



Airborne Engineers Association

Regd Charity No: 1009201

NEWS LETTER

NOVEMBER 1996

PRESIDENT

Major General G Field CB OBE

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From the Chair

Dear Members,

My first year as Chairman has come and gone, along with my first AGM. The high point of this meeting being the proposal that the AEA seeks closer links with the REA. The proposal was not taken and therefore no vote was required. The meeting generally felt that there was insufficient information to allay the concerns about any loss of independence that might occur in the future.

Other than that, the AGM and OGM went well. I would like to thank Colonel Ian Wilson who stepped in to cover Major General Field, who was unable to attend. My thanks also to Ray Coleman, for keeping me on the "straight and narrow" and for taking the minutes. I would also thank Derek Taylor, the Aldershot Branch and "The Squadron" for all the hard work that went into making the whole day a success. This applies particularly to Dave Rutter and his team, who organised the reunion in the Princess Hall. It was good to have the support of so many members, from all branches and I hope they found the meeting worthwhile and the evening enjoyable.

It is my hope to meet more of you in the coming year, until then, a Very Happy Xmas and Prosperous New Year to all Airborne Soldiers and their families, wherever you may be!

Tom Ormiston - Chairman Airborne Engineers Association

Committee Members

| Position | Member | Address | Code | Phone |
|------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| President | Geoff Field | | | |
| Vice President | Ian Wilson | | | |
| Chairman | Tom Ormiston | | | |
| Secretary | Ray Coleman | | | |
| Membership | Chris Chambers | | | |
| Treasurer | Bob Mathews | | | |
| Historian | Fred Gray | | | |
| Entertainment | Dave Rutter | | | |
| Editor | Colin Parker | | | |
| 1 Sqn | Bob Jones | | | |
| 2 Sqn | Ollie Atkins | | | |
| 3 Sqn | Bob Sullivan | | | |
| 4 Sqn | Eric Richards | | | |
| 9 Sqn | OC, SSM, Cpl | | | |
| 131 TA | Bunny Brown | | | |
| 591 Sqn | Tony Jackson | | | |
| 141 AB Pk Sqn RE | Major Ian Robbie | | | |
| Aldershot | Moggy Metcalfe | | | |
| Birmingham | George Barrett | | | |
| Chatham | Eric Blenkinsop | | | |
| Yorkshire | Bill Rudd | | | |
| North West | Alan Marshall | | | |
| Northern Ireland | RSM R Brown | | | |
| Shop | Jan Chambers | | | |

Ray Coleman - Secretary

1996 has seen another eventful year culminating in the AGM and Reunion at the Princess Hall in Aldershot. This whole event was not possible without the efforts of many hard working members of this Association and to them all, thanks! For the first time ever, we have reproduced the AGM minutes within the Newsletter and we trust this is acceptable to our members.

Annual General Meeting 1996

Held at Rhine Barracks, Aldershot
at 14:30 Hours on 5th October 1996

1. Opening Address

Colonel Ian Wilson opened the meeting by welcoming everyone present, stating how delighted he was to see such an excellent attendance. He gave the apologies of our President Major General G.W. Field, CB, OBE, who regrettably had a prior engagement. As Governor of the Tower of London, many official functions occur at weekends and unfortunately this was one such weekend. However, the President forwards his best wishes to all members and hopes the day would be enjoyable, spent in the company of old and true friends.

Colonel Wilson gave thanks to all those in any form of office, whether a committee member in the Association, the Branches, or Squadrons, plus those who contribute to the sterling work that they carry out for the benefit of the Airborne Engineers Association. He also thanked the Aldershot Branch for the marvellous arrangements made for this Annual General Meeting and in particular Dave Rutter and his helpers, for their organization of this evenings' celebrations.

2. Apologies

Major General F.W.J. Cowtan CBE MC, Brigadier I.D.T. McGill, Lieutenant Colonel I.B.H. Murray, Lieutenant Colonel P. Scoble, Major B. Bassett, Major D.C. Hudson RE, Captain P.V. Fountaine RE, H.B. Blakeway, D. Cooper, T. Gilkes, C. Harper, G. Hughes, J. Iddendon, L. Jones, R. Knowles, W.T. Marshall, G. Taggart, D. Jovell.

3. Minutes of Last Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 1995 Annual General Meeting were passed as a true record of proceedings.

Proposed: John Thompson

Seconded: John Vickerman

Agreed Unanimously

4. Chairman's Report

The Chairman Tom Ormiston said the Association had a good year. Recruiting has gone extremely well and one pleasing aspect were our closer association with 9 Squadron, with several younger members joining. Tom Ormiston outlined some more amusing methods employed by our Membership Secretary to gain a recruit, but confirmed most enrol willingly.

5. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer Captain Bob Mathews gave a full and detailed statement of the Association Accounts as at the 1st October 1996.

Current Account: £ [REDACTED]

Savings Account: £ [REDACTED]

Value of Shop Stock (at cost)

£ [REDACTED]

Value of Property:

£ [REDACTED]

Captain Mathews stated the current account is abnormally high, which is to cover several large invoices regarding the celebration function that evening.

Proposed: Bob Jones Seconded: Colin Parker

The figures as presented are accepted.

