



# THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



**For All Airborne Sappers - Service Not Self**

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*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.*

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## President's Update

A warm welcome to all as it would appear that Summer is at last here. I must admit that I am a bit behind the curve in producing this update for the journal, sorry Dave. While on the subject of the Journal, and from who has become the driving force, Dave Pace has continued to gather information and review how we deliver this to the membership and other agencies. Delivering this information in a timely manner across the sites, both recording and archiving this information is a large task. I know that moving from hard copy to electronic copy seemed a big jump. However, once embracing the power of social media, and various social platforms, I found that as a user it was what was needed, especially as it is the future. More on this later as Dave continues to gather information, along with developing how best to take it forward.

I would also mention here Jon Nichols our Shop Manager and the other driving force for the AEA. Jon and Dave are working hard behind the scenes in ensuring that they can deliver what the members require, information on the Association, Public Relations and stock which is what the membership want.

Both these individuals need your support, material for the Journal or web site, any information will be of assistance. Jon of course would welcome your ideas for stock, nothing is off the cards.

I was very proud to have been invited recently to a supper at 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment at the end of 51 Para Sqns development week. As always it is great to speak to fellow Airborne soldiers and their outlook. Yes, when I look back it is a different army, but what is different. These young men and women have had a lot asked of them, operations, training teams and other commitments, they have risen to it all and are confident, outstandingly trained and very well led by NCOS and Officers.

Rock Barracks continues to grow with 70 Gurkha Para Sqn soon to join them.

I know that Steve and Mel continue to support a number of events across the UK, a big commitment but one that is appreciated by the members. As I type this, the Airborne Riders are ready to commence their organised events across the UK and if you can attend and support them well done. Along with the many other events that occur and supported by members I congratulate them on their commitment and hard work in maintaining these events.

I wish you all a great summer.

With best wishes

Baz Bassett

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## Chairman's Update

Hi to everyone and I hope that this finds you in good health and enjoying the summer, such as it has been.

It's hard to believe that another six months have passed since the last edition of the Journal, it seems that the older we get the quicker time seems to fly by.

Much has happened since the last edition, not least of which was a near death brush with Sepsis that laid me low for several weeks, it's not something that I would recommend to anyone and served to show how fragile we all are.

We are now into the planning for this year's memorial events. Hardwick Hall was again attended by a stalwart group from the Birmingham Branch ensuring that the Corps was well represented at the commemoration to the first ever Airborne Depot, the place where the 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Brigade trained before attending Parachute training at Ringway.

This year, being the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D Day and of Arnhem, I applied for 42 tickets to the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph in London, to my surprise the request was granted by the Royal British Legion and so this year will see the largest AEA contingent at the Parade that we have ever had.

Important discussions have been taking place between the AEA Executive Committee, 23 Parachute Engineer Regt and the Royal Engineers Association to explore ways in which the AEA and the REA (Airborne) branch could merge, these discussions have been led by the AEA President Baz Bassett and Phil Taylor the Chairman of the REA(A) and also AEA Yorkshire Chairman, I appreciate that this is a very emotive subject, but it has to be addressed. These discussions are ongoing, and the results will be passed to all of the Branches and AEA members for consideration. I stress that no decision to merge has been reached and that it will be for the AEA membership to decide in a ballot and I assure you that the executive committee will stand by the decision of the majority of AEA members whichever way the ballot goes. We will distribute updates as and when we get them.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the various events that we attend throughout the summer or at the AGM in Hull in October.

Best wishes from myself and Mel.

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## Articles from our Members

### From 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment

Article originally published in Sapper Magazine

#### Exercise EAGLE SAPPER 24

Exercise EAGLE SAPPER is the 23 Para Engr Regt annual Regimental validation exercise. This year, 9 Para Sqn were tested in preparation for taking over Air Manoeuvre Task Force (AMTF) readiness commitments in June 2024 with 12 Para HQ & Sp Sqn providing logistical support. As ever, interoperability was key to the exercise. The Regt worked with numerous external engineer capabilities from 28 C-CBRN Engr Regt (42 C-CBRN Sqn), 33 EOD&S Regt (49 EOD&S Sqn), Military Working Dogs (102 Sqn) and 39 Engr Regt (48 Fd Sqn). The location for this year's exercise was primarily Albemarle Airfield and Otterburn Training Area, North-West of Newcastle.

The scenario for the exercise was set on an African nation undergoing a civil war that put UK Nationals at risk. The conflict would require a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) to take place; similar to Op POLARBEAR (South Sudan). To extract UK Entitled Persons (EP) from the region, an airfield capable of landing a C-17 was needed and the task was to create a runway long enough for it to land safely. A derelict airfield was identified which met the C-17's landing criteria and could be quickly upgraded. After a simulated parachute insertion, 9 Para Sqn successfully rallied on the Drop Zone and inserted into the airfield with their Ultra-Light Airfield Damage Repair equipment to assess the state of the runway. The airfield had been the scene of skirmishes between rival factions and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) littered the airfield. The EOD&S team from 49 EOD&S Sqn sprang into action and working with 9 Para Sqn's ADR team they effectively coordinated simultaneous UXO clearance and runway repairs on large craters to rapidly complete the mission.



As if the mission wasn't hard enough by itself, freezing cold weather conditions iced over water in our bottles and the asphalt, used to fill-in the craters, was too hard to pour. With a bit of ingenuity, creativity and highly flammable liquids the materials were warmed up so they could be used.



Having successfully opened the runway, 9 Para Sqn handed over the airfield to the Lead Air Support Sqn, 48 Fd Sqn, who used their heavier equipment to upgrade the airfield to maximise its utility for aircraft and the Engr Gp's deployed forces. It was a rare and excellent opportunity for integration between the LASS and Para Fd Sqns; who could next be working together on a live operation.

With the airfield upgraded and an Evacuation Handling Centre set up to process EPs, Engr Gp troops were next challenged with a victim-operated IED scenario.



The Military Working Dogs swiftly and expertly identified the IED and once the individual had been separated from their device, the EOD&S team took over to disarm it. The Engr Gp were then re-deployed to provide Close Support to the AMTF Battlegroup.



The first job was to break into a new Area of Operation. 'Fighting in Woods and Forests' the Sqn fought with precision to clear a woodblock to allow survivability tasks to be carried out. Getting back to their 'bread and butter,' CWSS and MGCC were constructed to provide water and crossing sites, and 105mm Light Gun Pits were excavated by the POMs. The discovery of a 'dirty' CBRN IED threat resulted in 42 Sqn (C-CBRN) deploying to support troop movement and advise ground commanders. And with inclusion of an airfield denial and a bridge demolition the final serial of the exercise, a blister munition indirect fires, forced Engr Gp troops to extract through a CBRN decontamination lane.



Despite the best effort of Storm ISHA, which ripped through to blow over trees in harbour areas and cause flash flooding across the AO, the tenacity and determination of every member of the AMTF's Engr Gp ensured every mission was successfully achieved to the highest of standards.

Capt Jones  
IO  
23 Para Engr Regt

Some more of what 23 Para Engr Regt have been up to



Sunset descent for basic parachute course 1332



Rock Barracks Boxing Night.

Two teams were made up of fighters from Rock Barracks (23 PARA Engr Regt and 28 C-CBRN Regt) and Carver Barracks (33 and 35 EOD&S Regts). There were also two guest fighters from 1 RSME Regt and 30 Signals Regt.

Due to the nature of having a number of guest fighters, there was no overall winner in terms of a Station. Spr Albertella (1 RSME) won the boxer of the night.



Visit to Rock Barracks by the Minister for Defence Procurement, James Cartlidge MP, and Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal MP).



Another successful All Arms Pre-Parachute Selection Course passing course in March 2024.



23 PARA Engr Regt conducted their Annual Diver Assessment at Gildenburgh Water in March 2024.



GOC Cross country hosted at Rock Barracks in April 2024. With a reputation to maintain, 23 PARA Engr Regt won gold!



Aspiring Airborne Sappers training on the AAPPS Conditioning Course.



23 PARA Engr Regt snowboarding team participated in Ex SNOWJACK 24 and SAPPER SNOWBOARD 24.

## Don Newman's Memoirs

We were recently contacted regarding the self-published memoirs of Don Newman. Don was a former SSM of 9 Indep Para Sqn, he emigrated to Australia in the seventies, and sadly passed away in 2019.

Just to be clear, when we say self-published we mean a basic PDF document, so the quality, particularly for photos, is not perfect. However, we plan to recreate the entire document as best we can and share it with our members. Watch out for further updates.

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## Falklands Visit 8th January 2024

by Jim Queen

My wife Susie and I paid a visit to the Falkland Islands on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 as part of our 30 day South American adventure. We left a very snowy Inverkip on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> December 2023 to travel to Edinburgh for an overnight stop before our flight on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup>. December. We flew to Bueno Airies in Argentina via a short stopover in New York's JFK airport. We arrived in Bueno Aires on January 1<sup>st</sup> for a four-day visit before joining our ship the Sapphire Princess, we sailed overnight to Montevideo in Uruguay, where we had a very pleasant day ashore.

