of the Journal, your input is much appreciated. If you would like to submit an article for a future issue, please get in touch using the Webmaster contact details below.

Committee Contacts

President

Lt Col (Retd) Baz Bassett
Email: mrb375@gmail.com

Vice President

John Brennan
Email: brennanj@btopenworld.com

Chairman

Steve Wallis
Email: stephen.wallis57@ntlworld.com
Facebook – AEA National Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/431399629016195>

Secretary

Mike Robertson
Email: michaelj.robertson@outlook.com

Treasurer

Lt Col (Retd) Robert Matthews
Email: robert.matthews52@gmail.com

Membership

Billy Morris
23 Cambridge Road
Aldershot, Hants, GU11 3JZ
Tel: 07840 102900
Email: bsfm968@gmail.com

Webmaster

Dave Pace
169 College Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6BX
Tel: 01304 373933
Email: contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com

Shop Manager

Jon Nichols
Email: aeashopmanager@gmail.com
Shop: <https://airbornesappers.org.uk/shop/>
Facebook - Shop Discussion Group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2016356088754648>

Welfare Advisor

Paul Moore
Email: To be advised.
Once known will add to welfare page of web site at
<https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/welfare.htm>

Association Archivist

Nick Gibson

Life Vice Presidents	Bob Ferguson	Tom Ormiston	Fred Gray	Ray Coleman
	Bob Prosser BEM	Chris Chambers	Dave Rutter	

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President's Update

Summer is here, I know that because Mrs B is directing me on operations in the garden. I have noticed rather like the 4 seasons we move through, the AEA is something similar. The events and services we attend throughout the year form the year for us as well.

We all have our own small services that we attend and support, some linked to the AEA others to where we live and event others to National events. It amazes me that then when I was serving I didn't think about attending these events as we were directed by the system when and where. Now of course it's having to sort your diary out to attend the many events that are around. Of course, the positive side is that slowly we as veterans are being recognised by the nation.

Regards events I just wanted to mention here the 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, Freedom weekend and Open day at Woodbridge on the 28th 29th and 30th of July. The Regt have this organised, with details to follow but the basic details are Freedom Parade on the Friday Morning, and with insurance covered, sleeping accommodation is provided now in the Gym. Saturday is the AGM for the REA (Airborne) followed by the open day with an all ranks curry in the evening.

I hope to meet as many of you that can make it on the weekend. Jon Nichols will be attending with the Shop and I hope that we can run a stand showing off the Airborne Engineers. I am after one favour; I hope to have a photographic show running off the laptop. If you have some interesting photos to share that I could use it would be appreciated. You can send them to me electronically, "weTransfer" offers a free service from email to email, if you do send them to me a description would assist. mrb375@gmail.com. Obviously the aim is to attract members and to show them where our branches are located. So, photos of social events, operations construction projects Adv Trg etc would all assist.

Of course, the other aim is for the AEA and the REA (Airborne) to gather together under the umbrella of the Regt and I hope for those who only know Woodbridge to realise there is the other Association that organises and runs events on behalf of the Airborne Engineers.

Until next time, stay safe all.

Baz Bassett

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Chairman's Comments

Hi everyone from myself and Mel.

As I write this we are supposed to be in the middle of 'Flaming June' but the temperature outside is 12 degrees C and it feels more like Autumn than Summer.

Its been a very busy year so far with work and personal issues but the tide of AEA events goes on and there are many events taking place this year that the Association is supporting.

The President has already mentioned the Regimental open day in July. This is our chance to bring the Association to the attention of the Regiment and I hope as many of you as possible will attend.

In October the Scotland Branch will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary with a Dinner in October which Melanie and I have been invited to attend. We are both looking forward to this and to meeting up with many old friends North of the Border.

I was proud to be present at this year's Hardwick Memorial service where we had the largest Airborne Engineer attendance that I can remember made up of ex 9 Sqn members and members of the Birmingham Branch. Of the six standards on Parade, three were carried by Association members and there were 13 AEA members in total. Thanks to all of you for helping to break the Para Regiment's stranglehold on this event!

Once again, the Association has been granted 36 Tickets for the Annual Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. The places will initially be offered to the AEA branches (3 each) and to AEA members not affiliated to a Particular Branch, any remaining tickets will then be offered to the Wider Airborne Engineer family on a **First Come, First Served** basis.

The Association has both a serious and a social side and I know that many branches have upcoming events, BBQ's etc, during the summer months and I wish you all the best and hope that you enjoy these events.

Mel and I are particularly looking forward to the AGM and GALA Ball to be hosted by the Wales and West Branch in October, knowing those involved with the organisation of this event it will be excellent.

I am also pleased that the Scotland Branch have agreed to host the 2025 AGM at a venue to be decided. I am sure that this will be a tremendous event with a welcome to our Scottish friends and lots of Haggis and Whisky, I'm just nervous about whether Andy Shankland will turn up with his Bagpipes!

In closing I wish you all the best for the coming months, may you enjoy the summer and continue to support the Association socially as well as at the formal commemorative events.

Steve Wallis

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Upcoming Events

23 Para Engr Regt Freedom Parade & Open Day

23 Para Engr Regt, Freedom of Woodbridge Parade Friday 28th July & Regimental Open Day Saturday 29th July.

Friday 28th July: The Regiment will be marching through Woodbridge Town Centre. The Parade steps off at 1000hrs and the CO & RSM would like an Airborne Engineer Veterans marching group with Standards on Parade.

Dress: Jacket & tie, beret & medals.

The RV for the Parade is at Woodbridge School Car Park IP12 4JH.

If you would like to march, please contact the RSM on Andrew.Foley473@mod.gov.uk

Saturday 29th July: The Regimental Open Day at Rock Barrack will start at 1000hrs. There will be lots on display from the Regiment, as well as local charities, Bridging competitions and a Royal Engineer Parachute display (weather dependant). This event is open to the general public.

In the evening there will be an all-ranks function with live music from the Chilli Fighters. If you would like to attend please contact the RSM's Clerk on Joseph.Anderson117@mod.gov.uk

Accommodation: There is very limited accommodation in Rock Bks. Stag accommodation i.e. camp cots, are available in the squash courts, with access to the toilets and showers. There are various hotels in the local area that are easily found via Google. There will be an area for campervans to park near the gym toilets showers.

If you would like a camp cot in the squash courts or space for a campervan please contact the RSM's Clerk on Joseph.Anderson117@mod.gov.uk

Parking: If staying on camp, please send vehicle details to the RSM's Clerk on Joseph.Anderson117@mod.gov.uk so a car pass can be made available.

Double Hills Memorial Service

The service to commemorate the first casualties of the Arnhem operation will be held on Sunday 3rd September at Paulton, Somerset. Meet up at the Sports Ground from 13.00 hrs. Final details not known at present but will be promulgated when known.

Cromwell Lock Memorial Service

The service to remember 10 soldiers from 131 Parachute Sqn who lost their lives whilst on exercise in 1975. Service will be held at Cromwell Lock, Cromwell nr Newark on Saturday 23rd September meeting up at 11.00 hrs.

Branch News

Birmingham Branch

Attendance levels at meetings remains steady at between 15 to 20 at each meeting and this is also the same at branch social events the Entertainment Committee organise to keep members and wives/partners in touch.

The branch was tasked to organise the National AGM in October 2022. This, we believe, was a great success from the reaction we received from members who attended. We believe it was down to the hard work that the Birmingham branch team contributed.

The branch Christmas dinner was held in December but on this occasion, it fell short on the usual numbers attending and so the branch had to pay for the shortfall.

The Branch as always is looking for new members and suffers, like most other branches, from the same problem, age.

The Birmingham Branch AEA meets at 19:00 for 19:30 hrs on the first Tuesday of each month at The Family Tree Social Club (previously a RBL branch), 29 Clopton Crescent, Birmingham B37 6QT.

Long standing member, Rip (George) Kirby, passed away recently and his family welcomed branch members, and the branch Standard, who attended his funeral with great warmth and gratitude and afterwards made a generous contribution to the branch. The branch presented an AEA shield to Rip's family at a recent branch meeting.

Several members of the branch attended the Memorial Service at Hardwick Hall on Saturday 13th May 2023 which was the first Airborne Forces training depot. We were hosted by the Chesterfield PRA branch and invited to the Doe Lea Miners Welfare Club for a fine buffet and entertained by a singer. Several Airborne and PRA Standards were on parade with the Sheffield Pipes and Drums.

The branch along with 299 Association are currently carrying out weeding and general maintenance at the Cromwell Lock Memorial with branches taking it in turns month on month off basis.

Photo of the Cromwell Lock Memorial after garden maintenance work completed on Saturday 20th May 2023.



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Chatham Branch

Since the last update the branch continues to function but with the numbers of the branch quite low we have opted to run just 2 functions a year. The John Rock in June and the Christmas lunch in December. Although small in number the branch does open its doors to a number of friends and families to these events which increases the attendance to a good number.

We have started a small reciprocal arrangement with the Maidstone PRA, they are now attending our functions and we in turn are invited to theirs, it's a good arrangement and great to see new faces and families.

The Christmas lunch was again held at the King Charles and was part of the many Christmas lunches we seem to face through December. A couple of photos are attached.



Bobby Matthews holding Court



Danny and Barbara McGowan - Relaxed



The Kershaw table suitably Fed and Watered.



Our PRA Friends



Frank and Mary Ryan with a photo bomb from Karen



Tony with Karen and Jim Doubtfire.



There is always room for our widows and family friends

So winter was soon over and April brought on the AGM, with only a few runners and no volunteers I was delighted to vote in the existing committee again for another year.

Plans are in place now for the John Rock lunch which this year is on the 8th of July, we have had to move the date because of other events clashing. As always it's an open invite for anyone who wishes to attend – email me mrb375@gmail.com. For details.

The branch will of course attend the Armed Forces Day in June and of course host the Airborne Riders when they visit the Headstone of Andy Mcilvenny. This event very much organised by Tim vd K who has really maintained the 4 troop connection to the Sqn.

I must also at this point say a fond farewell to Frank and Mary Ryan, they have now moved to the Humber Valley area and setting themselves up for yet another stage in their life. I know that all the members will join me in wishing them the very best in their new ventures. We will miss them both, greatly. Frank as the Raffle prize announcer will be hard to replace and Mary always with that great smile to welcome everyone to events. We will still see them again, but I just wanted to say a big thank you for all their work and effort over the years to the Branch.

I am looking forward to the AGM and Gala dinner later in the year and having stayed at the hotel previously I can speak from experience that I am sure we will be very well looked after and the hotel is in an excellent location.

Until next time all please stay safe.

Baz Bassett

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Scotland Branch

Generally, we are in a reasonably healthy position regarding members attending meetings. We have had an average of approx.15 members at each meeting this year

However, some members are finding it difficult to attend all our meeting due to health problems or they are caring for a wife/partner

Some members (15 No) met up , on 12th April 2023 , at The Guards Club , Edinburgh to raise a glass in memory of the late SSM John Lonergan and Sergeant Cyril Atkins (Royal Army Pay Corps) who were killed in 1965 whilst attending an overseas camp at Al Milah , Aden

On the 12th June 2023 members will meet up at Edinburgh Eastern Cemetery to remember Cpl Scot Wilson (9 Squadron) who was killed during the battle for Mount Longdon , Falkland Islands
We will meet up at 1300hrs at the Drum Terrace entrance Appropriately suited and booted after which we will retire to the Guards Club for some refreshments



Members will be attending The Airborne Forces Day Parade to be held at East Calder on 29th July 2023.