After we left Montevideo we had two days at sea before arriving in the Falkland Islands on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024. We arrived in Port Stanley on a beautiful sunny morning. Due to the size of our ship, we had to anchor offshore and get the ship's tender into Stanley, a journey of approximately 20 mins. This visit was always a concern for us as some of the previous ship visits had to be cancelled due to bad weather and if this happened to us we would have been truly devastated, but luck was with us. Thanks to two 9 Sqn friends John Hare and Paul Moore we ended up with not only one, but three personal tour guides, so thanks to the guys for that. John's good friend in the Falklands, Nyree is the chief tour guide for the Islands, as she was busy that day with tourist trips, she asked her friend Gerald Cheek if he would show us around the Island. Gerald is 82 years old, born and bred in the Falklands, what he doesn't know about the history of the Islands, isn't worth knowing. The night before our arrival in the Islands, I got a message from Paul to say that his good friends Geoff and Bernadette Pring had also agreed to meet us off the ship and take us around the Island. Geoff was a Royal Marine, stationed in the Falklands mid 70's and met his wife Bernadette whilst there, they now live in Stanley full time. We were in a bit of a position as to who to go with, we needn't have worried. When we got ashore from the tender Gerald was waiting for us at the jetty, when I said to him about other people also meeting us, he just said don't worry about it, the other couple won't mind. Standing next to Gerald was Nyree, so we got the chance to say hello and thank her for all that she had done for us. So off we went with Gerald. We spend a couple of hours visiting some of the war memorials and other sites around the town. Our first stop was to Memorial Wood, where I got the chance to lay the memorial plaque that I had made to honour my friends in 9 Sqn who never made it back home. We then headed to the lighthouse at Cape Pembroke, which has a monument to remember the crew of the Atlantic Conveyor who lost their lives when she sank about 90 miles from the point. We then went to Sapper Hill to pay our respects there also before heading back into Stanley where Gerald suggested that we have a break for a coffee, we went into one of the local café's and as we walked in, a voice said, you must be Jim Queen, I was a bit taken aback as I didn't know anyone in the Falkland's. It turns out that it was Geoff and Bernadette, sitting having a coffee. I felt a bit embarrassed and apologised for not meeting up with them, but they were fine with it. As we were chatting, we found out that Gerald and Bernadette are cousins, and they all knew each other. Looking back at this I think they had arranged all this between them, either way it was lovely to meet up with Geoff and Bernadette. They are visiting the UK in May and are hoping to come and visit us.

After this Gerald took us to the other side of Stanley, where he showed us Mount Longdon, Two Sisters and Mount Tumbledown, my heart went out to all the guys that had to take these locations. We were parked next to the remains of an old Argentine gun battery, shortly after we arrived there a group of approximately 8 Argentinian tourists arrived to pay their respects at the site. As I had on my 9 Sqn polo shirt and baseball cap, it was obvious who we were. I don't speak Spanish, but it was obvious what they thought and were saying about

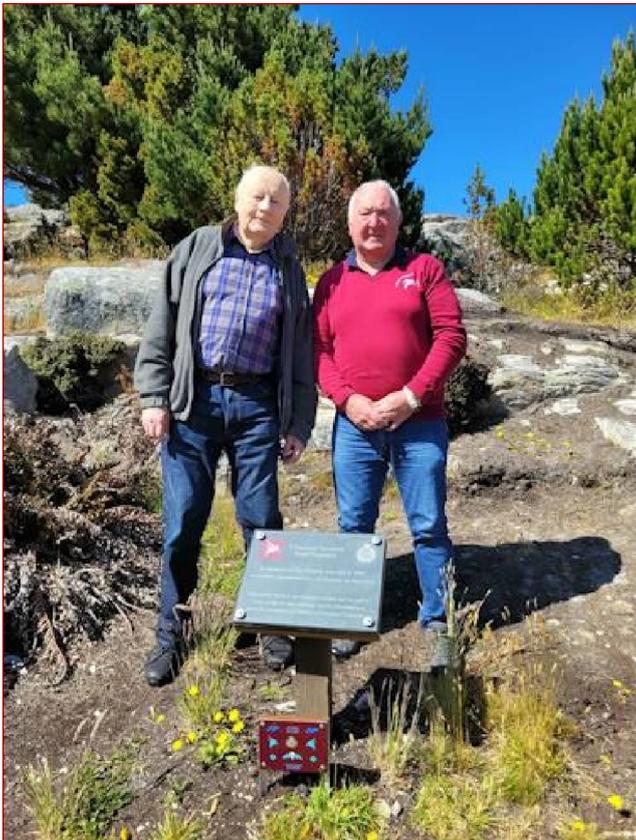
us. After this we headed back into Stanley, where we visited the main war memorial in Stanley and a few other locations. Gerald then announced that Marie, his wife had just put the kettle on so off we went to his house for a cuppa and to meet Marie, who's hospitality was second to none. After our second Naafi break we headed back into town to visit a few more locations, including the museum, which was very interesting, telling the history of the islands etc. There is a whole section dedicated to the war, with photos of all the men who lost their lives in the conflict. Shortly after this we said our good byes to Gerald who headed off home, we headed into the Globe for a drink before heading back to the ship. What a wonderful experience we had in the Falkland Islands, the people are so friendly and kind. This memory will remain with us forever.

After sailing from Stanley we headed south, down to Antarctica for a four day scenic cruise, this was truly a memorable visit, the weather couldn't have been kinder to us, the captain actually announced one day that this was the best weather he had seen down there in a long time, we were truly blessed, we encountered so much wildlife, including Humpback and Killer whales, Penguins and many different species of birds. We also went alongside the world's biggest iceberg the A23a, it's 46 miles long and 37 miles wide, with an average height from the water line of 400 metres. Truly awesome.

After leaving Antarctica we rounded Cape Horn where it was announced that anyone who rounds the Horn has the right to wear a gold earring in their right ear, I am sure the gripper would have been amused had I turned up for Monday parade wearing my earring. After the Horn we visited Ushuaia in Tierra Del Fuego, Punta Arenas in Chile before finally arriving in Valparaiso in Chile, we then had a two-day visit to Santiago before we flew back up to New York for 8 days to visit family in New Jersey. Finally arriving back home on the 30th of January. We may not die millionaires, but we will die with a million memories.

A selection of photos from our trip













## Following In Brummie's Footsteps to Everest Base Camp

By Kez Watters

I embarked on this challenge to Everest Base Camp with my adventurous daughter Ellie, after she had made it clear to me twelve months earlier that she wanted to follow in the footsteps of her great uncle, Brummie Stokes MBE BEM. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1976 he and Bronco Lane MM BEM summited Mount Everest as members of the joint British Army and Royal Nepalese Army Mount Everest Expedition. After their success, they had to endure an unexpected overnight stay near the summit, in order to ride out a storm that hit during their descent. This overnight stay cost them their toes, fingers and almost their lives. I urge you to read the book 'Soldiers and Sherpas, A Taste for Adventure,' written by Brummie, for a full account. Unfortunately the book is no longer available in stores or via online means and can now only be purchased from the Taste for Adventure charity itself, ALL proceeds going to the charity. Anyone interested in buying, can do so by getting in touch with [Angie at Taste for Adventure](#)

After very little convincing, I agreed to accompany her and from that point forward it was as if the spirit of exploration itself had possessed us. The call of the wild and the tales of courageous adventurers before us, began propelling us towards the roof of the world.

Months of rigorous preparation in the Malvern Hills, the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains had honed our bodies and steeled our resolve for the monumental task ahead. Our journey kicked off with a flight from the serene landscapes of the UK to the bustling chaos of Kathmandu, where the air was thick with the scent of incense, the hum of ancient prayers and ever-present pandemonium of people and vehicles all within tightly packed streets. It was here that we met our guide and now long term friend, Hasta Magar, who introduced us to the city, its ancient culture and to the journey ahead.

It was the prospect of getting to Lukla that truly set our hearts racing, as the three of us boarded a rickety DHC-6 Twin Otter plane bound for the edge of adventure. The aircraft itself very much reminded me of the old SC-7 Skyvan we used for parachuting over Weston-on-the-Green, an aircraft affectionately called the flying shoebox and resembled a Pickford's van with wings! Sitting at an altitude of 2860m (9383ft), Lukla is the gateway to the Himalayas and the starting point of our trek into the mountains. It also has the title of one of the world's most dangerous airstrips due to its minute size and that it is carved into the side of a shear mountain face. To land in



such a location can be likened to attempting to park a car in a single garage that is positioned on the hard shoulder of the M4. The driver having to abruptly come to a dead stop, neatly inside the garage, all from a staggering speed of 180mph. The flight was a rollercoaster of nerves and excitement, with every bump and jostle a reminder of the grandeur of the task we had undertaken. It was a little unnerving to see and hear one Nepalese passenger who was openly praying throughout the flight and asking his God for safe passage and an even safer landing! In addition to this, I secretly hoped that the pilot was on his 'A' game also that day!

After touching down on Lukla's precarious runway we both began to breathe again and wasted no time in hitting the trail, our spirits buoyed by the promise of the unknown. With our trusty guide Hasta, our laden bergens and sturdy boots, we set off on a journey that would test our mettle in ways we could scarcely imagine.

The path stretched out before us like an endless ribbon carving a path down through a valley, leading us along a breathtaking landscape that seemed straight out of the Heinrich Harrer book,

Severn Years in Tibet. The trail was littered with groups of yaks being shepherded by their watchful handlers. Like worker ants these iconic animals moved perpetually along main supply tracks, supplying all the villages and towns throughout the mountains with essential supplies and goods, all to the sound of their yak bells and the calls of their owners. They were not alone in the haulage of items up and down the trail, the ever-present



Sherpas could be observed carrying colossal loads on their backs at every point along the trail. The loads being carried by these small, yet robust individuals were immense and had to be seen to be believed. Their stature may be small, but their physical strength and immense levels of endurance know no limits.

We reached the tranquil serenity of Phakding (2610m or 8562ft) where we spent our first night in a local tea house and received our first taste of Nepalese hospitality. It is truly humbling to witness the level of kindness and friendliness continually exhibited by every person we met and could be clearly displayed within the smiles of our hosts who offered the warmest of welcomes at every stop we came to.

It wasn't all smooth sailing on our quest for glory, oh no, the mountains are capricious mistresses, prone to testing those that attempt to walk among them. We started the second day knowing that we would be gaining significant altitude, more than any other single day during the whole trip, and climbing up to the bustling marketplace of Namche Bazaar.



A thriving town in Khumbu Pasanglhamu Rural Municipality and sitting at an altitude of 3440m or 11286ft. The climb was a relentless uphill crawl, made slower by the need to avoid altitude sickness. This meant moving at a greatly reduced speed, regularly stopping to take on board the necessary four litres of water a day and maintaining sufficient energy levels by eating at regular intervals. The frequency of small shops and tea houses became less and less as we moved on at a snail's pace. Each stop along the way however provided Hasta, Ellie and I with views and images that were simply fantastic. Hasta's stories and his attempts at teaching us local words and phrases along the way gave us a greater insight into the local culture and injected a lot of humour into our conversations, our laughter ringing out like a clarion call in the crisp mountain air. These vistas, the scenery, the locals we met and our companionship all helped melt away the effects of the physical hardships we were facing and placed permanent grins firmly upon our faces.