Sunday 24th September will see our members parading at Zetland Park , Grangemouth in memory of the 10 Sappers who were killed at Cromwell Lock in 1975. This is an event that is usually attended by others (RBL Grangemouth, PRA Lothian, Army Cadets, Air Force Cadets, Sea Cadets, family members as well as locals)

We will be having a 25th Anniversary Lunch , on 7th October 2023 at The Guards Club , Edinburgh. We are still working on numbers Once details are finalised they will be issued, the reason for a lunch is so that some members who cannot bring their partners along can maybe get some time off to make an appearance during the day

Three of our members(Mike Ellery, Alex Cockburn and Andy Nelson) are organising a venue for our AEA/OGM 2025. So far they have identified two hotels to choose from. Once all details are finalised members will be notified.

That is all from Scotland and we close by wishing our colleagues, South of the Border, all the best

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Wales & West Branch

Riders of Respect visit Hereford

On Saturday 10th June approximately 30 riders assembled at St Martin's Church, Hereford, the memorial church for the Special Air Service Regiment to pay their respects to those members of 22 SAS who fell in the Falklands and other campaigns. Representatives from the PRA, RBL and other service organisations were in attendance as well, and a short service was conducted at the military graveyard at the rear of the church. Wreaths and crosses were laid, the Last Post and Reveille sounded and then the assembly retired to the church for welcome refreshments.

Later in the morning the Wales and West Branch held a meeting in the Welsh Club which was attended by the AEA President Lt Col Baz Bassett who had travelled up early that morning.



Members of the Wales and West Branch in St Martin's Church



Some of the wreaths and crosses laid at the Falklands Wall

Yorkshire Branch

Bill's Bench

By Phil Taylor

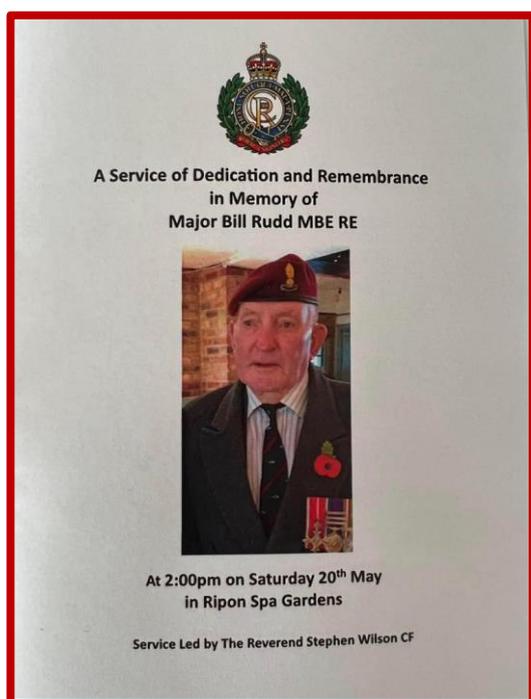
A service of dedication and remembrance - Major Bill Rudd MBE RE

Bill Rudd died 6 years ago and one of the things he wished for was a bench in Ripon Spa Gardens. 16 months ago, Jim Phillips of Ripon REA applied to Harrogate Borough Council for the installation of a bench in his honour. A bench has now been installed and a service of dedication took place on the 20 May 2023. The service was conducted by 21 Engr Regiment's Reverend Stephen Wilson CF. Tributes were made by Ken Heart REA, Ian Pincombe Commando REA and Adam Frame AEA. The event was interesting as it brought together 3 Sapper branches in a unified mission. Each organisation shares the cost of the bench. Many at the gathering personally knew Bill the man, the myth, the legend and had had the opportunity to have a drink in his flat opposite Spa Gardens where you could end up in a "Time Warp." As the social Captain of "Sappers in Yorkshire" he would always say "anything to do with sappers count me in."

A couple of anecdotes;

- At the AEA annual dinner in Blackpool competitive Bill at about 7 am after some 12 hours of socializing was in the hotel pool challenging serving members of 9 sqn to races, he was stripped down to his boxers but complete with hearing aids."
- On a Ripon weekend rehearsal his voice was booming out in the cathedral and the RSM had to tell him "Bill pop up to Boots and get some new batteries in your hearing aid please."

The service of dedication honoured a very special man a great Mentor, a friend to many and a dedicated warrior. The Bench and will serve as a focal point for old comrades to sit and laugh and remember an old friend Bill Rudd



Adam Frame



AEA gathering at Bill's bench



Phil Taylor & Capt John (Tommo) Thompson (PSAO 299 Parachute Squadron)



Phil Taylor & Bob Prosser

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Hardwick Hall Visit 13th May 2023.

By Steve Brown, Birmingham Branch.

Several members of the Birmingham Branch attended the Hardwick Hall Memorial service on Saturday 13th May 2023 where they met up with other members of the AEA. The AEA National Chairman, Steve Wallis, was there along with Geoff Barlow, Dave Raes and others.

The weather was kind once again although a little chilly to begin with.

The veterans were marched on led by the Sheffield Pipe & Drums with many standards on parade from local PRA branches and the Birmingham Branch Standard, carried by Tony Higgins.

The service was taken by Padre Rodney Warden along with Major Giles M Timms OBE MC. Mick Wattam read the Airborne Forces collect.

The day was very well supported by Parachute Regiment Branches and other Airborne associations.

After the Service we were all invited back to the Doe Lea Miners Welfare Club, hosted by Chesterfield PRA where we were treated to a splendid buffet and entertained by a singer; although the journey was challenging due to road works on the island above the M1.

AIRBORNE FORCES DEPOT HARDWICK HALL

A brief reminder of the history.

After initially training at Knutsford in Cheshire training was moved to Hardwick Hall in August 1941. Hardwick Hall was the first ever Airborne Training Depot situated in Derbyshire, close to Chesterfield where all potential Para's went to train. The old camp is no longer there but was situated at the bottom of the hill, with brick billets arranged around the lakes which still exist today. Those who in 1940 onwards volunteered to join the Airborne Forces were sent to be tested for their suitability to become one of the elite Airborne Forces. This was their 'P' Company? Tom Hicks, Tom Carpenter and Bob Jones amongst others, undertook training at Hardwick Hall.

It remained the training depot until 1946 and should not be confused with RAF Ringway which was the first ever, No1 Parachute Training School, where the early Paras honed their skills at being thrown into the slipstream from mostly bomber aircraft.







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Lt Col John Humphreys Receives the Thank You Liberators Medal



A one-hundred-and-one-year-old British Army World War Two veteran has been awarded a new honour from the Dutch for his notable service which saw him escaping two prisoner of war camps.

Lieutenant Colonel John Humphreys OBE DL, who is a Chelsea Pensioner, received the Thank You Liberators Medal from Lieutenant Colonel Richard Piso, Military Attaché from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The event was at a private reception held at the Royal Hospital Chelsea in recognition of his distinguished military service, and particularly in respect of his service to the Netherlands.

The Royal Hospital is a place of refuge for “those (soldiers) ravaged by age and war” in old terms. It was built for soldiers and not officers, and so any soldier who attained a commissioned rank within their military career must revert to their last substantive Army non-commissioned rank. In John's case this was Warrant Officer Class One.

Lt Col Humphreys served with the Royal Engineers between 1936 – 1977 during which time he escaped from two prisoner of war camps. He had initially hoped to be posted to France, but with the retreat from Dunkirk he found himself being posted to Africa in 1940 where he remained until 1942.

He spent time in the Western Desert, notably in Tobruk which was bombed three times a day, every day. During one of these bombing raids he sustained a head injury.

"When I woke up, I was surrounded by Germans who looked down on me and said: 'For you Tommy, the War is over.' I can still see them now if I close my eyes, two big fellas, looking down on me," explained Lt Col Humphreys.

After receiving treatment for his injuries, he was transferred to a Prisoner of War camp in North-East Italy, which he describes as a “soul destroying experience.” With daily rations of only a quarter of a pint of soup, and small pieces of bread and cheese - he was starving.

He managed to get hold of an Italian phrase book which he studied intensely, gaining a large vocabulary. He encouraged a bored sentry to converse with him, and after three months he had perfected his accent.

Lt Col Humphreys received a Greek Army uniform from the Red Cross, which was very similar to the Italian uniform. With some alterations it would pass for the Italian Army uniform worn at the camp.

One night after roll call, with his new uniform and near perfect upper-class Italian accent he marched his two good friends over to the sentry and stated that he was taking the prisoners for punishment. After being waved through he and his friends hid under the barrack block until it was dark.

They then climbed over the wall, made a break for it and were free at last. Avoiding Italian and German soldiers, the group lived off the land, before making it back to Allied Forces where John was de-briefed.

Freedom was short lived for Lt Col Humphreys, after he returned to the Army. After four days of intense fighting for the Rhine Bridge in 1944, he was captured again by the Germans but this time in Arnhem, Netherlands.

“The battle raged from Sunday evening until Wednesday. By the end we had no ammo and had to surrender,” explained Lt Col Humphreys.

“We were sat outside in the ruins and the school was on fire. I didn’t want to be a POW again so I said to what was left of my stick: ‘Shall we make a run for it?’ They all agreed. We crossed the road, dived into the cellars of a house and then proceeded to go over different garden walls. One bloke got stuck on some barbed wire on top of a wall. He shouted, ‘John help me I’m stuck.’ I put my hands on his equipment and pulled him towards me. There was a burst of machine gun fire. I pushed him back and carried on.

“Eventually, we ended up in a tram depot. I remember thinking – ‘all I need to do is jump this wall and I will be on the Rhine.’ The tram depot was full of German soldiers. We all ended up hiding under a tram. A soldier came over and said in perfect English: ‘If you don’t come out, I will blow you out.’ So, we crawled out.”

He managed to conceal his Army issued Jack-knife in his trousers before his capture, and by the next day he was back in a Prisoner of War camp, but this time in Germany. Having already been a Prisoner of War he had no intention of staying and immediately set about planning his next escape.

Lt Col Humphreys took his opportunity and jammed the door of the cookhouse and using his Jack-knife he painstakingly and quietly chipped away at the cement holding the five bars in place. He mixed ash and water into a paste to conceal his efforts.

After doing this he told his friend that he was going to try to escape and asked if he wanted to join him, but he didn’t. He ended up recruiting two officers and two soldiers.

"We escaped through the cookhouse window. We then walked through the night until we were close to the Rhine," said Lt Col Humphreys.

"As soon as it was dark again, we were on the barge looking for what we could find. There was a rowboat, we jumped in and shoved off and let the current take us down. We spent at least 12 hours in the boat and finished up in Nienhagen."

Here the group of escapees re-joined the British Forces marking the end of an incredible period in their military lives.

John went on to have a very successful career and there are many members of the sqn who remember him when he was the QM.

The photos below is at his 100th Birthday gathering.



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Wales Weekend 12th – 14th May 2023

By Baz Bassett

The weekend once again found some of the old and bold winding their way to The Joint Services Mountain Training Centre at HMS Indefatigable on Anglesey. Unfortunately, due to various issues only 21 made it this year for the weekend, but that did not affect those of us attending having a thoroughly enjoyable time.

Thursday the 11th

The advance party of Baz Bassett and Peter Kershaw arrived on Thursday afternoon to take over the accommodation, the sailing club Bar and liaise with the camp staff. This also involved the inevitable trip to Tesco for the Beer and BBQ food. Big decision was how much lager and how much bitter, we never get it right. Another early arrival was Paddy Denning to assist, once sorted off to the pub for a beer, where we met Pete Bailey who had also arrived early, this was an early start for the weekend.

Friday the 12th

The morning started with Paddy's wild water swim, off to the coast and into the (cold) water Peter K leading the way followed by Paddy and with Baz bringing up the rear as the newest recruit to the team. Personally, I did feel "refreshed" after the session and it was a good start to the day and definitely cleared the head from the night before.



Peter leading the way for the morning swim.



Just getting thawed out.

Friday afternoon is arrival time for all but for the admin team it's getting the sailing club bar prepared and open to welcome everyone. Once all gathered and a few warmers into the bank, the next stage was food. SOP is the evening meal at "The Penrhos Arms," and the fun of trying to remember what you had ordered a couple of weeks ago. We almost got it right, but we were all eventually well fed.



All looking for seconds of the Lamb Shank.

Next was entertainment so across to the next and only other Pub "The Tig Yan" where it was Karaoke night. A few good songs were totally ruined.



Billy in full Elvis mode.



An avid audience – who needs the X factor!

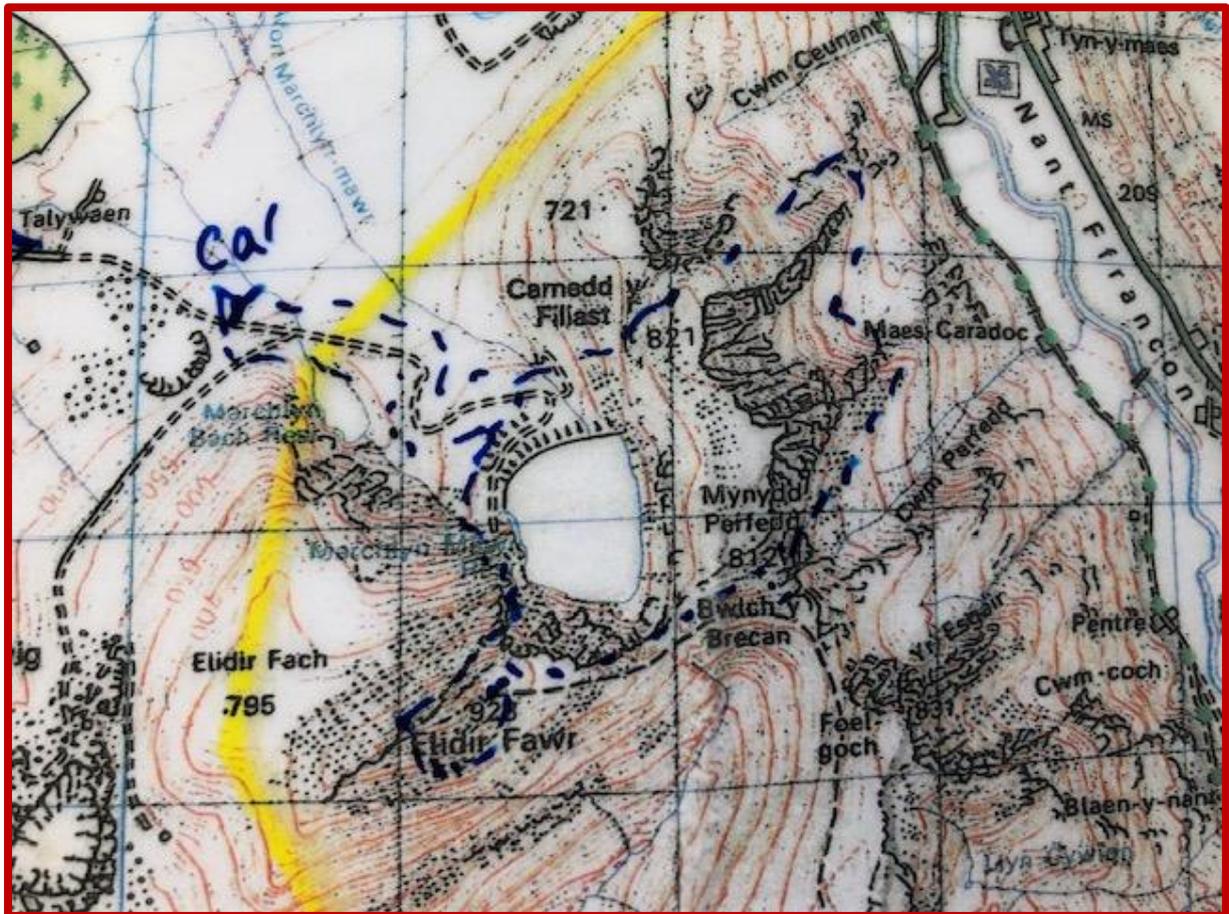
Saturday 13th

Saturday morning bright and early, breakfast was organised with the canteen so an early start. The days of cooking our own and making haverbags long gone, thank goodness.

First parade about 8am required a decision on who was walking on the high route, low route, or something else they had planned. The original high route had been planned by Phil Paulton but was some distance to the start so Porky Phillips and Fennymore redrew an old route and off we went. I must state at this point the weather was absolutely fantastic, so we all knew we were in for a great day but it was going to be warm, very warm.

Other options taken were to the RSPB centre and walks around the reserve, and a gentle meandering walk for a couple of hours.

The map below shows the high walk taken.



As always the route was a great challenge, slightly longer walk on the path to the start but once on the hills it was a testing and challenging route. The route up took us through the stacks to the top and around Maes Caradoc and then across and up Mynydd Perfedd up again to Bwch Beacon and approached Elidir Fawr from the east side.



The start line looking fresh.



Warming up and regretting that last beer.



On top but a bit further to go.



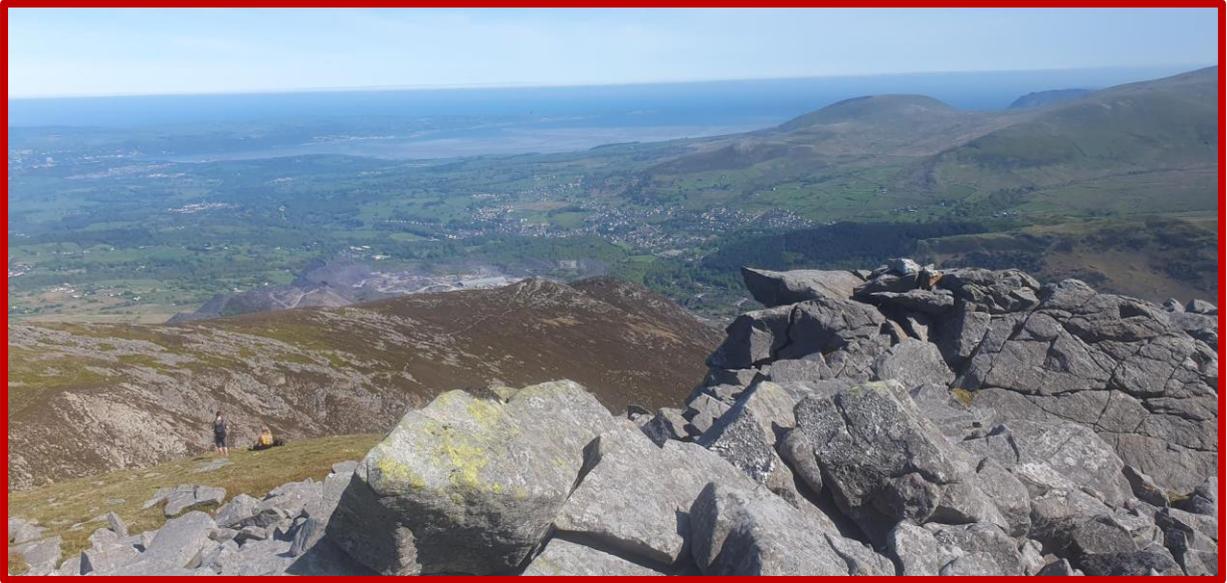
Next phase lunch at the top.



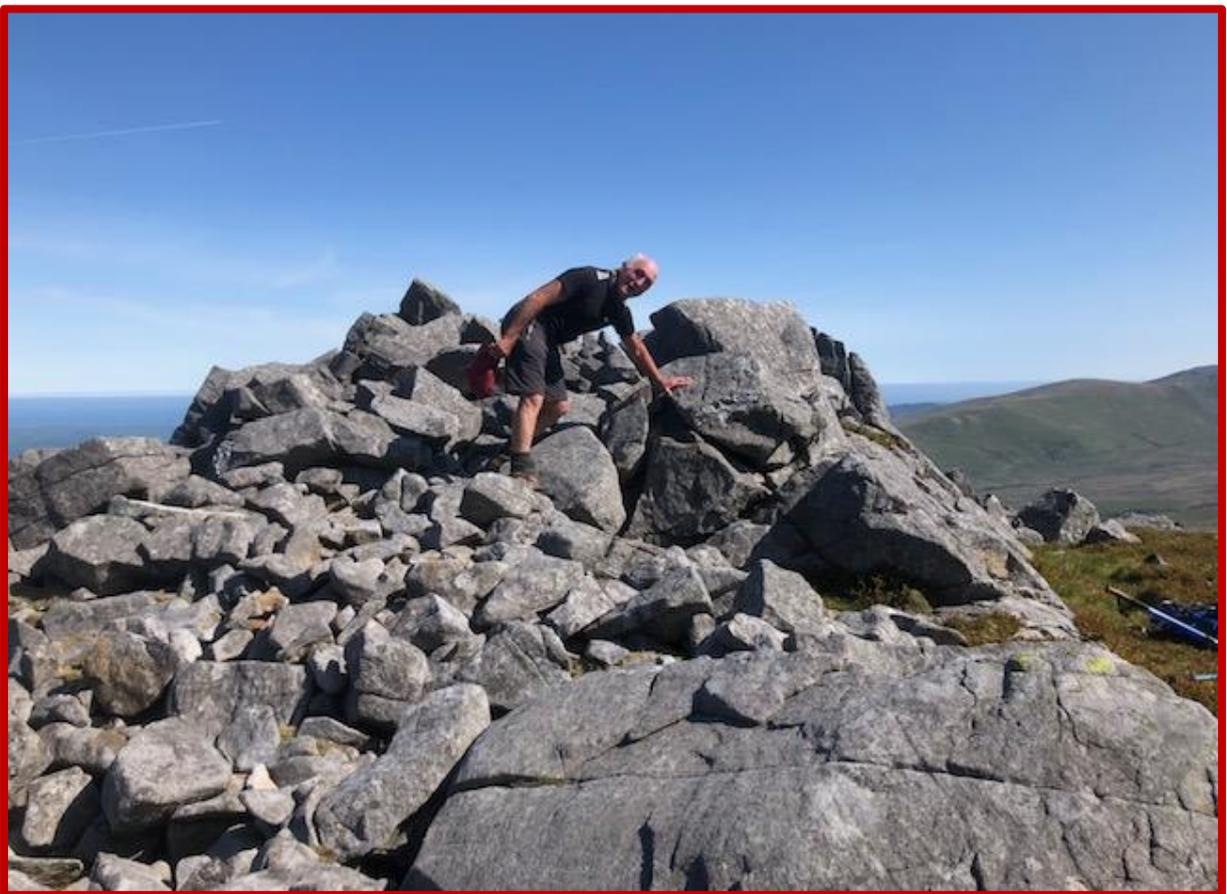
Almost there



Always worth it when you're at the top and what fantastic views, not normally associated with Wales. Dave, Paddy and Fenny (our route master) deciding if they should sit down or just pose!



Looking down to the Menai Straits



Paddy Denning checking for any pound coins.

Great views on the way up and down to the reservoir. Lunch was here with a quick conflag for which route selection down. Unfortunately, we came down a bit early and spent longer negotiating the scree getting down, we should have paid attention to the briefing, nothing like shaking up the knees a bit.



Never give an officer a map.



Quick stop off at the reservoir and its homeward bound



As always rehydration was of the order and Lindsey our local guide found a handy little pub for refreshments.

Back for a shower and shake out and ready for the next event. Our friendly chef Tony Manley, had organised his annual trip to Israel over this weekend so a replacement was required. With Peter K taking the reins of the Bar it fell to Paddy Denning and Baz to prep and sort the cooking. Easy job, Baz stated that the best way would be to pre-cook all the meat in the oven and then flash it over the BBQ. Timings were calculated, salad prepared, condiments etc set up and laid out. Oven on and meat prepared and placed into the oven. 10 mins later back at the oven to find Paddy pointing out that the oven was not on and demonstrated how to light it correctly. Unfortunately, by the fourth time of lighting it we realised that it was not working correctly. By now the lads in Bar were eyeing up the Chinese menu. Do not panic we have a cunning plan!! The Combi / Microwave came into action and Paddy worked out that providing the oven door was not closed the oven worked, so with Paddy working the oven magic and me on the combi oven we were almost there.