Our arrival at Namche Bazaar saw Ellie beginning to feel the effects of the altitude and needed to spend the rest of that day and night bedded down feeling nauseous, tired and unwell. The next day however she was feeling a lot better and was able to undertake a short acclimatisation walk to the Hotel Everest View. The hotel opened in 1971 and is situated at a height of 3880m or 13000ft. Hotel Everest View has been listed on the Guinness Book of World Records (2004) as the Highest Placed Hotel in the world. After one or two coffees at this location we returned for another evening at Namche Bazaar. This bustling enclave thrives with activity, a vibrant tapestry woven with the colours of a myriad of cultures and traditions. Streets teem with merchants and travellers haggling over both ancient items as well as modern goods, their voices blending with the chimes of prayer wheels spinning under the power of a stream running through the centre of the town. At every turn, the scent of incense mingles with the aroma of yak butter tea, creating a unique and unforgettable experience.

The following day saw Ellie and I feeling rejuvenated and ready to get back on the trail. We continued through valleys and over peaks, each step bringing us closer to our ultimate goal. We spent the next several days steadily climbing through stunning vistas, areas of immense beauty and ever-changing environments, all interspersed with small villages and towns. We spent nights in local tea houses at Phortse (3840m or 12598ft), Dingboche, (4410m or 14470ft), Lobuche (4940m or 16210ft) and Gorak Shep (5164m or 16942ft). Each of these locations a milestone on our path to greatness, each stop a testament to our unwavering determination. Again, however it was not all plain sailing as I began experiencing a steadily increasing headache that began at Dingboche and worsened with every contour line of height we crossed. This, in conjunction with thinning oxygen levels in the air and a significant loss of appetite, made each step forward quite an effort.



After a final push from Gorak Shep on one clear and sunny morning, we eventually stood at Everest Base Camp. Our hearts soared with the knowledge that we had overcome many difficulties and succeeded in this challenge. Everest Base Camp (5364m or 17598ft) sits at the foot of the world's highest peak, a realm where bold and brave climbers converge in pursuit of the ultimate conquest. Here, amidst the icy expanse of the Khumbu Glacier, tents stand, their fluttering flags bearing witness to the indomitable spirit of human endeavour. The air, thin and unforgiving, echoed with the excited voices of hikers and mountaineers, clad in layers of warm weather gear. Yet, amid the harsh beauty of this unforgiving landscape, we felt a sense of elation, having now reached our goal following months of planning and preparation. In the shadow of Everest's towering peak, where the line between triumph and tragedy is as thin as the air itself, we could not help but think about Brummie and Bronco's own adventure all those years before, a moment frozen in time, a triumph that would echo for years to come.

But even as we revelled in our victory, we knew that our journey was far from over. With a fond glance over our shoulders, we began the long descent back to civilisation, the symptoms of altitude sickness diminishing the lower we got. After another hair-raising flight from Lukla to Kathmandu we spent two days relaxing before returning to the UK, weary but triumphant.



Amidst the laughter and the difficulties, there was purpose to our pilgrimage. For every step we took, we carried with us the hopes of those less fortunate than ourselves, raising almost £2,400 for the Hereford based charity 'A Taste for Adventure.' The charity was founded by Brummie Stokes himself and is aimed at the social inclusion and the enhancement of the lives of disadvantaged people through the medium of adventurous, outdoor activities. Both Ellie, myself and the charity itself would like to thank all association members and association branches that donated.



Thank you.  
 Kez Watters

## Insignia of the Gurkha Engineers

By Frank Stevens

In 1947 a decision was taken to recruit support arms for the Gurkha Division and these comprised Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Royal Signals, Royal Army Service Corps and Military Police. At the time of recruitment the personnel were enlisted into their parent Corps, not into the Gurkhas as a separate branch. All personnel were enlisted from existing units including those to be transferred to the Indian Army upon partition, so there was no such thing as a raw recruit.

Since the Nepalese make superb fighting soldiers, great difficulty was experienced in turning them into technical soldiers. When the Malayan emergency was in full swing, a decision was made to return the Royal Artillery Gurkhas to infantry units and the matter was not raised again. The Gurkha Military Police was also disbanded at a later date, but the author does not know the reasons for this.

The Engineer, Signal and Transport units still exist and form a valuable part of the British Army, although much reduced, in keeping with the remainder of the Army.

Referring back to the commencement of Gurkha soldiers in the R. E., they wore all the normal insignia of the Corps, brass George VI cap badge and brass shoulder title R. E. Later on the change of the badge, the bi-metal version was issued and later still, the bi-metal E II R cap badge was worn.

As far as possible, the Gurkhas followed the dress of the infantry units and therefore a blackened SIT was worn on the jungle green tunic. The officers had a badge of the type described below, mounted on a cord boss for the peaked cap, on blue for the khaki cap, and on red for the No. 1 Dress blue cap although later it was agreed to only use the red boss for all dress. By this time the new badge for the units, now known as Gurkha Engineers, had been approved and this consisted of crossed kukris, surmounted by a grenade with the motto 'UBIQUE' across the hilts of the kukris, all in white metal at that time and manufactured in the Far East until Ordnance supplies became available. The new badge was approved in 1955. An issue of battledress was made to all personnel and, as a special concession: the unit tailor wove shoulder titles as 'one offs.' These were black on red, and had 'Royal Engineers' over 'Gurkha' as the wording. At the same time the Sappers wore the Hat, Felt, Gurkha (H.F.G.) and the badge for that was the R.E. collar badge mounted on a 2" x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" dark blue patch worn on the right side of the hat. Note that this was before 1955, and therefore still wearing R. E. insignia in the main.

Later a better type of title was made with blue lettering on red for issue to all ranks when wearing B. D. in Hong Kong. The final type of cloth S/T was 'GURKHA ENGINEERS' in blue on red from Ordnance sources. This became obsolete when battledress ceased and No.2 Dress came into use. For the jungle green uniform, the SIT became 'G.E.' in black. This was in 1955 at the time of the distinctive cap badge. Buttons for the No.2 Dress were anodised, and had the design of the badge upon them, the buttons resembling brass. At one stage the officers had black horn buttons made for them as a trial, but it is believed that there was only one batch made.

In 1977 the honour of the title Queen's Gurkha Engineers was granted; a similar honour also being granted to the Signals and Corps of Transport arms at the same time. At a time, which is not recorded, having the grenade and scroll gilt and the remainder in silver plate embellished the cap badge. The three forms of head-dress used by the Gurkha sappers are; beret, hats F.G., and a hat known as the KILMARNOCK, which, to many would be described as a 'pillbox,' around the body of which there is yellow braid. The hat commemorates the Royal Sappers and Miners who wore a similar head dress. The badge is worn in all three types of hat. The SIT currently in use by the Gurkhas is the letters [Q.G.E](#)

A special feature for both British and Gurkha officers is the wearing of a shoulder belt in red leather (or imitation of), which has a large gilt badge thereon, surrounded by a wreath. The belt also bears a lion's head boss with whistle and chain, also in gilt. Nowhere else in the Corps is a shoulder belt worn.

## If The Lord Could Cast His Net

Taken at Haig Lines in the 70s



Ken Mason,  
Bill Thompson,  
Derek Sowden,  
Chris Reid,  
Colin Parker,  
George Murphy

In front:  
Taff McCleary &  
Tosh Byrne

## Scenic Landscape of Libya – 1968



Dave Rutter  
Colin (Blackie) Brien &  
Pete (Plug) Plowman

Mount Olympus – 1962



Can you help name these characters?

These are the names we have so far

Left to Right Standing  
2<sup>nd</sup> Ian Wilson  
4<sup>th</sup> Jessie Owens

Left to Right Sitting  
2<sup>nd</sup> Dave Rance,  
3<sup>rd</sup> Benny Benson,  
4<sup>th</sup> Stan Marley

This article was originally written by John Elliot (John is sadly now deceased)

## Reg Orton

### A SOLDIER FROM THE CORPS OF ROYAL ENGINEERS - UBIQUE



Reg Orton was born in Birmingham in 1919 and lived with his parents in Acocks Green until the start of the War. There were seven children in the Orton family, three girls and four boys. A sister aged 91 is still alive and so is one of the brothers, Billy, who is aged 83. The family had a military background in that his father was one of the defenders of Ladysmith and one of his brothers finished the War as a RSM in Austria.

Reg joined the Army at the outbreak of War and went to France with BEF. His stay there was short and he was evacuated from Dunkirk with the survivors of the BEF. The experience probably shaped Reg's outlook on the Army and his future in it. In a letter written to a nephew his comments on the lack of proper equipment and the leadership of some of the Generals, who still thought that they were fighting the First World War were scathing. No doubt this influenced his decision to join an elite force, which he did by volunteering for parachute training with the newly formed Airborne Forces.

Reg was one of the early members of the Air Section of the Royal Engineers. The unit quickly expanded and was designated 1<sup>st</sup> Para Squadron RE. As part of the newly founded 1st Para Brigade they went with the invasion force to North Africa. The unit made two operational drops during the campaign in North Africa and fought with distinction until the German surrender in May 1943. Reg was fortunate to survive one particularly disastrous incident during which most of his section was killed when the Hawkins mines they were carrying during a night time operation behind the German lines exploded accidentally.

1<sup>st</sup> Squadron next saw action in Sicily as part of the Para force, which dropped on the Primasole Bridge. After Sicily 1<sup>st</sup> Para Brigade was landed at Taranto in Italy by the Royal Navy where the Squadron was employed in an infantry role for four months before being recalled to England to prepare for the invasion of Northern Europe, as part of the new-formed 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division.

After much training and the frustration of preparing for several operations, which were cancelled, the 1st Airborne Division was dropped at Arnhem, as part of the Allied Airborne force whose task was to capture the bridges over the Neder Rhine. Reg and most of his troop reached the Bridge on the first day, and under the command of the then Captain Eric McKay, held the schoolhouse on the East bank of the Bridge despite all attempts by German armour and infantry to dislodge them. With the schoolhouse on fire, a cellar full of wounded, little ammunition or medical supplies left.

Captain McKay ordered the survivors to evacuate the building and attempt to reach the rest of the Division, which, though completely surrounded, was still fighting in Oosterbeek. This proved to be impossible, as the Germans had formed a tight perimeter round the bridge and the survivors from the schoolhouse were either killed or captured. Reg was taken prisoner and though he escaped in the general confusion of the next few days, he was recaptured and spent the rest of the war as a POW working in the coal mines of East Germany with other POW's and slave labourers.