With most of it cooked 2 more volunteers, Porky and Barny, volunteered to man the BBQ and they did a great job. We promised the BBQ for 7.30 and we got it there at 7.32. The first two beers never touched the sides and Paddy only had a few oven burns! But best of all no one was ill.



As usual the raffle commenced with pretty well everyone winning something, £220.00 was raised which was split between the Mountain Rescue Team and the National Lifeboat Association.

Planning will start for next year in a few months, no problems if you want to register early let me know, 17th – 19th May 2024 is looking good but as always very dependent on the accommodation availability. Will you be there?



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Chuckle.

By Terry Froggatt

It would have been around 1971/72. we were on an E&E exercise in the Black Forest area of Germany.

Four of us became separated from the main body, but we had the final RV point, a small village called Schwarzenau, RV time, mid-day on the Friday.

We arrived at about 1145 hrs., a woman from the local grocery store came out and with gestures and us with a few words of school-boy German, made us understand that the pick-up truck had been and gone.

But no worries, we had a telephone number to call, she graciously allowed us to phone in, the voice at the other end of the line said "About 30 minutes".

We thanked her and went and sat on the grass verge of the village green.

At twelve o'clock there was a strident ringing of a bell over to our right, and within a minute the children of the village came out of the school.

They were chattering away before they arrived in front of us, the total silence as they passed, then continued chattering afterwards.

Eventually they all disappeared, and one of the teachers came out, friendly enough, he asked what we were doing there.

Brian Care replied for us "We'em cor goo yet, they'm sendin' a wagon out far we"

The expression on the teacher's face said it all "Der Englander ist taking ze p—s"

In order to avoid a diplomatic incident, I translated into English, the teacher said "Danke" gave Brian a dirty look and walked away.

The transport arrived about ten minutes later.

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Airborne Initiative

By Roger Howles

Some years ago, at Barrows Lane Birmingham, 3 troop, 301 Squadron were leaving in a 3 tonner, on the way to RAF Abingdon to enplane, join 10th Para Battalion and jump into Stanford PTA .

On a bad bend in the road near the Barracks next to an Air Raid shelter a mini was parked so no one couldn't get past !

Straight away A.B.I. kicked in, we jumped out picked up the mini and popped it on top of the air raid shelter!

I still wonder what the owner thought when he came to go home!

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Time Capsule Watches

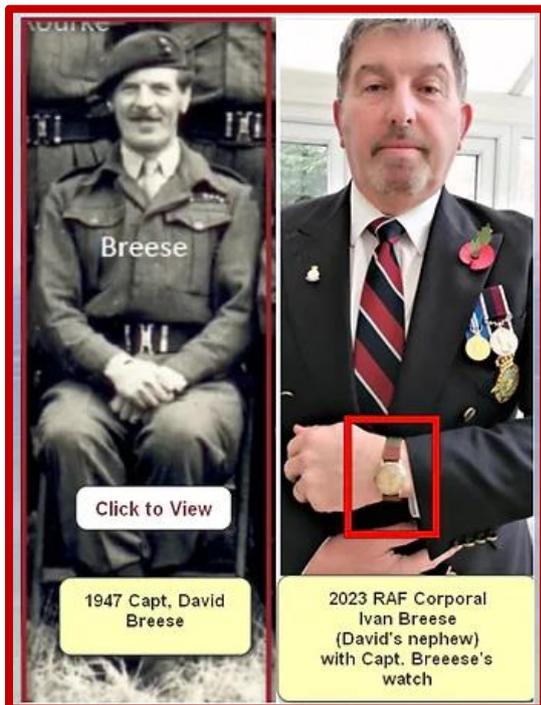
by Dave Pace

In March 2021 I was contacted by email regarding the AEA website Roll of Honour entry for Major David Breese <https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/rollofhonour/B/davidbreese.htm>

The email was from Bob Stokes (he lives in the USA) regarding his collection of vintage watches, more specifically a watch he had that once belonged to Major Breese.



Bob's aim was to return the watch to Major Breese's family and in February 2023 he was finally able to do that. Bob had managed to track down Major Breese's nephew, Ivan Breese

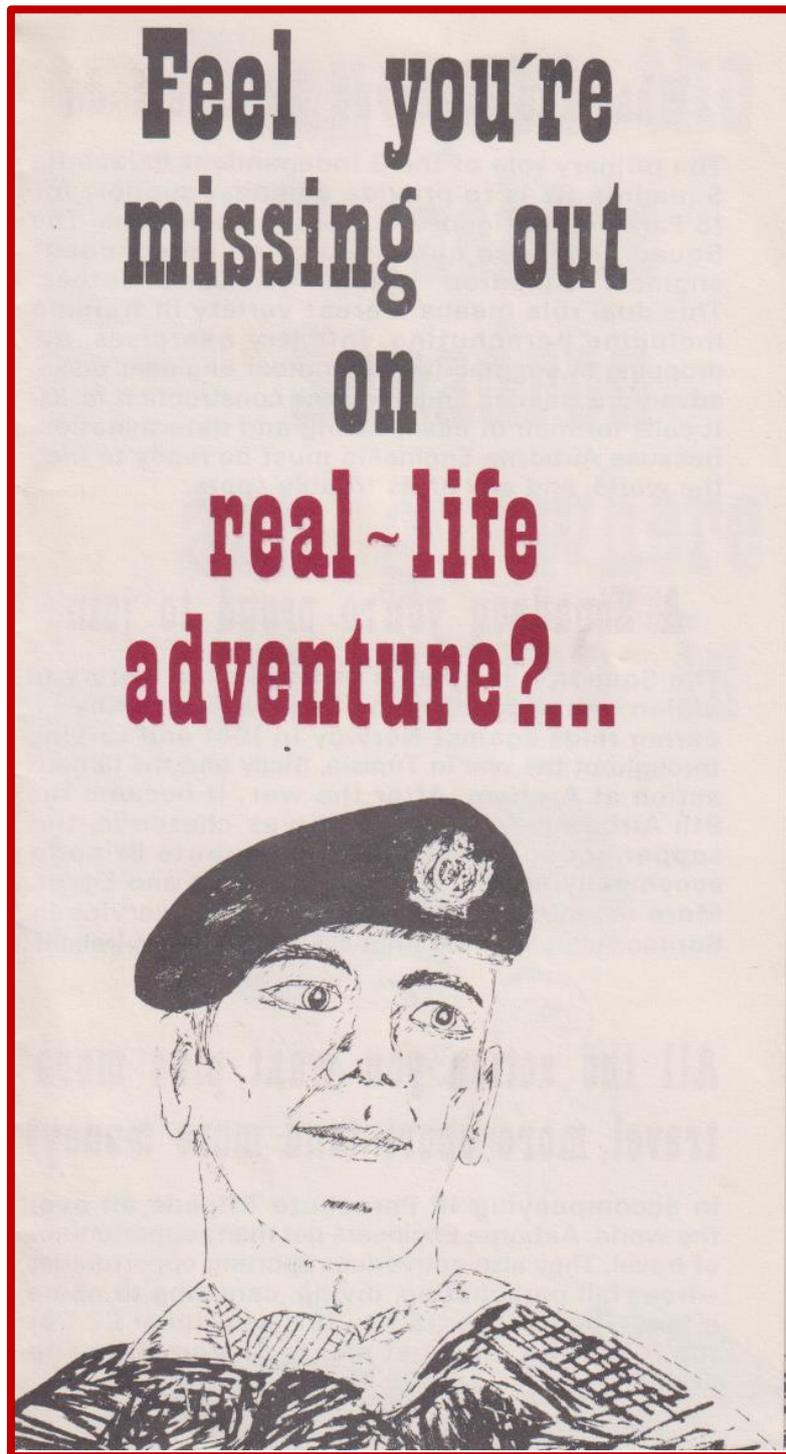


Thank you Bob for what you've done by returning the watch to the family, as well as the many others where you've done the same thing. It is a very unselfish act and great to see in these times, all credit to you for all you do

Bob has a website with details of his collection at <https://www.timecapsule-watch.com/> which is also available via the Links page of the AEA website <https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/links.htm>

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Airborne Engineers Recruiting Leaflet
From the seventies (maybe even earlier)



**Then join the
Parachute
Squadron
and go where
the action is**



What the Airborne Engineers do

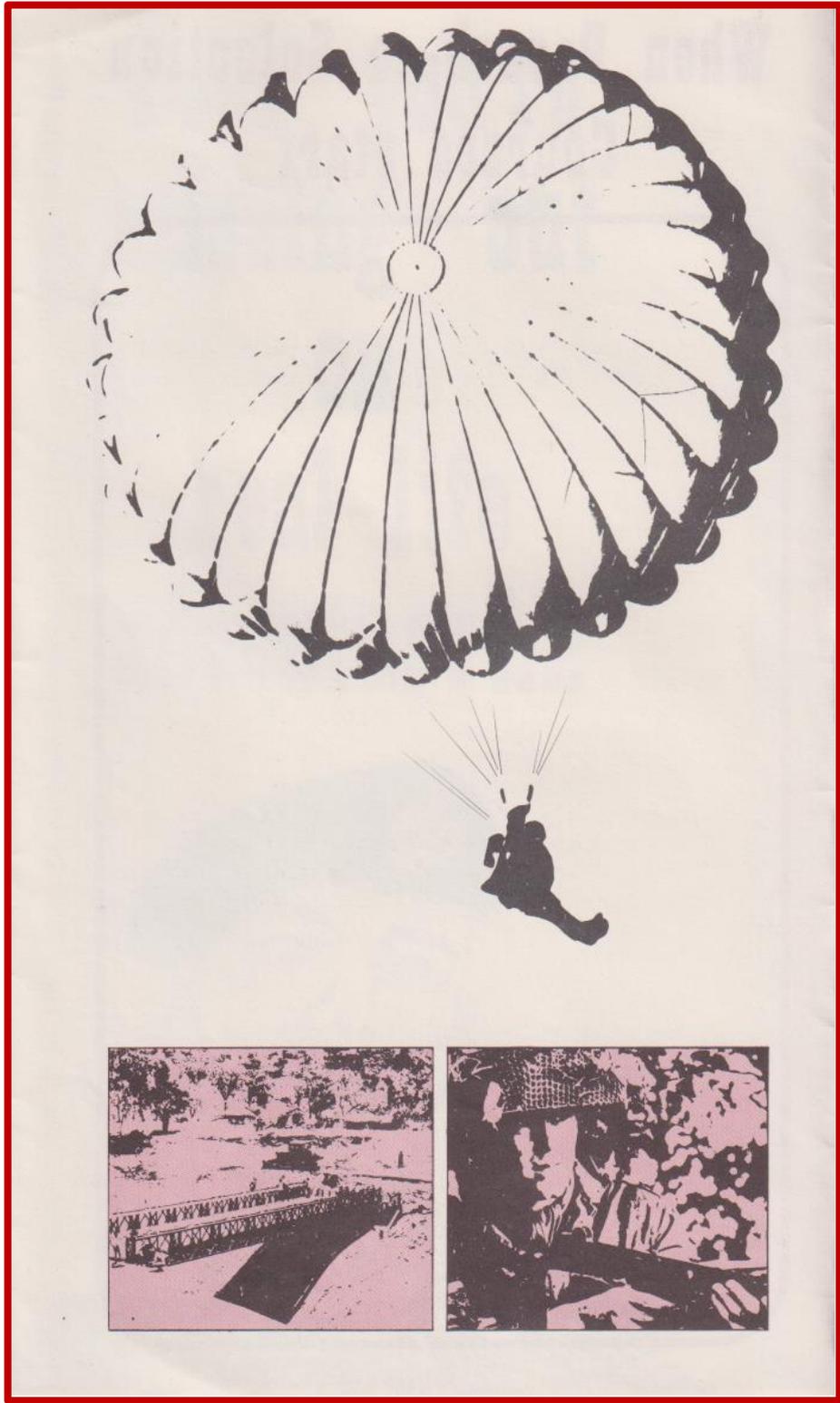
The primary role of the 9 Independent Parachute Squadron RE is to provide engineer support for 16 Parachute Brigade in airborne operations. The Squadron is also employed as an independent engineer squadron within UK Land Forces. This dual role means a great variety in training including parachuting, infantry exercises, air dropping of engineer plant, combat engineer tasks, adventure training and overseas construction tasks. It calls for men of dash, daring and determination, because Airborne Engineers must be ready to face the world, and any of its trouble spots.

A Squadron you're proud to join

The Squadron has had a distinguished history of action taking part (as the 9th Field Company) in daring raids against Norway in 1941 and serving throughout the war in Tunisia, Sicily and the famous action at Arnhem. After the war, it became the 9th Airborne Squadron and was chosen as the sapper squadron within 16 Parachute Brigade accompanying the Brigade to Cyprus and Egypt. More recently the Squadron has seen service in Borneo, Aden, Kuwait, Anguilla and Northern Ireland.

All the action you want, plus more travel, more sport (and more money)

In accompanying 16 Parachute Brigade all over the world, Airborne Engineers get many opportunities of travel. They also get various sporting opportunities – free-fall parachuting, diving, canoeing to name a few. They get extra pay (an additional £2.50) too. Above all, they get plenty of adventure and action.



Trainings tough~but remember, only men of courage wear the red beret

Naturally, as an Airborne Engineer you've got to be fit in body and mentally alert. So we won't deny the training's tough. But if you're healthy – and determined – you'll pass. You start your training course with the pre-para troop where training is aimed not only to develop your physical fitness but also your skill in map-reading and your skill at arms. When we've taken you through that, you go on to a four - week parachute selection course at P Company where you will receive training in weapons, fieldcraft and signals as well as physical endurance tests in the depot and the Welsh mountains. Successful candidates continue with parachute training at Abingdon and when you've completed the ground training and eight jumps you're a fully fledged member of the Squadron and entitled to wear the parachute wings and the red beret. Then you've every right to be proud of your achievement.

Are you ready for the challenge ?

We need men who are keen, tough and determined.
We need men who want action.
Do you measure up to this?
If you feel this is the life for you, then why not volunteer for the Airborne Squadron and share its 'esprit de corps'.

How to join

All serving soldiers of the Corps of Royal Engineers are entitled to volunteer, regardless of trade or back - ground. Just complete and hand in the attached volunteer form.

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Airborne Engineers Online Shop

<https://airbornesappers.org.uk/shop/>



Online Shop Update by Jon Nichols, Shop Manager
& Dave Pace, Shop Admin Support

Hello All,

I hope this correspondence finds you and your families well.

Following its launch in September 2022 and thanks to your support the Shop is doing well and in a strong and healthy position

Current and Future Product Inventory

You can see from the shop products and sale products tables below we have a good variety of inventory. Tell us what you like or don't like, do you have any suggestions for future inventory?

You can contact us by the following means:

1. Facebook Shop Discussion Group -
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2016356088754648>
2. Not on Facebook? Get in touch via the Shop "[Contact Us](#)" form.
or via email aeashopmanager@gmail.com
3. A product review following a purchase from the shop

Pre-order Process

We now have the facility to list an item in the Shop for Pre-order, we intend to use the following process:

1. Admin will set up the relevant product(s) with a pre-order status
On the shop front, these products will have a "Pre-Order" button instead of the usual "Add to Basket" button
2. Admin will set up a date from which relevant product(s) can be pre-ordered and paid for. We will probably keep a product on pre-order for about 2 months prior to placing an order with the supplier, though this is flexible and we're open to suggestions.
The pre-order payment process is identical to any other product purchase via our shop
3. Admin will set up a date from which the relevant product(s) will have the next order placed with their supplier, this will automatically generate the following text against relevant product information in the shop front "This product will be next ordered on" [date]. We will also add text manually to inform customers of any lead times, therefore letting the customer know when they can expect to receive their order.
4. Admin will send pre-order acknowledgement emails to customers on receipt of their pre-order and payment.

Please bear in mind, although we administer the shop to benefit the Association, this is your shop and we will always endeavour to get the products you want. Where a specific product may not be commercially viable to hold in stock, we intend, with your input (utilising the various communication methods listed above) to make the pre-order process work for us all. It will allow us to gauge demand and order accordingly, therefore limiting any over ordering and tying up Association funds on dead stock

Association Merchandise

Visit the AEA [Online Shop](#) for Product Details & Pricing or click a specific product link from the following table to view the product in store. **See separate table on next page for Sale items**

Headgear

[Beanie Pull Down Black Wings logo 'AIRBORNE' wording](#)

Sweatshirts

[Sweatshirt Maroon Large Pegasus & "AIRBORNE ENGINEERS' Logo](#)

Polo & T Shirts

[T Shirt Cotton Maroon Small Front Pegasus & Rear Wings logos](#)

[T Shirt 'Wicker' Large Pegasus & "AIRBORNE ENGINEERS' Logo](#)

[Polo Shirt Maroon Small Pegasus Logo](#)

Jumpers

[V Neck Jumper Woollen Maroon Mini Pegasus Logo](#)

Rugby Shirts

[Samurai Rugby Shirt > AIRBORNE ENGINEERS BESPOKE DESIGN](#)

[Traditional Rugby Shirt Maroon Small Wings Logo](#)

PT Kit

[Vest Wicker Fabric Maroon Small Front Pegasus & Wings logo](#)

[Vest Cotton Maroon Small Front Pegasus & Wings logo](#)

Cummerbund, Bow Ties, Cufflinks, Tie Clips & Ties

[Cummerbund - Wings and Pegasus Logos](#)

[Bow Tie - Self Tie Design](#)

[Cufflinks - Gold Pegasus](#)

[Pegasus Tie Clip / Slide](#)

[Cuff Links Corps & Pegasus logo](#)

[Bow Tie \(Wings & Pegasus\) Clip Fastening](#)

[Airborne Engineers Tie \(wings\)](#)

[Airborne Engineers Tie \(wings & Pegasus\)](#)

[Airborne Engineers Tie \(Pegasus\)](#)

Badges

[Lapel AEA Corps Badge + Pegasus Design](#)

[Lapel Ladies Gold Coloured Pegasus Brooch](#)

[Car Grille Badge \(AEA & Pegasus Logo\)](#)

[Association Car Sticker \(inside screen mounting\)](#)

[Blue Wings Lapel](#)

[Association Blazer Badge](#)

Miscellaneous

[Mug 'Regular 325ml' wings Pegasus cap badge logo](#)

[Mug 'Large Size 444ml' wings Pegasus cap badge logo](#)

[Association Shield](#)

Sale Items

The following items are on sale (limited stock and size options):

SALE

Click a link to view the item in store	Original Price	Sale Price
Showerproof Fleece, Maroon with Pegasus logo	£32.00	£25.00
Showerproof Fleece, Blue with Pegasus logo	£32.00	£26.00
Sweatshirt Maroon Crew Neck Small Breast Pegasus Logo	£19.50	£14.00
Sweatshirt Maroon V Neck Small Breast Pegasus Logo	£19.50	£14.00
Sweatshirt Blue V Neck Small Breast Pegasus Logo	£19.50	£14.00
Crew Neck Sweatshirt, in Blue with Pegasus logo	£19.50	£14.00
Polo Shirt, in Blue with Pegasus logo	£15.00	£11.50
T Shirt Cotton Maroon with small Pegasus logo	£9.00	£7.00
T Shirt, Cotton Blue with small Pegasus logo	£9.00	£7.00
Fridge Magnet Association Logo	£2.50	£2.00
Paper Weight (AEA & Pegasus Logo)	£5.00	£4.50

Tips & Tricks

How to save the AEA Shop to your web browser favourites or bookmarks

This will vary for different browsers, we've covered a few here but if you need help with your browser get in touch contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com

Firefox and Chrome

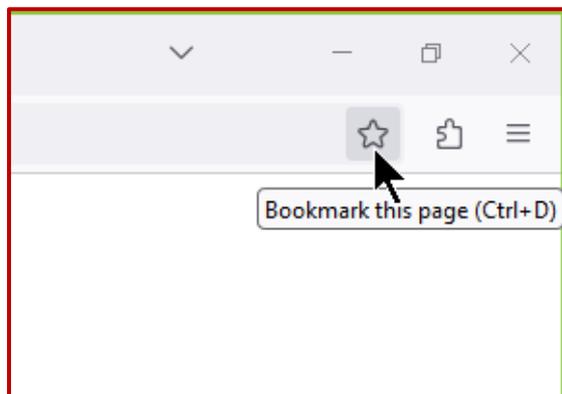


Figure 1- Click the Bookmark this page icon or press Ctrl + D

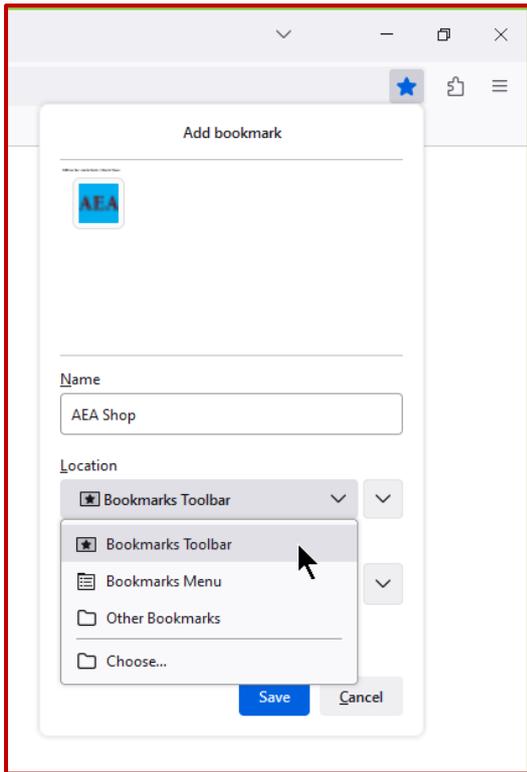


Figure 2 – Edit the bookmark name and select where you want the bookmark to be saved e.g. The Bookmarks Toolbar