After the war Reg was posted to the Far East and spent three years in Hong Kong with a Works Unit restoring the war-damaged utilities of the Colony. Whilst on leave at the end of this tour, he volunteered for service in Korea and was soon in action with 55 Independent Field Squadron RE as a Troop Sergeant. During April 1951 his unit was engaged in a particularly fierce action whilst supporting

an armoured column which was attempting to relieve the 1st Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment, who had been surrounded on the Imjin River Crossing. It was in this action that he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The citation for the awards states:

"From about 0830 hours to 1345 hours Sgt Orton was in charge of a party of 9 men acting as local protection to a CENTURION tank. During the early part of this period his men were deployed on either side of the tank and engaged continuously by enemy small arms and mortar fire. He and his men broke up at least one formed body of Chinese of more than platoon strength who attacked them. His tank was the last to withdraw and came under very violent attacks from Chinese lining the sides of the road grenading and smoking the tank. He organised and controlled the fire of all the tank passengers into two effective fire banks. When the tank caught fire and fell off the road he was, while still in a dazed condition, ordered in English to surrender by a Chinaman, armed with an automatic weapon. He attacked this man with his fists and laid him out cold".

He gathered the survivors together and got them onto another tank through the great number of Chinese who were in the area, grenading and firing at them. When Molotov cocktails halted this tank he immediately went to the front and put out the fire with his own clothes, thus saving the driver from being burnt or blinded.

The Commander of the tank was severely wounded at this time, and Sgt Orton moved to the turret where he took command of the tank himself. The tank gunner, under his control, successfully engaged several groups of the enemy, and succeeded in bringing the tank with its passengers, the majority of whom were wounded, to safety.

During the whole of this period Sgt Orton acted in a most cool and courageous manner taking on the responsibilities of infantry NCO and tank commander confidently and efficiently. By his actions he undoubtedly saved the lives of many British soldiers and almost certainly saved a tank from being lost, whilst at the same time inflicting the maximum damage possible to the enemy."

Soon after this Sergeant Orton was selected to travel to the United States with a small party of servicemen from selected units of the UN Force, who had distinguished themselves during the fighting. These veterans were guests of President Harry Truman and as such appeared at several civic functions with him, though the main purpose of their visit was to tour munitions plants and factories giving firsthand accounts of the fighting in Korea. To honour these veterans the City of New York awarded them The Medal of Honour of New York City. (If you have very sharp vision and are ever watching a news clip of the aftermath of the Korean War you will see Reg beside President Truman on the steps of City Hall, New York). During this tour Reg was appointed 'Colonel aide-de-camp' on the staff of the Government of the State of New Mexico.

On his return to the UK in 1953 Reg was posted to the TA Liverpool as an Instructor. However this routine life as a 'Civvy Soldier' lasted for barely six months and by a certain amount of manipulation, Reg was posted to HQ, RM Commando Brigade in the Canal Zone as WOII, QMSI. The Commando Brigade subsequently moved to Singapore and then to Malta. After a short time the Commando Brigade moved to Cyprus as reinforcements for the Cyprus garrison and in preparation for the Anglo French intervention at Suez. During this part of his service with the Commando Brigade WOII, Orton was awarded the British Empire medal in recognition of his outstanding services whilst serving as Assistant to the Staff Officer, RE. HQ, 3 Commando Brigade R.M.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Independent Para Brigade was also in Cyprus on anti EOKA operations and standing by for the imminent operation against Col. Nasser. At this most important time, 9 Para Squadron RE was without an SSM and WOII Orton suddenly found himself as SSM of 9 Para Squadron, still wearing his green beret!

As many of the Reservists, who had been recalled to the colours, had been away from airborne life for various periods of time, the RAF Parachute instructors ran a series of short, sharp, familiarisation courses. Reg immediately joined one of the courses and by cutting corners, as usual, found himself in a stick, standing up ready to jump. With slight apprehension Reg realised that his last jump had been

at Arnhem 12 years previously and that techniques had changed, however, as the red light was 'ON' he thought that it was rather late to mention it. Needless to say. he landed safely.

The Airborne part of operation Musketeer was launched on 5th November 1956 and Reg landed at Port Said with the seaborne force the next day. After a few days ashore the Parachute Brigade was withdrawn to Cyprus, where they continued their anti-terrorist operations, until their return to UK in December 1956.

Reg stayed with the 9 Para Squadron RE until 1960, during which time he completed two short emergency tours in Cyprus and Jordan. On leaving 9 Para Squadron on the expiry of his tour, he returned to HQ Commando Brigade in Singapore.

In 1962 Reg retired from the Service and went to work for an oil exploration company in the Middle East. Whilst on a drilling survey in the desert near the old British campsite of Tel El Kebir, Egypt, he stepped on an old British AP mine and lost the lower part of his left leg. He was not found for several hours and even then it was some time before an emergency operation was performed on his shattered leg. Eventually he arrived at Roehampton, where he faced two more operations before he was fitted with an artificial limb.

During his stay at Roehampton Reg was nursed by Clare Stanley. Subsequently they married and had two sons. Reg was liked and respected in the community for his work with the Samaritans, The Quakers and as a volunteer driver for the Social Services. His compassion, knowledge of life and down-to-earth advice were valued by all who met him. He died after a short illness in July 1989 remaining brave and uncomplaining to the last with Clare at his bedside.

His rank on retirement was Sgt. He never troubled to sit his Army Certificates of Education, which would have assured a higher substantive rank. Perhaps he was too busy fighting the Queen's enemies. One wonders what dizzy heights he would have aspired to if he had obtained those treasured certificates? Would he perhaps have been an even better soldier?

#### Epilogue

After his Army service Reg worked in the Middle East on geophysical surveys for an oil exploration company. During this time his medals were sold without his agreement. Eventually they were traced to a Canadian collector, who had bought them in good faith. He was so impressed by 'The Man' whose medals he owned that he visited him in the UK and commissioned a portrait of the action in which Reg won his DCM. During 1999 Mrs Orton was able to purchase the medals from the Canadian collector, as it had always been Reg's wish that the medals should be in UK, preferably in the Royal Engineers Museum for safe keeping.



Reg Orton's Medals

## Visit to Stavanger by the Family of Sapper George Simkins

By Dr Bruce A. Tocher

I had the great honour and privilege to host a visit to Stavanger, Norway last week of the family of Sapper George Simkins, 261 (Airborne) Field Park Coy., Royal Engineers, who was one of the 41 men killed during Operation Freshman.

Sapper Simkins' son, Bob, his granddaughters Karen and Linda, and other close family members took part in a memorial visit to Eiganes on Thursday the 11th of April. Also present were Thomas Falck, the British Consul in Stavanger, Lieutenant-Colonel Piers Noble, representing NATO's Joint Warfare Centre, and Warrant Officer Jørn H. Johansen of the Norwegian Home Forces.

This was 82-year old Bob's first visit to Norway to see his father's grave and was a truly moving occasion for all present. A journalist from the Norwegian news service, NRK Rogaland was also in attendance and recorded a personal interview with Bob which was broadcast on Norwegian television the same evening. Click this link to view the broadcast -

<https://tv.nrk.no/se?v=DVFJ20041124&t=455s>

The Simkins family and official representatives were joined at Eiganes by members of two Norwegian families, the Helmikstøl's and Espedal's, who both played key roles in the events following the crash of the glider in which Sapper Simkins was killed around midnight on the 19th of November 1942, during Operation Freshman. Bob and the other family members were delighted to be able to thank them for their families' care and compassion following the crash.

I gave a short address covering the events of Operation Freshman, followed by a speech from the British Consul on the close co-operation and friendship of Norway and the U.K during WWII. Lieutenant-Colonel Noble then talked about the courage and sacrifice of Sapper Simkins and the other members of the Airborne Forces, drawing on his own personal experiences in the military.

Lieutenant-Colonel Noble then laid a wreath on behalf of the Commander, Major General Piotr Malinowski and staff of the NATO Joint Warfare Centre, Norway with the following dedication: -

### **Sapper George Simkins**

*We follow in the footsteps laid by the brave,*

*Your eternal sacrifice will always be remembered*

*May you rest in Peace*

Warrant Officer Jørn H. Johansen also laid a wreath, followed by floral tributes from the Simkins family.

The family expressed their sincere gratitude to all present, the Commonwealth Graves Commission for their care in looking after the grave of their relative and his comrades, and the Norwegian people for their continued acts of remembrance for the Allied fallen during WWII.

After the ceremony at Eiganes, the group had lunch, then I gave a presentation of Operation Freshman with special focus on Sapper Simkins. During the presentation, Lt.-Col. Noble presented Bob with a Paratrooper's "Wings" as a personal memento of the occasion.

## **SAPPER GEORGE SIMKINS**

Sapper George Simkins; Service No. 1884423; Age 30, 261 (Airborne) Field Park Company, Royal Engineers, from Romford, Essex, England.

Simkins enlisted in the Royal Engineers on the 20th December 1939 and joined the 261st Field Park Coy., R.E. in February 1940. On the 19th October 1942, he, together with around 30 other Royal Engineers, volunteered for a special mission, the details of which were not given to the men at the time. This mission was Operation Freshman, the Allies first glider borne raid of WWII, which had the goal of destroying the Heavy Water production facility at Vemork in Norway. Heavy Water was a key component in the attempts to develop an atomic bomb.

The raid had a tragic outcome and 41 of the 48 men who took part lost their lives. Sapper Simkins was one of eight men killed when his Horsa glider, DP349, crashed near midnight on the 19th November, 1942, in Fylgjesdalen, Norway. The casualties were initially buried near the scene of the crash, but after the war their bodies were recovered and taken to Stavanger where they were reburied with full military honours in the Commonwealth Grave section at Eiganes Cemetery.

***"We will remember"***

Dr. Bruce A. Tocher

### ***THE OPERATION FRESHMAN PROJECT***



## The Operation Freshman Project

By Dr Bruce A. Tocher

The successful attack on the Heavy Water facility at Vemork in Norway in February 1943 is rightly regarded as one of the most daring special forces raids of WWII. Over the years many books have been written about this raid, Operation Gunnerside, and it has been portrayed in films (The Heroes of Telemark, starring Kirk Douglas), television series (The Heavy Water War) and numerous documentaries. However, what is less well known is that there was an earlier attempt to destroy this target. This raid, Operation Freshman, which was launched on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 1942, ended in tragedy with 41 of the 48 soldiers and airmen involved losing their lives.

Several books have been published in which Operation Freshman is described, e.g., by Richard Wiggan (1986) and Jostein Berglyd (2005). In 2011, Ion Drew et al. published Silent Heroes which, in addition to the details of the raid, also provided a unique insight into the personal lives of the individual servicemen and their families, and contained information based on interviews, correspondence, and meetings with surviving relatives and ex-servicemen who had connections to the operation. At the time of publication, however, details of only some of the men were available. Efforts are now being made to address this gap and to publish a new book on Operation Freshman which includes information on all of the men who took part in the mission.

With this in mind, The Operation Freshman Project is trying to trace any surviving relatives or people who have stories or anecdotes concerning the servicemen who participated in the raid, or who were involved in the planning, training and support roles, and who may have photographs, letters or other documentary information relating to the servicemen. The idea is to tell the story of these incredibly courageous young men through their lives, and lives of their families, rather than more conventional histories which focus primarily on the events themselves.

Since the start of 2020, the project has managed to establish contact with relatives of 38 of the 48 soldiers and aircrew who took part in Operation Freshman, as well as families of some of the Norwegians involved. This effort is ongoing.

In the Autumn of 2022, to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, a total of 67 Freshman relatives spent 8 days in Norway visiting the various sites connected with the raid. This included visits to the three Commonwealth War Grave sites (Oslo, Stavanger and Helleland), as well as the three crash sites, execution sites, prisons, and the Heavy Water Cellar at Vemork. The visit culminated in a reception at the British Embassy in Oslo.

### **OPERATION FRESHMAN**

In July 1942, the British War Cabinet decided to try to destroy the heavy water production facilities at the Norsk Hydro facility near Vemork, Norway. The reason was the concern that the heavy water was being used as part of Nazi Germany's program to develop a nuclear bomb. After much discussion, it was decided to use specially trained Royal Engineers to carry out the task. They were to be flown to a landing site on the Hardanger Plateau, near the Vemork facility, using two Horsa gliders, each towed by a Halifax bomber.

The Royal Engineers who took part were all volunteers. Twenty men came from the 9<sup>th</sup> (Airborne) Field Company and ten from the 261st (Airborne) Field Park Company.

On the evening of November 19th, 1942, despite some misgivings regarding the weather over the objective, two Halifax bombers, each towing a Horsa Glider took off from RAF Skitten, near Wick in NE Scotland. On board each glider were 15 Royal Engineers, and two pilots. Their top-secret mission was code-named Operation Freshman.

Waiting near the target zone were a group of four Norwegians from the Special Operations Executive, codenamed Grouse, who had parachuted into the area some weeks earlier. Their primary mission was to light flares on the planned landing zone on the Hardanger Plateau, then guide the engineers to the target – the Norsk Hydro heavy water facility.

Tragically, due to failures in the navigation and guidance systems, and poor weather, the aircraft failed to identify the landing zones and were forced to turn back. On the return journey, ice began to build up on the tow ropes and the increased weight began to seriously affect the flight performance, as the planes lost altitude. At a point over southwest Norway, the tow rope between Halifax A and its glider snapped and the released glider crash-landed in Fylgjesdalen, a steep mountain valley near Lysefjord in Rogaland. Halifax A, made it back safely to Scotland, extremely low on fuel.

Of the 17 men onboard Glider A, eight were killed on impact. The dead were initially buried near the site of the crash, but at the end of the war, their bodies were recovered and reinterred in the Commonwealth Grave Section at Eiganes Cemetery, Stavanger.



**Original burial site of the 8 men killed when Glider A crashed in Fyljesdalen, Lysebotn, Norway. Photograph by Dr. Bruce A. Tocher**

Four, badly-injured survivors from Glider A, were brutally murdered by the Gestapo in Stavanger sometime on the 23/24<sup>th</sup> November, 1942. Their bodies were then weighted down with rocks and dumped at sea off the coast of Stavanger, Norway. In 1985, a special memorial was raised to these four men with no known grave in Stavanger.



**Memorial to the four Freshman soldiers with no known grave, Eiganes Cemetery, Stavanger, Norway. Photograph by Dr. Bruce A. Tocher**

The five remaining soldiers from Glider A, were held in the Gestapo Prison in Lagårdsveien in Stavanger for a number of days before being transported to the concentration camp at Grini, near Oslo. The Grini records indicate that they entered the camp on the 29<sup>th</sup> November. According to statements made at the War Crimes Trials, the men were interrogated at both Grini and the Gestapo Headquarters in Oslo during the period of time they were held in captivity. On the 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1943, they were taken out of Grini and transported to Trandum Wood, north of Oslo where they were executed by firing squad.



**Grave 9, Trandum Wood, near Oslo, where Sapper Blackburn was originally buried before reburial in the Commonwealth Grave in Oslo West Cemetery. Photograph by Dr. Bruce A. Tocher**

The bodies were initially buried in an unmarked grave but were recovered by the Norwegian authorities in 1945 and reburied in the Commonwealth Grave at Oslo West Cemetery.

The fate of Combination B was almost certainly similar to Combination A, in that at some point the tug aircraft and its glider became separated. However, in this case, both glider and tug crashed near Helleland in southwest Norway. The seven-man crew of the Halifax were killed instantly on impact. They were initially buried in a shallow grave close to the crash site on Hestafjellet but were subsequently reinterred in the Commonwealth graves plot in Helleland Churchyard, Rogaland, Norway at the end of the war with full military honours.



**Commonwealth Graves for Halifax B aircrew, Helleland Churchyard, Norway. Photograph by Dr. Bruce A. Tocher**

Three men, including both pilots, were killed when Glider B crashed on Benkja Mountain. Fourteen survivors, surrendered to the German Army and later that same day, the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1942, they were led one by one to an area outside the German Army camp at Slettebø (near Egersund) and executed by firing squad.



**Execution site of 14 British soldiers from Operation Freshman at Slettebø Camp, near Egersund, Norway.  
Photograph by Dr. Bruce A. Tocher**

The bodies of the men were buried that evening in an unmarked grave in the sand dunes at Brusand. However, a local Norwegian secretly observed the burial and was later able to alert the Allied Authorities to the location.

At the end of the war, the remains of most of the soldiers were reinterred at the Commonwealth Grave section in Eiganes Cemetery in Stavanger where remembrance ceremonies are still held each year to honour their sacrifice.



**Remembrance Sunday 2020, Commonwealth Grave Section, Eiganes Cemetery, Stavanger, Norway.  
Photograph by Dr. Bruce A. Tocher**

Due to the secrecy surrounding the mission, very little information was provided to the families of the servicemen at the time, other than that they were missing. A short news article was released by the Germans shortly after the raid saying that a number of aircraft had landed in Norway and that all of the soldiers on board had been engaged and killed to the last man. However, it was not until after the war that true horror of the story emerged!

Below is a link to a lecture I gave at the Royal Engineers Museum in 2022 to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the raid. I will be giving another lecture at the Army Flying Museum near Andover in November 2024

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6eX6gM6xVg>

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## WALES 2024

The planning for the Wales Weekend began late in 2023 with confirmation in Feb 2024. Unfortunately there were a couple of late changes, as always we are very grateful to the staff at the Armed Forces Mountain Training Centre Indefatigable who this year had to move some of our dates around due to the Military demands. I would thank the members for remaining flexible with the last minute changes.

However, it was still a great turn out by all, not all could make it due to changes and other commitments, ensuring though that 22 attended for the weekend. The weekend was over Thursday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May to Sunday the 5<sup>th</sup> May.

Thursday is normally admin and set up day but has become a bit more popular. Thursday now consisted of 6 members and it was felt that something else was needed so under the guidance of Paddy Denning it was felt that we needed a pick me up, so a quick recce to the waterside for a bit of a dip. "Dennings Dippers" as we appear are now named consisted of Paddy Denning, Peter Kershaw, Dave Ford and Baz. Llanddwyn Beach / Newborough Nature Reserve was the location.



There were also 3 keen life guards, Dave Grimbley, Pete Bailey and Brian Spivey, all ready to dive in and rescue the "Dippers" if we got into trouble. Back to the Pub to thaw out was a good call, where the local landlord fed us with a horrendous pile of Chilly and chips and some other hot mix.

Somehow Friday morning found the Dippers once again by the seaside practicing a variety of exercises, I must admit I followed everything as I was told by the Chief Dipper but it was still bloody cold. The photos do not do justice although we all convinced ourselves that we felt marvellous and reinvigorated after the swims!



Friday afternoon the gathering began in the Sail club, with a meet and greet and a few warmers into the bank. Slight change of plans as our Local restaurant had become an Indian restaurant. But as the local Chippy, Indian and Pub were withing 50 meters of each other it was no big deal.

Sat morning bright and early (actually damp misty and drizzly) breakfast eaten and haver-bags collected we were organised into a groups. 2 good walks were organised and also South Stack on Anglesey and visits to the Museum and local areas.

The longer walk was adjusted, as we hoped to reach the Balancing Rock, which we had visited a few years back, but heavy mist, high winds and a bit of rain caused an adjustment to the plans. No matter the amended route was just as challenging and under the mist allowed great views and good walking.





Paddy Denning enjoying himself.



Yes it was a misty day, limiting our vision a bit but a fantastic view of the Mist settling down into the area where millions of years ago the Glaciers melted leaving these fantastic pockets.



This photo I am told is to be used as the cover magazine for “Men Outdoors” casual posers!



On recovery back to Indy, our Master Chef Tony Manley was hard at work producing a fantastic BBQ for 23 hungry mouths to feed.

Sat evening picked up from Friday and stories were soon exchanged.



Paddy, Ginge and Dave, scrubbed up and looking well.



Peter Kershaw, with his minder Pete Bailey managed to squeeze more money from us for the raffle.

Give me the money, Dave Rutter checking if White Pound notes are still acceptable.



Lindsey and Froth both regulars at the weekends with Steve Morris. Steve kindly donated a large amount of his father's books on the Scottish hills, walks and history of Scotland, they all went.