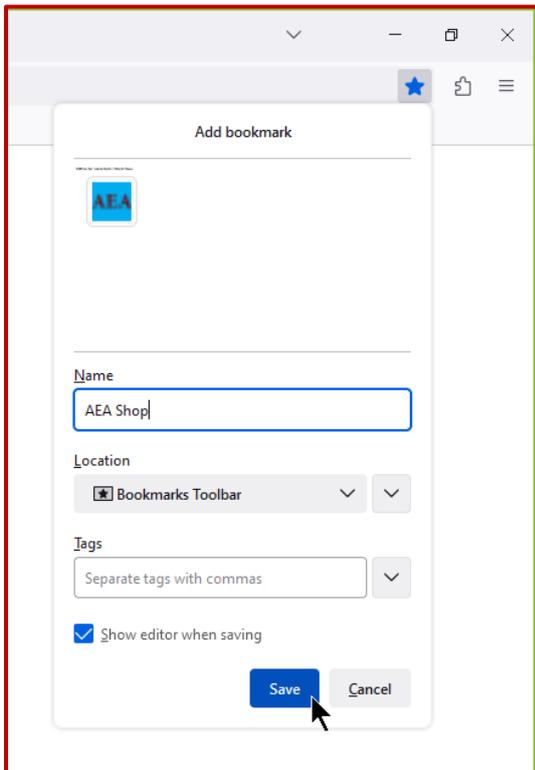


Figure 3 - Click Save

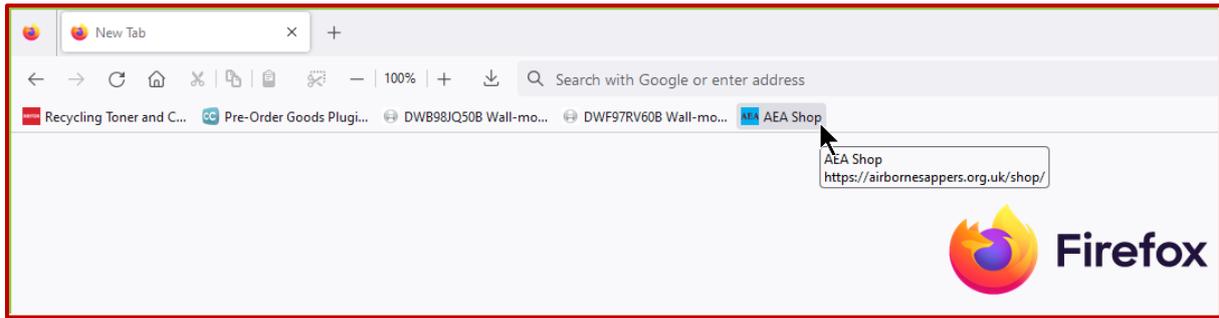


Figure 4 - Click the bookmark on the Bookmarks Toolbar to jump to the Shop

Safari

Add a bookmark on a laptop or desktop computer

1. In the Safari app, go to the website you want to bookmark.
2. Click the Share button in the toolbar, then choose Add Bookmark.
3. Choose where to add the bookmark, and rename it if you like. Add this page to: Click the pop-up menu and choose a folder. The default is Favourites. ...
4. Click Add.

How do I add a bookmark in Safari on IPAD?

1. In the Safari app, go to the website you want to bookmark.
2. Tap. to the right of the search field.
3. Tap Add Bookmark.

To access a stored bookmark, select the Bookmark icon — the one that looks like an open book — located at the top of every Safari screen. A new panel appears where you can tap on Favorites — or any other folder — to view the bookmarked sites in the folder. To see all the folders, tap All at the top of the panel.

How to add a desktop shortcut in Windows

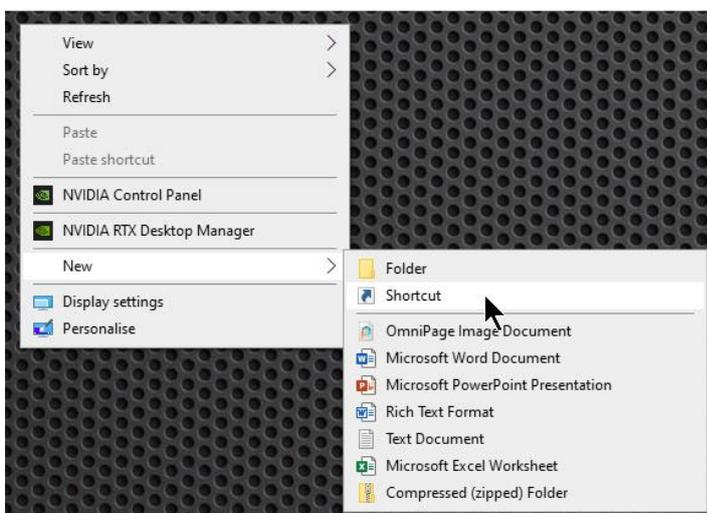


Figure 5 - Right click on your desktop and select New > Shortcut

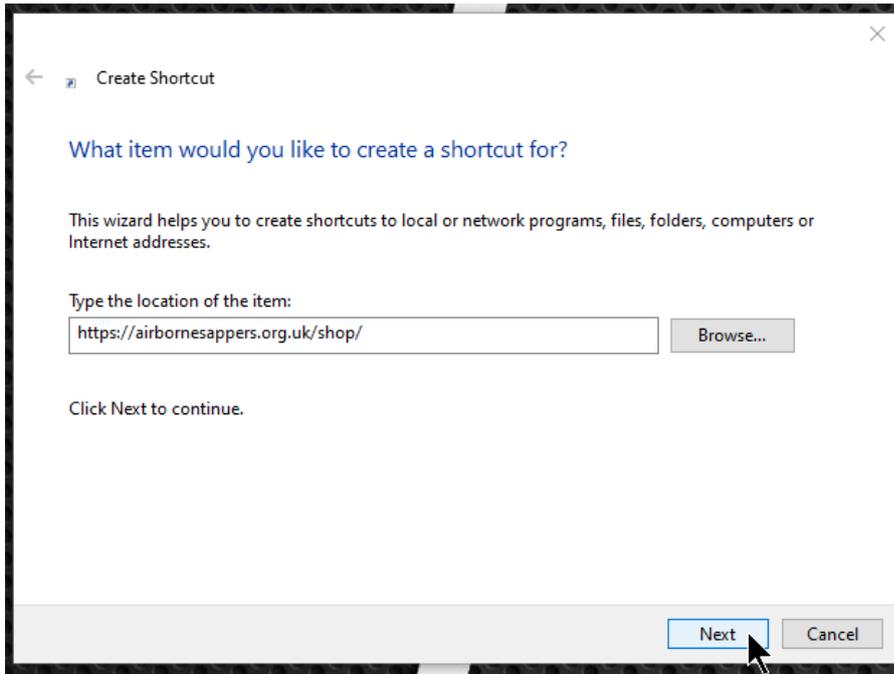


Figure 6 - Enter the location of the item, in this case the Shop web address and click Next

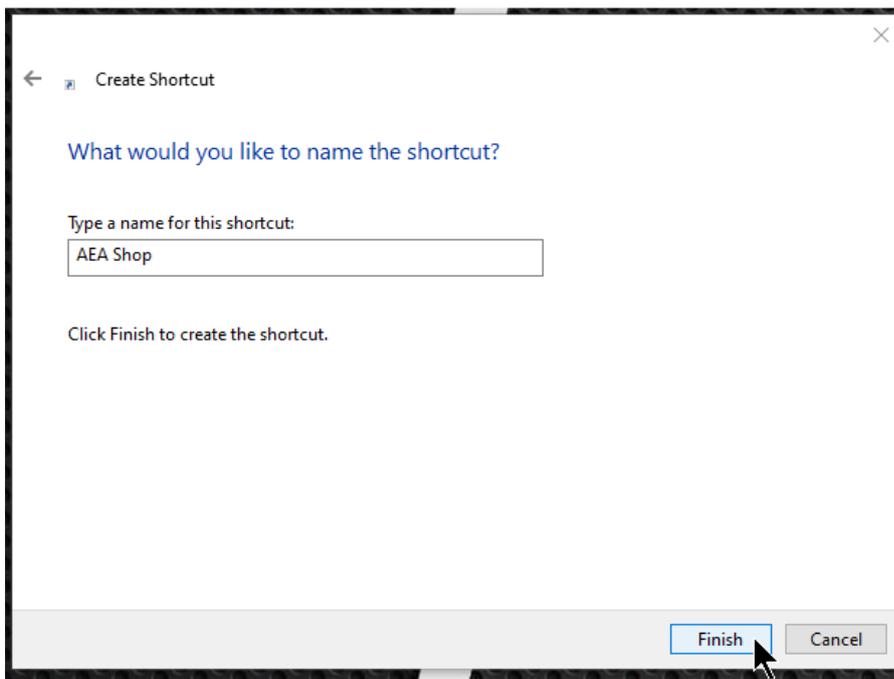


Figure 7 - Type a name for the shortcut and click Finish

Shop Team Photo



Figure 8 - Dave and Jon on a recent works do in The Red Lion, Walmington-on-Sea

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Airborne Engineers Association

Registered Charity Number: 1009201
~

President: Lt Col (Retd) Mervyn Bassett BEM

Email: mrb75@gmail.com

Chairman: Steve Wallis – Tel: 07757 115681

Email: Stephen.wallis57@ntlworld.com

Secretary: Mike Robertson

Email: Michaelj.robertson@outlook.com



MINUTES OF THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING (OGM) VIA ZOOM ON SAT 22ND APRIL 2023

1. Opening.

1.1. Opening address

The Chairman led the ode of remembrance and the 2-minute silence in memory of fallen comrades.

The Chairman welcomed all those attending and opened the meeting at 10:12am

1.2. Members Present

Member present were Lt Col (Retd) Baz Basset BEM-National President (from 10.35), Steve Wallis National Chairman, Mike Robertson BEM-National Secretary, John Brennan, Tim Van der Kraan, Steve Morris, Mike Ellery, Jon Nichols, Steve Brown, John Askey, Dave Rutter.

1.3. Apologies:

Apologies were received from Bob Mathews (National Treasurer), Dave Pace,

Baz Bassett send his apologies stating that he will be joining but after the start of the meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM and OGM.

The minutes of the previous AGM held at the Holiday Inn Birmingham Airport on Saturday 22 October have been produced and circulated.

Tim Van der Kraan questioned whether the date is correct as he believed it was held on the Sunday. Steve committed to check and amended as necessary.

Other than that, there being other no comments from the floor the Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder that the minutes as recorded be accepted.

Proposer: J Askey

Seconder: J. Nichols

Vote: Carried

3. Treasurers Report.

The associations treasurer Lt Col (Retd) Bob Matthews sent his apologies in advance but provided a written summary of accounts.

A copy of the accounts (Un-audited) prepared on 14 April is appended to the minutes and will also be added to the AEA website.

The Chairman commented that for future report, he would like to see a comparison against the previous report included so that we can see the variance.

He also requested that the shop financial statement be included in the treasurer's report.

There were no further comments from the floor.

The Chairman requested a proposer and seconder that the Treasurers Report, subject to annual audit, is accepted as presented.

Proposer: S. Morris **Seconder:** T. Van der Kraan **Vote:** Carried.

4. Association Shop Report.

The Association shop report was presented by the new shop manager Jon Nichols.

Since taking over from Dave and Jeanette / Rutter in August last year with help of Dave Pace. He described the developments since taking over.

a. Shop Front - Discussed new products. He mentioned that he is not including individual units and will focus on "Airborne Engineers" rather the 23.9 etc.

Jon outlined the new products; rugby shirts, T shirts, sweatshirts, ties, cufflinks, mugs.

He intends to have a stand at the Regt birthday in July and needs to ensure he has sufficient stock for this.

b. Accounts – with the help of D. Pace (Spreadsheet King) Jon demonstrated the dashboard that assists with sales, account etc so that there is a good live visibility of the situation at any time.

The figures are audited monthly with D. Pace, this achieves a high level of governance and transparency.

Please use review button to ensure Jon gets honest feedback on the products.

Anyone can request a report on the current status of account – just request this from Jon by email.

Jon outlined the process of payment and fees on PayPal (1.4%+20p) and the costs of postage and packaging which are charged at cost.

Payments to AEA account Q1 2023 was £1885.22. However, Jon estimates that the latest will be in the region of £3,770.20 so far this year

Sales so far this month (April) is £1,954.28.

Steve Morris asked how the stock checks are carried out. Jon showed a spreadsheet page on how this is done and accounted for. However, this is currently not independently checked. It was agreed by all that this independent check should be arranged for at least once a year. **(Action 1).**

c. Other Matters

Jon stated that he intends to keep the products and cost effective as possible and not sell very expensive items.

Jon hopes to form an alliance with the Regimental PRI and explore whether we can sell regimental PRI stock on their behalf.