Paddy and Jim in relaxing mode



Pat and Barney trying to convince me that they did not knock down the door



Tom Downey holding court with Jimmy Murray and Martin Walker



Peter and Baz , Barmen extraordinaire

Another good weekend was had by all, a few new faces to catch up with. Many thanks again for the Team at Indy for looking after us. I have booked into Indy again for 2025, second weekend in May, Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup> to Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup>. If you can, book out the weekend in your diary. There is plenty to do, it's a great location with great friends to share the weekend with. Look forward to seeing you next year.

Baz

## So Where Did You End Up?

By Dave Pace

Many of us settle down somewhere we hadn't even heard of, often well away from our roots

For me it was the smallish seaside town of Deal, Kent, located between Dover and Margate.

I was born in Easington, a small colliery town in County Durham, we weren't there long but apparently I did develop quite an accent. Growing up as a pad's brat, the family moved a lot, locations such as Malvern, Hereford (twice,) Chepstow, Plymouth, Malaya, Singapore and Cardiff. Then I joined up and started my own travels.

So here's a little info on what I now call my home town



Deal seafront, taken from the pier

Deal has a history dating back to the medieval period. During the 16th century, Deal was a major port for shipping and a centre for shipbuilding.

Deal is mentioned as a village in the Domesday book but archaeological evidence suggests its history stretches back much further. Julius Caesar is said to have landed on the Deal-Walmer coast in 55 and 54BC.

In the 17th century, it was a popular destination for smugglers and privateers.

In the 19th century, Deal became a popular seaside resort for the wealthy and by the 20th century it was a thriving commercial centre with a bustling fishing industry.

During World War II, Deal was heavily bombed and much of the town was destroyed, especially around the railway lines and major infrastructure.

However, it was rebuilt and today it is a busy coastal town with a rich history and heritage.

Deal even has its own Tudor castle



And windmill



The Royal Marine Depot, Deal was a military installation occupied by the Royal Marines and located in South Deal, on the road to Walmer. The Depot (for training Royal Marine recruits) was first established in Deal in 1861, occupying part of the Royal Naval Hospital (which was linked to H.M. Naval Yard, Deal). In 1868 the Depot expanded and took over the nearby 18th-century Army barracks.



The Royal Marines School of Music moved to Deal in 1930. Between 1940 and 1950, they moved to various locations around the country before returning to Deal.

On 22nd September 1989 the IRA exploded a bomb at the Royal Marines School of Music in Deal that killed 11 Musicians and seriously injured 11 more.



<i>Rest in Peace</i>			
Musician Michael Ball	Band Corporal Andy Cleatheroe	Band Corporal Trevor Davis	Musician Richard Fice
Musician Richard Jones	Band Corporal David McMillan	Musician Chris Nolan	Band Corporal Dean Pavey
Musician Mark Petch	Musician Tim Reeves	Musician Bob Simmonds	

In 1996, the Royal Marines School of Music left Deal and relocated to HM Naval Base Portsmouth.

Today, with the generous help of sponsors and donations from the public, free concerts continue to take place at the Memorial Bandstand located on Walmer Green from May to September, with the Royal Marines Band returning each July to perform to huge crowds and to perform a rededication to those that lost their lives.



Eleven sides of the twelve-sided Bandstand structure have engraved tablets bearing the names of those who lost their lives.



Beating the retreat at a Memorial concert. The Corps of Drums always steal the show



Always a good turnout for the Memorial concerts

So in a nutshell, I live in a Bootneck town, but it's a great place to be. I've lived here since 1985, I think I might just stay.

## From the AEA Website

### 2024 AGM

For anyone who may need details of the 2024 AGM, click [here](#)

Information includes a booking form in Word and PDF

Please pass on these details to anyone interested in attending

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### The Book of Valhalla

The Parachute Regiment & Airborne Forces Memorial Group have a very active presence on Facebook. Its purpose is to remember those members of the Parachute Regiment & Airborne Forces who are no longer with us. This is achieved by producing and installing brass plaques on benches situated in the Aldershot Military Cemetery

There are 5 benches in total..

1. The Northern Ireland Bench
2. The Goose Green Bench
3. The Mount Longdon Bench
4. The Parachute Regiment Bench
5. The Airborne Forces Bench

All the benches are close to the Falklands Plot & the three marble memorial stones, for Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Macedonia & the Falklands.

If you haven't seen them yet, please go and visit the next time you're in Aldershot. You will not be disappointed.

The following text is an extract from a post by Tommy Simpson on the Group's Facebook page, which explains the Book of Valhalla. If you need any further clarification please get in touch via our [Contact page](#), alternatively you can visit the Memorial Group page via the following Facebook link



One of the hardest things to do, is get the details of those who've died.

Nobody wants to ask the family for details or are embarrassed to at the time.

Nobody wants to stress out the relatives by searching for things, only a Paratrooper would know.

So for those of you that would like to help me with this....

I have a book called

The book of Valhalla.....

It's for the Living.....

It holds all the details except the date of death....which we will add later on.....

All you have to do is give me your details....nobody will get access to it except for me & my nominated successor....

Number

Rank

Name

Unit

Date of birth

I will add the last detail... date of death....

I know it's a bit morbid, but since starting the book, I now have 600 odd names on the book.....

The very first person in the book & where I got the idea from, was Frankie Pye, who many of you will remember.

Frank served from 1966 until the early 90's. He gave me the idea, after seeing the difficulties of trying to get those details after someone has died.

This will ensure that you will be remembered, with a brass plaque bearing your details which will be put in Aldershot military cemetery or possibly in the garden of remembrance, on the site of 16 Para Bde Offrs Mess, on one of our benches. Next to friends already gone.

Message me if you want. That is the safest option.

Or,

if you post your details on the Memorial Group page, I will delete them once I've copied them to the book.

At least think about it....you know it makes sense!

It will save your loved ones from the stress of finding things like Regimental numbers, which most people don't have a clue of.

Thank you!

Tommy Simpson

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## Airborne Engineers Shop

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



Online Shop Update by Jon Nichols, Shop Manager

### New Payment Methods

To help make the checkout process easier, we have now added Apple Pay and Google Pay in addition to the PayPal and credit/debit card options. It is recommended that you register and login as a customer to get the benefit of all of these payment options. Please note that at the time of this publication, Apple Pay will only be available if you're using the Safari web browser and IOS 15 or above

### Pre-Order Products

We have recently completed our second pre-order product run, for the 9 Indep Para Sqn RE sweatshirts. The original run was for the Samurai rugby shirts.

We use the pre-order method so we can order what's required and not end up with stock sitting on the shelf and tying up Association funds. Both pre-order runs have been a great success, with products dispatched as far afield as Guam, New Zealand and Australia.

If you have a suggestion for a product you'd like, but isn't currently stocked, first of all try and gauge the demand (you never know if you want something it's possible others do too) and then get in touch via [email](#) or on the shop's [Facebook Discussion Group](#)

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### 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 and AIRBORNE Wording](#)

[Baseball Cap with Airborne Logo](#)

#### **Jackets**

[Fleece Jacket with Pegasus Logo](#)

[Soft Shell Jacket with Pegasus Logo](#)

#### **Sweatshirts**

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

#### **Polo & T Shirts**

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

[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 > Grandad Collar Design](#)  
[Samurai Rugby Shirt > Full Collar Design](#)  
[Traditional Rugby Shirt Maroon Small Wings Logo](#)

**PT Kit**

[Vest Wicker Fabric Maroon with Small Pegasus & Wings Logo on Front](#)  
[Vest Cotton Maroon with Small Pegasus & Wings Logo on Front](#)

**Cummerbund, Bow Ties, Cufflinks, Tie Clips & Ties**

[Tie Slide, RE DZ Flash and Pegasus](#)  
[Cufflinks, RE DZ Flash and Pegasus](#)  
[Pocket Square, Corps Colours with Wings & Pegasus](#)  
[Cummerbund - Wings and Pegasus Logos](#)  
[Bow Tie - Self Tie Design](#)  
[Pegasus Tie Slide, Corps Colours with Gold Pegasus](#)  
[Cuff Links, Corps Colours with Gold Pegasus](#)  
[Bow Tie \(Wings & Pegasus\) Clip Fastening](#)  
[Airborne Engineers Tie \(wings\)](#)  
[Airborne Engineers Tie \(wings & Pegasus\)](#)  
[Airborne Engineers Tie \(Pegasus\)](#)

**Badges**

[Lapel Badge, RE DZ Flash & Pegasus](#)  
[Lapel Badge, Corps Colours with Gold Pegasus](#)  
[Lapel Badge, Ladies Gold Coloured Pegasus Brooch](#)  
[Lapel Badge, Blue Wings](#)

**Miscellaneous**

[Mug 'Regular 325ml' wings Pegasus cap badge logo](#)  
[Mug 'Large Size 444ml' wings Pegasus cap badge logo](#)

Sale Items

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



Click a link to view the item in store	Original Price	Sale Price
<a href="#">Sweatshirt Maroon Crew Neck with Small Pegasus Logo</a>	£19.50	£14.00
<a href="#">Sweatshirt Maroon V Neck with Small Pegasus Logo</a>	£19.50	£14.00
<a href="#">Sweatshirt Blue V Neck with Small Pegasus Logo</a>	£19.50	£14.00
<a href="#">Crew Neck Sweatshirt, in Blue with Small Pegasus logo</a>	£19.50	£14.00
<a href="#">Polo Shirt, in Blue with Pegasus logo</a>	£15.00	£11.50
<a href="#">T Shirt Cotton Maroon with Small Pegasus logo</a>	£9.00	£7.00
<a href="#">T Shirt, Cotton Blue with Small Pegasus logo</a>	£9.00	£7.00
<a href="#">Fridge Magnet Association Logo</a>	£2.50	£2.00
<a href="#">Paper Weight (AEA &amp; Pegasus Logo)</a>	£5.00	£4.50

## OGM Minutes



### *Airborne Engineers Association*

*Registered Charity Number: 1009201*

~

President: Lt Col (Retd) Mervyn Bassett BEM Email:

[mrb75@gmail.com](mailto:mrb75@gmail.com)

Chairman: Steve Wallis – Tel: 07757 115681

Email: [Stephen.wallis57@ntlworld.com](mailto:Stephen.wallis57@ntlworld.com)

Secretary: Mike Robertson BEM Tel: 07958650592

Email: [Michaelj.robertson@outlook.com](mailto:Michaelj.robertson@outlook.com)



## MINUTES OF THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING VIA ZOOM ON APRIL 23rd 2024

### 1. Opening.

#### 1.1. Opening Address

The National President opened the meeting with a big thanks to everyone for joining. He informed the attendees that Steve is ill with an infection and cannot join the meeting so Mike the National Secretary will chair the meeting assisted by himself where required.

The acting Chairman led the ode of remembrance and a minute's silence in memory of fallen comrades.

The acting Chairman welcomed all those attending and opened the meeting at 19.02 hrs.

#### 1.2. Members Present

Baz Basset (National President) Mike Robertson (National Secretary), Ronnie Hadden, Craig Gadd, John Askey, Phil Taylor, Mick Walker, Dave Pace, Jonny Nichols, Steve Brown, Paul Moore (Joined at 20.20)

#### 1.3. Apologies Received:

Steve Wallis (Due to illness), Lt Col (Retd) Bob Matthews, Billy Morris, Dave Rutter, John Lee, Pete Kershaw & Dave Leibrick

### 2. Minutes of the AGM

The minutes of the AGM have been produced, circulated and included on the website.

There were no comments from the floor the acting Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder that the minutes as recorded be accepted.

**Proposer:** Ronnie Hadden    **Seconder:** John Askey    **Vote:** Carried

### 3. Treasurers Report.

3.1 The associations treasurer Lt Col (Retd) Bob Matthews provided a written summary of accounts. This report is appended to these minutes.

The acting Chairman went through the main points as reported in the written summary.

- Cash in Bank and Total working Capital as at 23 April 2024 = £26,503.34

There were no further comments from the floor.

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

**Proposer:** Baz Basset      **Seconder:** Dave Pace      **Vote:** Carried.

### 3.2 Application for Contributions from AEA Funds for Arnhem Commemoration Trips

Craig Gadd opened the discussion with a request from 299 Association for a contribution from AEA funds for Arnhem trip being organised by 299 association with 47+ wanting to attend.

The proposal from 299 Association is for a grant of £500.00 to assist in funding travel to Arnhem.

Phil Taylor stated that the Yorkshire Branch is requesting the same amount to offset transport costs.

Baz gave Mick Walker an opportunity to outline the Scotland branch request – Mick stated that £250.00 would be sufficient for the Scotland branch

Jon Nichols mentioned that with 7 branches we need to come out with a solution to provide fair funding to all branches.

After some discussion Baz proposed the following;

Up to £2,000 be released for this year's Arnhem trips distributed as follows;

- £500.00 – 299 Association
- £500.00 – Yorkshire Branch
- £250.00 – Scotland Branch
- Remaining £750.00 to be made available for other branches to request if required.

**Proposer:** Baz Bassett      **Seconder:** John Askey      **Vote:** Unanimously Carried

Further arrangements for funding request are to be included as an agenda item at the AGM

### 4. Association Shop Report.

The Association shop report was presented by the Shop Manager Jon Nichols. In accordance with Jon's SOP's he showed attendees live and actual statuses using the online platform. This included;

- New designs and products
- Pre-ordering concept to reduce over ordering.
- Accounts
- Mark up = 2.85%
- Working alongside 23 Engineer Regimental PRI
- Jon emphasised the contribution made by Dave Pace in setting up the systems that support running the shop and accounting. The acting Chairman thanked both Jon and Dave for running such a slick operation and associated systems.

**Proposer:** Mike Robertson      **Seconder:** Phil Taylor      **Vote:** Unanimously Carried

## **5. Journal – Editor’s Report.**

The acting Chairman outlined Dave Pace’s request to discuss the future format of the journal, contributions and how it is presented to and by the members. This is predicated on the fact that very few people actually access the web-based content and there is a constant struggle to get members to write contributions.

Dave Pace outlined the current situation following the change from hard printed copies to the online webpage approach.

The acting Chairman asked members to consider the following;

- Do members still want the journal?
- What is the preferred mechanism considering the role played by the various social media sites and enabling easy access to members?

Dave Pace mentioned that we need to consider the archiving/saving of past and future journal content.

After some discussion it was agreed that an option could be that we bring the content out of the members area and use the various social media sites (probably led in the AEA National FB page) to provide links to such an area, thus enabling easy access to either the regular journal or just to individual articles as they are produced, and to promote each item that is up on the website.

The issue of journal content getting out into the public domain should be considered.

It was agreed that the National Secretary, Dave Pace and Dave Rutter (if he wants to) develop a form of words/options for further discussion at the AGM.

## **6. Membership Report.**

Billy Morris had sent his apologies so was not able to present the current membership situation. However, he did send through a report after the meeting which is attached to these minutes.

## **7. Welfare Liaison Officer’s Report.**

Maj (Retd) Paul Moore (joined the meeting at 20.20) reported that there were no welfare issues since his last report.

Paul took the opportunity to outline the latest developments regarding the Airborne Forces Riders. Paul is the President of the Airborne Forces Riders which is now a registered charity affiliated to the PRA and has 550+ members, The patron of which is John Lorimer (Former Lt General and CO of 3 Para) It is bringing ex para’s back into the fold and supporting ongoing welfare.

## **8. Archivists/Historian Report.**

The national president (Baz) outlined latest developments on behalf of Mr Nick Gibson.

## **9. Presidents Awards/Commendations.**

Any nominations for the Presidents report should come with a brief citation be prepared and submitted by 15 August in good time for the AGM in October.

## **10. Election of Officers**

None

## **11. Branch Reports.**

The following Branch Reports were outlined by the following;

- **299 Association** – Presented by Craig Gadd
- **Aldershot Branch** – No report
- **Birmingham Branch** – Steve Brown
- **Chatham Branch** – Presented by Baz Basset.
- **Yorkshire Branch** – Presented by Phil Taylor
- **Scotland Branch** – Presented by Mick Walker
- **Wales and West** – Presented by John Askey

## **12. AEA Relationship with REA Airborne Branch**

Baz outlined the current position and the process currently being put together to outline the pros and cons of both organisations coming together, or otherwise. Baz and Phil Taylor are preparing a discussion paper, a draft of which is attached to these minutes.

Baz proposed that we continue to develop the proposal paper and develop a mechanism to gather member views and opinions. The key is that where there is a concern, the possible solutions should also be outlined. We also need to consider that many of our members are knocking on a bit so we need to find a way of bring the younger former RE Airborne soldiers and others who have served in Airborne RE units into an association with like-minded people all ages.

The National Secretary (Mike) agreed to arrange a meeting with a small group to decide on how best we do this.

## **13. Matter Arising from Previous Minutes**

None

## **14. Items from Members**

Brigadier Sir "Honker" Henniker's Medal Collection

The National Secretary outlined what happened during the process for the RE museum in trying to secure Brigadier Sir "Honker" Henniker's medal collection. and the AEA agreed to pledge £1,500.00 to support the pledges already made by the Corps, the REA and others.

Baz thanked all branch secretaries and members who responded very quickly to agree in pledging £1500.00 from AEA funds. However, unfortunately the pledged funds were not sufficient to secure the medals for the Corps. The final hammer price was £100,000, Although £104, 00 was pledged by various parties to support the Corps bid, accounting for significant fees, this was not sufficient.

## **15. Remembrance Events and Services.**

- Airborne Forces Riders – in June
- Falklands Service of Remembrance, the Falklands Chapel, Pangbourne School – Sunday 9 June.
- Squadron Falklands wreath laying at Aldershot Military Cemetery – Saturday 15 June meeting at 10.30hrs.tbc
- Hardwick Hall – Saturday 11 May.
- Double Hills – Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.
- Arnhem 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorations – 20-22 Sept. (Various branches organising trips)
- Cromwell Lock – Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> Sept.
- National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph Sunday 10 November. It is anticipated that the AEA will be awarded a good number of places.

- Lt Col Mick Stewart's (Spr & Sgt Major in the Squadron) dining out – Saturday 16 Nov at Minley Station.

#### **16. Any Other Business from Branches**

Craig Gadd requested that the contact detail of branch secretaries etc are amended on the AEA Website as appointments change.

Jon Nichols is going to Arnhem for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year for the first time. He requested that those that have been before and know the routine, event, RV's etc to publicise then in some appropriate way. Paul Moore said he will make direct contact with Jon. He also mentioned that do not underestimate how long it takes to get there and get around the areas due to the amount of people, road traffic and security cordon over that weekend.

#### **17. AGM and Gala Ball.**

The 2024 AGM and Ball will be hosted by 299 Association on 11-13 October at the Village Hotel in Hull. (Booking form attached to these minutes)

The 2025 AGM and Ball will be hosted by the Scotland Branch

#### **18. National President's Closing Remarks**

Baz thanked all Secretaries and members in supporting the association and for everyone to reflect on how we can keep our association alive.

He also informed the attendees that he will be resigning as President of the association before the AGM in October. He is also not available to attend the AGM. However, he will still be a major contributor to the consultation process considering the joining up with the REA in some form or another.

#### **19. Next Meeting National Meeting Date:**

AGM will be hosted by 299 Association on 12 October at the Village Hotel in Hull.

The meeting was closed in good order at 20.51hrs.

#### **Attachments**

- Treasurers Report
  - Branch Reports
  - Membership Report
  - Draft AEA/REA(A) relationship review draft discussion document -Project Pathway
  - AGM and Gala Ball Booking Form
-

**AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION**  
**STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**  
**AS AT 23 APRIL 2024**

**ASSETS**

Cash in Hand		Nil
Cash at Bank	£	5,060.68
Deposit Account	£	15,035.12
Shop Stock	£	6,407.54
<b><u>TOTAL ASSETS</u></b>	<b><u>£</u></b>	<b><u>26,503.34</u></b>

**LIABILITIES**

		Nil
<b><u>TOTAL LIABILITIES</u></b>		<b><u>Nil</u></b>

**WORKING CAPITAL**

Assets	£	26,503.34
Minus Liabilities	£	0.00
<b><u>TOTAL WORKING CAPITAL</u></b>	<b><u>£</u></b>	<b><u>26,503.34</u></b>

Points:

Audit completed on the 23 April 2024

R J Matthews Treasurer

## Branch Reports

### 299 Association – April 2024

Since the AGM in October the Association has attended the Remembrance Parade in Hull which was very well attended with around 30 members marching. After the parade we retired to the Minerva Public House for a few refreshments and a raffle prize draw with members of 299 Association and their families along with serving members from 1Tp 299 Para Sqn RE. A great day was had by all.