Mike Ellery questioned whether we should be sourcing products from China considering what is currently happening on the worlds stage. Jon stated that he believes that the only stock sourced from China is the Samurai rugby shirt; however, he will check this. Notwithstanding this, Jon has considered this and is just as uncomfortable with sourcing products from China and would be happy to take an action to look at this. Baz stated that it is a matter for the association to decide on matters such as this.

Baz also mentioned that running such an operation and associated fees and other costs is dynamic and reiterated the need to have an annual audit to supplement Jon's monthly stock checks and audits that is currently supported by D. Pace.

Steve clarified that the vote is purely on how the shop is being run and not on the accounts.

Proposer: S. Morris **Seconded:** John Brennan **Vote:** Carried

Baz mentioned that he has clarified that the profits from the shop are not taxable providing that the funds are for charitable purposes.

5. Journal – Editor's Report.

In the absence of Dave Pace and a report, the Chairman outlined his understanding of latest developments.

Currently done 2 x a year, and it is being consider going for 4 x a year. However, this is very reliant on sufficient content from members, branches and the Regiment.

Steve also stated that Dave Pace does most of the work. He also does a lot of work with the AEA shop, the AEA website and really needs the assistance of a Journal Editor. Steve once again appealed for a willing volunteer for this role.

There were no further comments from the floor.

6. Membership Report.

The membership report was presented by Steve Morris

The current running total of members who have joined the AEA since its conception in Nov 1989 stands at **1578**. Less those departed to the Sqn Bar – **468** giving a total membership of **1110**. Three (3) new members joined this year with an influx of 26 new members mainly into the Birmingham branch.

Last member to join the AEA is Ian Tooley who was in 9 Sqn between 91-96.

Baz would also appreciate a few copies.

Baz mentioned some ideas for the Woodbridge weekend – set up a stand next to the REA stand and try and recruit there and then. Also suggest photo boards, map of branches etc.

Mike Ellery for Baz – AEA Scotland branch has a great deal of material on their website that would be great for recruiting purposes. Steve added that he also has a lot of photos for Hardwick Hall events. Data projectors, screens, banners etc was also discussed.

Baz advised that all these ideas are pulled together via a separate meeting which he will arrange. **(Action 3)**

Welfare Liaison Officer's Report.

Maj (Retd) Paul Moore has volunteered to take over the role.

Steve requested that all branches are aware that Paul is available to act as a signpost to other charities and organisations that can assist in such matters.

Steve mentioned that Paul reports that there have been no requests for assistance since he took on the role.

There were no further comments from the floor on welfare.

7. Archivists/Historian Report.

Baz outlined latest developments on behalf of Mr Nick Gibson.

Baz mentioned that Nick that he is now retired, and Baz does not have a great deal of information to share at this point.

8. Presidents Awards/Commendations.

Gil Nichol should be recognised for his service. However, Steve is aware that there are other who also may be eligible.

Steve Brown mentioned that George Barrett is worthy of an award and a citation is currently being prepared.

Steve outlined the process that the nominees prepare and citation and send it to the National Secretary, who forward them on the Baz as President, who decides on what award to present.

Baz mentioned that people who have spent a great deal of time supporting the association. Citations are important so that it is clear to everyone on their achievements and dedication to the association.

Steve mentioned that the Scotland branch are about to reach a 25-year anniversary since the branch was established. He is aware that there is to be a dinner to celebrate this anniversary and that he would like to attend if invited. If so, Steve would be happy to present Gil with his President's award at that dinner.

Mick Ellery stated that it is likely to be a small event and the guards club but he has no further information on this at the moment. The National Committee are keen to recognise this milestone. Baz regrets that he has to give his apologies that he is unable to attend this event.

Gil Nichol and George Barrett are nominated for the President's award.

9. Election of Officers

- 9.1. Steve stated that Mike Robertson BEM has volunteered to take up the role as National Secretary. No vote is required due to no other volunteers coming forward. The national committee has the powers to approve the appointment.
- 9.2. Steve reminded everyone that the National Secretary should be copied in all formal correspondence.
- 9.3. Steve stated that Major (Retd) Paul Moore has volunteered for the post of Welfare Liaison Officer and once again a vote is not required that that the National Committee have the powers to make this appointment.
- 9.4. Journal Editor is required.
- 9.5. Steve stated that a Vice Chairman is required, and it be part of the succession planning. Steve has done longer than he is supposed to and will have to stand down in two years. It is hoped that a Vice Chairman can be appointed at the AGM in October.

10. Branch Reports.

The following Branch Reports were outlined by the following;

299 Association – No representative present

Aldershot Branch – presented by Dave Rutter – The branch continues to hold bi-monthly meeting Brewer Fayre as Potters Hotel has taken over by the Home Office. A branch luncheon was held in Farnham, organised by Steve Morris, 37 members and guest attending. A big thanks to Steve for organising such a successful event. A similar event will be held early next year.

Birmingham Branch – presented Steve Brown- The branch organised the reunion and AGM last year. Attendance levels are at monthly meeting average at around 15. Have lost two long term branch members in the period include George/Rip Kirby members attended his funeral with the standard. His family made a generous contribution to the branch which is very much appreciated. The branch intend to present the family with an AEA plaque in due course,

Sid Warrilow MBE also unfortunately passed away. As the branch were not aware of his passing, they were not able to attend his funeral. This was a great shame as many members would have attended.

The branch is looking at supporting the memorial services at Hardwick Hall in May and the Double Hills service in September.

Chatham Branch – presented by Baz Basset. Problems being experienced with membership. The branch committee regularly meet up at Baz's house. AGM was held with 5 members present. Pete Kershaw remains as treasure. Tim covers off a lot of the other stuff. N

There are not many members retiring in the Chatham area.

Scotland Branch – Presented by Mick Ellery – Generally, we are in a reasonably healthy position regarding members attending meetings. We have had an average of approx.15 members at each meeting this year However some members are finding it difficult to attend the meetings due to health problems or caring for a wife/partner.

Wales and West – Presented by John Askey - Branch Members – 73 on the books. Many of those shown on the database do not respond to emails, letters or attend meetings

Meetings:

- a. Meetings were kickstarted again on 28 Jan 23 with 15 in attendance.
- b. The last meeting was held on 15 April 23 with 10 in attendance.
- c. The next meeting will be held on 10 June 23 to coincide with the Ride of Respect visit to Hereford.
- d. In Sept the branch is involved in the Double Hills memorial event. Peter yates and offered the branches assistance which was eagerly accepted.

Charity:

- e. The branch has elected to donate to local charities who will benefit more from the amounts we will be able to raise.
- f. Due to the ubiquitous nature of our branch, support for various charities across the region will also follow suit.

Welfare:

- g. The funeral of Brig John Hedley Hooper took place on 27 March at Monmouth. The Branch provided a Standard Bearer for which the family was extremely grateful.

AGM:

- h. Planning for the AGM on 13-15 October is well underway.
- i. 66 people booked in so far. However, branches are urged to book as early as possible.

Yorkshire Branch – No representative present.

The chairman reminded everyone that written branch reports being sent in advance of any OGM/AGM would be appreciated. On this occasion, it was requested that such branch reports be sent to the National Secretary so that they can be appended to the minutes of this meeting.

The Charman mentioned that the AEA Facebook page with a calendar so he urged branches to use it to log meeting and advertise branch meetings as much as possible in advance. This should help improve attendance. Also consider Mike (National Secretary) to keeping a log of such events.

11. Matter Arising from Previous Minutes

Trustees – The Chairman advised that he must change John Lee for Baz Basset, and to include Bobby Mathews and Treasurer with the Charities Commission. After note: this has now been done

AEA Relationship with REA – the Charman explained it was agreed many years ago that this issue was not to be discussed for 10 years. It is now approximately 15 years since that agreement, so it is appropriate to revisit the question. Steve made it clear that it was a matter for the members to decide. He then handed over the National President (Baz) to elaborate.

Baz explained the process that he proposed be adopted. He plans to engage with Ken Kirk (REA CEO) to understand restriction and issues are from his perspective. Once this is understood, the AEA National committee will reach out to the members to fully understand issues from their perspective, then prepare a proposal for the members to vote on.

The President and the Chairman recognises that there are strong feelings within the association about this subject and assured the meeting that any decision would be made by the whole membership of the AEA and not by the committee.

The President recognises that it may take some time to go through the process. In the meantime, anyone with any views and comment, please by all means discuss with Baz.

Mick Ellery asked what the criteria is for joining the REA Airborne branch, is the same as the AEA? The Chairmen explained that the AEA is open to anyone who has served on the strength of in an Airborne Engineer unit. This includes attached arms as full members, whereas with the REA Airborne branch, they could not be full members. Also, with the AEA, the members do not have to be para trained, just to have served in an Airborne Engineer Unit.

12 PROPOSALS FOR AGENDA ITEMS FOR AGM:

- 12.1 Discuss ideas and proposals for increasing membership and attracting those served between 1990 - to current day and serving members. This is agreed and has been covered under previous agenda items.

12. Remembrance Events and Services.

The following major events will be/were attended by members of our Association this year:

- 12.1. Falkland Islands.
 - Falklands Memorial Service at Pangbourne on Sunday 12th June
 - Falklands Memorial Service at Aldershot 10th June at Aldershot Military Cemetery.
- 12.2. Hardwick Hall, Saturday 13th May. This was well attended by the Birmingham Branch and the Branch Standard was paraded.
- 12.3. Double Hills, Sunday 3rd Sept.
- 12.4. Cromwell Lock, currently scheduled for Sunday 24th Sept at Cromwell Lock. However, as the 1st parachute Squadron (below) is scheduled for the same day, Steve, is liaising with the parties involved to try and deconflict these events.
- 12.5. 1st Parachute Squadron Memorial at Donnington. Sunday 24th Sept.
- 12.6. National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph Sunday 12th November – Steve has requested thirty-six tickets for AEA members. This should be confirmed soon. Generally, this includes 3 tickets to each of the branches with the rest offered up to members who are not members of any AEA branch. However, due consideration is given to those who have served in Airborne Engineers units, irrelevant whether they are members of the AEA or not.

12.7. 23 Parachute Engineer Regt 20th Anniversary

2023 will see the 20th Anniversary 23 Parachute Engineer Regt and a number of activities have been planned. Capt Marc Dorkings has provided the following information.

- Friday 28 July 22: 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, Freedom of Woodbridge Parade, timings TBC but expect a 1100hrs step off. The RSM would like a good veteran marching contingent if possible.
- Saturday 29 July 22: 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment Open Day followed by an all-ranks function with live music.
- A camping and campervan area is being allocated for the weekend.
- The cookhouse will be open all weekend for pay as you dine feeding, expect a ticket price for the function in the Saturday night.

More information will be published as soon as becomes available.

13. Any Other Business from Branches

Cromwell Lock – John Lee has agreed to continue organising this event for the next couple of years. Mike Holdsworth is assisting. However, John is looking for a volunteer to help him in that period with the view of taking over in due course. There is a committee established with the Birmingham Branch and 299 Association taking it in turn to tidy the memorial area.

Steve Brown stated that he will try and clarify with involved parties.

14. AGM and GALA Ball.

2023 Event will be hosted by the Wales and West Branch on the weekend 13th-15th October at the Abbey Hotel Greater Malvern

John Askey mentioned that Dave Leibrick and himself are the main organisers with other helping out with the raffle etc. John stated that all was heading in the right direction with no foreseeable problems.

Steve also mentioned that he has a book that he will donate as a raffle prize.

Golf Completion is being organised by Steve Morris. Steve stated that it was already arranged.

Steve stated that it was a matter for the branch to invite guests. However, the 23 Parachute Engineer Regiments' CO and RSM are invited by the National President, so this year they will be formally invited by Baz.

299 Association have agreed to host the 2024 AGM,

Scotland Branch have agreed to host the 2025 AGM who have requested £1000.00 grant for this. However, the Chairmen stated that initially £750.00 will be granted. Notwithstanding this, if they do need more they can requested this closer to the time. Mick Ellery explained that there are issues with alcohol pricing in Scotland, so no discounts will be offered by venues.