Christmas saw the last meeting of the year. Our first for this year is in February as we don't have one in January.

Seventeen officers and seniors joined us for our monthly meeting in February making it a really good night and keeping good relations between the Sqn and Regiment.

The Association is very much looking forward to our AGM on the 3rd May which is always well attended with members attending from all over the country.

Our Arnhem trip is fully booked and the men of 299 with a few atts and dets from the Yorkshire Branch and elsewhere. We are very much looking forward to the 80th celebrations.

The AGM and Gala dinner on the 12th October 2024 at the Village Hotel Hull is filling up nicely. John Thompson along with Billy Morris have also confirmed the golf day for the Friday 1st October 2024 at the Hull Golf Club. Please speak to them direct for info.

Unfortunately we have lost a few members since our last AGM. May they RIP

Lest we forget

Nev Smales passed away on Remembrance Sunday. 2023 Mick Burrows passed away 2nd November 2023

Marten Hall passed away 25th January 2024

Yours Aye,

Gaddy

Craig Gadd, Vice Chairman & Acting Secretary, 299 Association

## Birmingham Branch

AEA Birmingham Branch Report. April 2024 – Steve Brown.

The Branch maintains around 18 to 21 members attending monthly meeting.

The Branch has 2 new members who have joined the Branch over the last few months. Pat Saunders and Mark 'H' Harrison. Welcome.

The Branch, over the winter period with darker evenings, trialled breakfast/ lunch time meetings where members could have a hearty breakfast prior to the meeting start at 12:00hrs.

These meetings proved popular and gave a chance for members who are reluctant to drive in the darker months a chance to attend meetings.

The meeting venue is always welcoming and will allow the Branch to try different timings to try and retain members which is obviously our prime concern.

The Branch will continue to hold a breakfast meet up, on a social basis, as it proved popular. The Branch also enjoys a more social side, meeting up for restaurant meals and social meets for a drink.

The Branch held its Christmas Dinner on the 2nd December 2023 which was a success although the entertainer was a little loud for some.

The Branch has recently held the Branch AGM which was well attended with the existing Branch committee staying in post as no new nominations were received for any of the positions. Some of the current committee still hold several posts on the committee which is not ideal and puts pressure on individuals.

The recent sad news is that the Branch lost our President. George Barrett. R.I.P.

Branch members continue to support Airborne and PRA events and Services and members will be attending Hardwick Hall in May, PRA service at NMA in July, Double Hills and Cromwell Lock services in September. Members will also be attending the AGM and Gala Dinner in Hull.

Along with 299 Association the Branch continues to maintain the garden and memorial at Cromwell Lock.

Some of our members will attend the 80th anniversary at Arnhem this year.

The sadder side is that the Branch has lost members or ex-comrades over the past 6 months.

Branch President, George Barrett who was a long standing AEA member passed away in February 2024. Peter Clarke passed away in December 2023. Bob Lees passed away in October 2023.

The Branch has also supported funerals of ex-service personnel in the area.

## Wales & West Branch

Wales and West Branch update. AGM April 2024

### 1. Branch Members – 73 on the books.

- a. Many of those shown on the database do not respond to emails, letters or attend meetings

### 2. Meetings:

- a. Meetings are taking place on a quarterly basis
- b. The last meeting was held on 16 September 23 with 5 in attendance
- c. The next meeting will be held in December 23 and hopefully incorporate a few Christmas Drinks

### 3. Charity:

- a. The Branch has elected to support to Hereford Veterans Support Centre and have so far donated £47.00.
- b. Everest Climb. On 24 October, Kez Watters and his daughter Ellie will be starting their ascent of Mount Everest to the Base Camp to raise money for the 'Boulder Barn' charity which was founded by Brummie Stokes and is an Adventure Centre set up for the underprivileged to be able to benefit from challenging activities in a safe environment. A JustGiving page has been set up to help raise funds.

### 4. Welfare:

- a. Sam Hesketh unfortunately passed away due to complications arising from his cancer tumour.
- b. His funeral will take place on Friday 13th October at 1400 (This will be yesterday by the time of the AGM) in Great Malvern at Malvern Priory, with the wake being held in the Abbey Hotel
- c. Clive Lee has recently undergone Hip Replacement Surgery and is recovering well

### 5. AGM:

- a. Planning for the AGM on 13-15 October is complete.
- b. 124 bookings have been received so far.
- c. The Branch has elected to support a local charity in Malvern the AGM

### 6. Walking Group:

- a. The Branch has set up a walking group which we hope to get off the ground properly in the New Year.

### 7. Cromwell Lock and Double Hills. Several members of the Branch visited both events

## Yorkshire Branch

Yorkshire Branch OGM 1900hrs Tuesday 23 April 2024

The situation has generally improved in the branch. I think ground lost during covid has been regained. I put this down to the following:

- a. New format of 3 meetings a year March, June, and November.
- b. Clear social focus of two events the first function based on the June meeting being combined with a dinner and weekend away and the second event a Christmas function.
- c. Simple food and bar provided for each meeting.

We are expecting a good turnout at the Gala dinner helped by it being up North.

Our Christmas function is hopefully going to be with 299 Para Sqn. There is a new OC Mike Dudley (friendly forces) and Tomo and I have been invited to his dining in. My agenda is to forge a better link with 299 soldiers targeting the Wakefield based Senior Cpls, officers and Senior NCOs mirroring the Hull model where the AEA are well connected with the Hull based 1 Troop 299 Para Sqn.

We have changed our annual subscriptions from £10 to £20. At the same time urging members to set up a DD at the beginning of July to minimise the work for Ron our treasurer.

That concludes my report

## Membership Report

Notes below are the membership report for May 2024.

So far this year has been a wash out in more ways than one, interest for membership this year has been zero so far, I will be hoping to get round any new faces that turn up for the ABF weekend in July in Aldershot, and attend any functions that the Regt open to us in Woodbridge. I always carry membership forms with me on social occasions just in case you bump into someone. I have developed a recruitment A4 Poster that I will send out to the branches to print off and distribute around their local areas, and Pubs etc.

My report:

Total members since conception;	1579
Less those departed to the RV above	473
Total membership I have records for	1106

For info:

Numbers joining 2021	7	
Numbers joining 2022	34	This was due to Birmingham branch updating full members etc
Numbers joining 2023	4	

Regards Billy Morris MSM  
Membership Sec  
Airborne Engineers Association

AEA AGM & Gala Ball Booking Proforma – Oct 2024

**AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION**

ANNUAL AGM and Gala Dinner 11th – 13th OCTOBER 2024 THE Village Hotel-Hull, Henry Boot Way Priory Way, Hull HU4 7DY

Surname: Person making booking..... Forename:.....

Surname: Partner/Guest..... Forename:..... please include further names overleaf

**Arrival Date:**.....**Departure Date:**.....

**2 Night Package**

- o 2 Nights' Accommodation on Friday and Saturday with full English breakfast
- o Hot buffet/carvery meal in private room
- o 3 Course Gala Dinner on Saturday evening served in the Inspiration Suite (dinner to paid separate)

Double/Twin Room for double occupancy	= £ 180.0 per room	Total No of persons:.....
Double/Twin Room for single occupancy	= £160.0 per room	Total No of persons:.....
Hot buffet/carvery meal	= £19.95 per person	Total No of persons:.....

**1 Night Package**

- o 1 Night Accommodation with full English breakfast
- o 3 Course Gala Dinner on Saturday evening served in the Suite

Double/Twin Room for double occupancy	= £90.0 per room	Total No of persons:.....	Double Bedded
Room for single occupancy	= £80.0 per person	Total No of persons:.....	

**ALL GUESTS FOR THE GALA DINNER TO PAY 299 ASSOCIATION NOT THE HOTEL**

- o 3 Course Gala Dinner on Saturday evening served in the Inspiration Suite £40 per person (made payable to 299 Association not the hotel) Total No of persons:.....

Sort code 30-98-97 Account number 82110362 (please quote name and AGM in the reference.

Additional Nights (subject to availability)

- o Double room single occupancy please state what nights Total No of persons:.....
- o Double room double occupancy please state what nights Total No of persons:.....

**Room Upgrades**

- o May be available upon request (subject to availability) Ask for details when booking

**Reservation & Payment: Your Payment/Card details will secure your booking, payable by credit/debit card. Cheques are unfortunately no longer accepted.**

Due to GDPR, we cannot accept payment details on proformas. Please contact Haley Cowles at the Village Hotel-Hull to make any bookings – Details below

Signature below indicates that you agree to the above terms:

Name: In Capitals.....Signature:.....Date:.....

Please continue on next sheet

Our kindest thanks for your loyal support to the Association from 299 Association.

**N.B. All raffle prizes will be gratefully accepted with thanks.**

## AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION

Gala dinner seating – if possible, please seat me with: .....

Special dietary requirements/allergies:.....

Any access requirements e.g. wheelchair access:.....

All booking forms must be sent to: Haley Cowles, Meeting & Events Sales Manager, Village Hotel- Hull, Henry Boot Way, Priory Way, Hull HU4 7DY

Direct line: 01482 560905. E-mail: [hullhub@village-hotels.com](mailto:hullhub@village-hotels.com)

Please quote Airborne Engineers Association AGM & Gala Dinner

**Please, also send a copy of your booking to Craig Gadd:  
IF I DON'T KNOW YOUR COMING YOU WON'T GET FED**

Email: [craig.gadd@hotmail.com](mailto:craig.gadd@hotmail.com) Tel: 07771 880733

Proformas must arrive no later than 1st September 2024 as any rooms not booked by this date will be surrendered and the package price will increase for late bookers. There are 80 double/twin rooms available on a first come first served basis. Please book now and don't file this booking form in the bottom drawer! Rooms can be upgraded directly via the hotel.

### Car Parking

Ample Free Parking is available on site. Car registration details may be required on arrival.

**Our kindest thanks for your loyal support to the Association from 299 Association.**

**N.B. All raffle prizes will be gratefully accepted with thanks.**

## 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](mailto: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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