Dave Rutter, described the issues experienced at the Banbury Event 3 years ago and believes that £1000.00 for each of these annual events is now a reasonable sum.

The president suggested that we put this to the vote at the AGM which was agreed.

Mick Ellery asked Steve Morris if he will be organising the golf competition for the 2024 AGM and Gala Ball and will he need a room for the crazy golf on the Saturday afternoon? Steve replied yes and will make contact to discuss further away for this meeting.

15.National President's Points

A big thanks form the National President to all branches for the work they do generally, including maintaining membership through these challenging times, and to the members who undertaking key role have recently volunteered for key roles.

16.National Chairman's Points

As King Charles III is now the Colonel Commandant of the Parachute regiment and the Royal Engineers, the Chairman suggested that the National president write to the King to invite him to be the honorary member of the Association. This Baz agreed to. An association tie will be included in such and invitation.

17. Next Meeting National Meeting Date:

The next National meeting will be the OGM to be held in 14 October at the Abby Hotel Great Malvern at a date and location to be confirmed.

18. Chairman's Closing Remarks:

The Chairman thanked those members of the Association who attended and for participating in this Annual General meeting.

19 AOB

Tim Van Der Kraan mentioned that the subject of Presidents Commendations was not included in the minutes of the previous meeting. Although no award were given out during the weekend, the Chairman noted this point and agreed to modify the minutes to record the fact that no awards were presented at the AGM.

Tim also noted that for the Woodbridge regimental anniversary event, there will be very little attendance by association members, due to the fact that no accommodation is being offered on camp.

The President replied that despite all efforts, the Regiment does not have the space and other facilities so will not be providing accommodation in the Gym as they have done previously.

The meeting was closed in good order at 12.09hrs.

Attachments

- Treasurers Report
- Branch Reports
- Shop report

Addendum- As John Lee did not attend the meeting on the Saturday due to him believing that the meeting was to be held on the Sunday. He did try to join on the Sunday. He called the National Secretary who clarified the day had changed. Notwithstanding this, John highlighted the fact that due to the Association Constitution, the Associate is required to have 2 x Vice Presidents and they be Trustees.

The National Secretary agreed to include this point and an addendum to the minutes and seek the views of the National President and Chairman.

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Statement of Accounts

AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

AS AT 14 April 2023

ASSETS

Cash in Hand Nil

Cash at Bank £5772.80

Deposit Account £14870.06

Shop Stock £ 5784.96

TOTAL ASSETS £26427.82

LIABILITIES

Nil

TOTAL LIABILITIES Nil

WORKING CAPITAL

Assets £26427.82

Minus Liabilities £0.00

TOTAL WORKING CAPITAL £26427.82

Points:

Audit completed on the 14 April 2023.

R J Matthews Treasurer

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Obituaries

Brigadier John Hedley Hooper OBE DL



John Hooper, who died in March aged 93, nearly didn't become a soldier. He left school determined to be a Vet, but National Service convinced him that the Army was the place to be so he went to Sandhurst and was commissioned in 1951.

His first posting was to 9 Squadron as a Troop Officer and then, after further Engineer training at Chatham, he returned to 9 Squadron as a Troop Commander. Altogether he served five tours with Airborne Forces, becoming Adjutant of 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment, then Brigade Major of 44 Parachute Brigade and Col(GS) at 38 Group.

Along the way he commanded 25 Field Engineer Squadron and 36 Engineer Regiment before becoming the first Welsh speaking Deputy Commander Wales. His final posting was as Commander of the British Military Mission in Saudi Arabia. John was a great linguist and spoke Welsh, German and Arabic fluently, often acting as an interpreter.

Following retirement from the Regular Army in 1984, John became the Honorary Colonel of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia). He was also appointed as a Deputy Lieutenant of Gwent and later became High Sheriff of Gwent. His final appearance in Army uniform came in 2007 when he took the salute at the Double Hills parade to mark the first fatalities of the World War 2 Arnhem operation.

David Charles Davies

10th September 1937 to 4th December 2022

Served in 9 Indep Para Sqn RE from 1959 to 1962

John Pfiffner



John Pfiffner who passed away just after Christmas 2022 was a keen member of the Aldershot Branch and the Airborne Engineers Association for many years.

After working in the aeronautical industry, he set up in partnership with a close friend to form an electrical business with which he was associated with for virtually the rest of his life.

In his younger years speed was one of his interests and he was a keen amateur motor bike racer. He was also the owner of a Reliant Scimitar GT which went like the wind, it certainly did on a cold winter's day when we drove down to deepest Somerset to inspect an old barn cum cowshed which John had bought, and over the next few years slowly converted it to a comfortable home.

This attraction for a bit of adventure led him to join 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment TA in 1959 in which he served until 1987 reaching the rank of WO2. John served in the plant section of Support Troop for virtually all of his career, being awarded an honorary green beret when the squadron re-roled to a Commando Sqn, finally retiring from 131 as 302 Plant Troop commander in 1987. He was an experienced parachutist having recorded over 400 jumps during his service with 131.

John was married to Ann who pre-deceased him and they had three children, and after leaving 131 regularly attended the Aldershot Branch meetings and was instrumental in helping out at the annual BBQ's held at Fred Gray's house in Fleet. Apart from his military interests John was a keen Freemason which took up a lot of his time and he was a very well-respected member of the Order.

He was an adaptable person who could apply his skills to many trades and was always willing to help out as his many friends will testify.

A service was held at Yeovil Crematorium on 31st January attended by family and friends together with representatives from 131 Sqn and the Freemasons.

John Lee

David (Jed) John Stone.

11th August 1952 - 14th March 2022

Written by Dick Merry & Carl Rhodes



It was a cold and misty March morning when four of us stood outside Kingsdown Crematorium, Swindon with David's wife Debbie, daughter Jens, brothers, and sister. We'd come to say farewell to our old mate Jed, as he was better known to us all. Not only had Jed passed selection with us nearly 50 years earlier but in the words of the regimental collect, he had to go further:

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further: it may be
Beyond the last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea,

Service in the Regiment in 1977 had left him paralysed from the waist down at the age of 25. Such was his character that the former member of mountain troop D Sqn, went that little further and never dwelt on his change in circumstances.

Jed was born in Taunton in 1952, the eldest of four brothers and a sister. Jed later moved to Culmstock; from there he attended the local secondary school where he was marked out by his academic excellence. It was the out of doors though that Jed loved and so he joined the school's army cadet force. On Saturday mornings he regularly cycled miles to visit a local army museum. With his roots firmly established in the army it was not unsurprising this led him to leave school at 15 and join the Army Apprentices College at Chepstow in 1968. His former head master came to visit Jed's parents and remonstrated with them, that he was too clever for the Army and should pursue an academic career.

Whilst at Chepstow he was a member of the gymnastic team and played hockey and badminton. It was sometime during this period that he was given his nick name Jed, after the leading character Jed Stone in the hit TV series, Coronation Street. As soon as he was old enough he bought a Greaves 380CC Griffin Motor Cross Bike which he rode fearlessly. Ironically it was Bert Greaves who after WW2

made the first car, Invacar for disabled veterans, before branching out into motorbikes. After qualifying as an electrician at Chepstow he left the army in 1970 for six months, working as an electrician in Cirencester. He then re-joined the Royal Engineers doing P Coy in 1971 and joined 9 Sqn. During his time in 9 Sqn, he served on a UN tour in Cyprus 1973, two tours in Northern Ireland 1973 and 74 and road construction task in Hong Kong.

In August 1975 along with three other members of 9 Sqn Jed took SAS Selection which he passed. He then flew out to join D Sqn on Op Storm, along with several other men from the same selection course. He joined Bernie Greens Mountain troop in Taqah. This was the adventure he had joined for and he was in his element. He had a passion for climbing and would no doubt have been on one of the Everest expeditions to come. These were busy times for the regiment and no sooner was the Squadron back in Hereford than Jim Callahan took a hand directing their deployment to South Armagh, Op Contravine. A very different theatre than the Dhofar trip but one that he was well familiar with. Not long after returning from this tour he was away again on what was to be his last operational tour Op Overjoy. It was here in Central America that he was involved in an RTA whilst driving a Land Rover, breaking his back in May 1977. This led to him being flown by private plane to Miami Florida, USA. accompanied by surgeon Dr Barth Green. Once there he received surgery and rehabilitation, receiving particular attention from an American nurse Deb. Six weeks later he was flown back to the UK, where he entered the army's main orthopaedic hospital, The Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital at Woolwich for a further rehabilitation. Here the physio was particularly brutal, Jed was left on the gym floor and told somehow/anyhow to get himself into his wheelchair, no easy task, let alone when your 6'4" tall. He later sent Deb a plane ticket to fly to the UK, she arrived in March 1978 and on 27th July they were married. At this time Jed was now one of four men in the regiment left paralysed from the waist down, Tony Fleming from Op Storm, Joe Lock and Jimmy Joint also being victims of an RTA.

Jed left the army later in 1977 closing the door firmly behind him and having little to do with the regiment, although he maintained contact with several of his closer mates. Jed took to his new life, not seeing himself as disabled or it being a barrier to living life to the full. Instead of army life he rebuilt a new life around his wife, parents and brothers and sister.

In 1979 Jed was placed on a retraining course at St Loye's College in Exeter doing Electronics and his daughter Jen was born on 27th March 1979. In 1980 he started working as an electronic test Technician servicing British Airways radio equipment. Within a year he had secured a post as Electronic Technician at The Royal Military College of Science (RMCS), Shrivenham. Now Jed's full academic ability was realised as he firstly gained an HNC in Electronic Engineering at Swindon College, 1983-1985. This he upgraded to a Degree in Electrical Engineering at Bristol Poly 1985-89, whilst still working at RMCS, now as a Teaching Associate. Finally, he achieved a Master's Degree in Distributed Systems, 1994-96 at Oxford Brooke's University. Jed now lectured at RMCS amongst other things in Computer Architecture, Network design, Digital Systems Designs and Electronics where he worked for over 20 years.

Jed was not done yet. He now ventured into private industry with his family. They set up a field marketing company, Infinite Ltd, where he was in charge of the IT side of things. Jed continued to be involved until 2015.

Throughout his working life Jed pursued a passion for off road driving starting off in Bala, North Wales before taking his family to Morocco to further test his driving ability. His off-roading was with hand controls - so no mean feat! He loved nothing more than driving a vehicle on a single-track road on the side of a mountain, and giving his family heart failure. He had absolutely no fear! The family travelled

extensively making multiple trips to visit student friends from Shrivenham in Egypt, as well as other middle eastern countries. The Far East, Australia, and America as well as most of Europe all were visited. During these adventures he took the opportunity to photograph and record the sights he saw. A passion he cherished throughout his life.

An exceptional individual who battled adversity and achieved more than most. Even and despite being disabled.



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Join the Airborne Engineers Association

Eligibility

The Airborne Engineers Association (AEA) was formed in 1989 and is open to all personnel who have served, or are still serving, on the strength of any Airborne Engineer Unit.

This also includes parachute trained Royal Engineers who have served, or are presently serving with any Regular or TA unit, which has in its order of battle a parachuting capability.

Membership may also be given to any person who in the opinion of the Executive Committee has rendered special service to the Airborne Engineers.

The Association currently has seven branches:

Aldershot, Birmingham, Chatham, 299 Association (Hull), Scotland, Wales and West & Yorkshire.

Life membership of the Association costs just £25.00

Unsure if you're eligible to join the AEA or have any other questions? Get in touch via our [Contact](#) page or via email contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com

Apply for membership via [web form](#)

or print, complete and post the following PDF documents

[Membership Application Form & Gift Aid Declaration](#)

General Data Protection Regulations - [Personal Data Consent Form](#)

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