Agreed Unanimously

6. Membership Secretaries Report

Our Membership Secretary Chris Chambers gave a complete update and humorous summary concerning the strength of the Association, which has now risen to 892. He confirmed the best form of recruitment remains by word of mouth and requested each member try to enrol any friends they are still in touch with, who are not members. Gratitude was expressed by the assembly for the tremendous work the Membership Secretary is doing.

7. Election of the Committee

The election of the Committee went as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---|
| Vice-President: | Col. I. Wilson | In Office |
| Chairman: | T. Ormiston | In Office |
| Hon. Secretary: | R.P. Coleman | In Office |
| Hon. Treasury: | Captain R.J. Mathews | In Office |
| Membership Secretary: | C. Chambers | Proposed: R. Coleman Seconded: J. Thompson |
| Entertainment: | D. Rutter | Appointed |
| Historian: | F. Gray | Appointed |

8. Election of Representatives

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Squadron | B. Jones | Proposed: Seconded: | B. Brown G. Barrett |
| 2 Squadron | O. N. Atkins | Proposed: Seconded: | A. Jackson F. Gary |
| 3 Squadron | R. Sullivan, MBE | Proposed: Seconded: | B. Jones A. Jackson |
| 4 Squadron | E. Richards | Proposed: Seconded: | J. Hobbs R. Sullivan |
| 9 Squadron | O.C. S.S.M. Cpl's Mess | In Office | |
| 131 Squadron | B. Brown | Proposed: Seconded: | G. Barrett B. Jones |
| 147 Squadron | I. Robbie | Proposed: Seconded: | F. Gary A. Jackson |
| 591 Squadron | A.F. Jackson | Proposed: Seconded: | Brig. Semple R. Sullivan |
| Aldershot Branch | N. Metcalfe | Proposed: Seconded: | W. Rudd F. Gray |
| Birmingham Branch | G. Barrett | Proposed: Seconded: | B. Brown B. Jones |
| Chatham Branch | E. Blenkinsop | Proposed: Seconded: | M. Farrow A. Cheesman |
| Northern Ireland Branch | WO1 R. Brown | Proposed: Seconded: | R. Mathews O. Rutter |
| North West Branch | B. Jones | Proposed: Seconded: | W. Rudd B. Brown |
| Yorkshire Branch | W. Rudd, MBE | Proposed: Seconded: | B. Henderson S. Hoyle |

9. Confirmation of Trustees

The previous trustees of the Association have now relinquished their appointments and it is necessary to replace them. The Committee therefore nominate the following to be approved at this Annual General Meeting. Colonel Ian Wilson, Tom Ormiston and Chris Davies MBE.

Agreed Unanimously

10. Affiliation to the REA

Following the Committee's agreement to recommend affiliation to the REA, Colonel Wilson made a proposal to this effect. He emphasised that the Charity Commission new rules, which come into force in 1997, could be avoided under the umbrella of the REA. An extensive and frank discussion followed, which showed there was still some considerable support for independence. The Committee was asked to study the implications in more detail and produce a report at our 1997 Annual General Meeting.

11. Membership Appraisal

During the past year, the Committee have discussed every facet in respect of the qualification required for membership of the Airborne Engineers Association as requested at the Ordinary General Meeting at Ripon in 1995. It is therefore the recommendation of the Committee that the following criterion is accepted by this Annual General Meeting.

"Any Sapper personnel who have served with, or who are serving on the strength of a unit establishment, which has a parachuting role, as part of its military duties i.e.: SAS, EOD or Commando units, who have passed an Army Parachute Selection Course, shall be entitled to Membership."

This addendum requires no amendment to the constitution.

Passed by a vast majority

12. Next Meeting

The next Annual General Meeting will take place on the 11th October 1997 in Chatham.

News from "The Squadron" and Around the Branches

"The Squadron"

by Sgt Ahern - Chief Clerk

Since the last Newsletter, "The Squadron" have enjoyed some well-earned leave and of course had a "bit of do" on Airborne Forces Day! It was good to see so many "old and bold" back in the Shot!

After leave in August, the bulk of the Squadron moved down to our second home in Wyke Regis! The plan was, to get our combat engineering skills, back up to speed. The training programme had been put together by the Op's Officer and implemented by the SSM, WOII Nick Blair, who was back in "The Squadron" after a brief spell away.

Bridging and watermanship were the main aims of Wyke Regis and "boy" were the lads hammered! I'm sure by the end of it they were sick to death of carrying bars and outboard motors. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at Wyke and like any good bridge camp, it was concluded with a march and shoot competition! Staff Sgt Buttery and 2 Troop finally running out as winners.

"The Squadron" is as busy as ever, while most of "The Squadron" were enjoying the delights of Wyke Regis, 1 Troop are still supporting 39 Regt. RA in Cyprus and 3 Troop where in Canada, in support of the Welsh Guards. Preparation for the Kenya Tour continues and our Patrol Team are well into their training for the "Cambrian Patrol Competition" in November. That is all for now "AIRBORNE!" Merry Xmas and a Prosperous New Year to all AEA members!

Aldershot Branch

by Fred Gray

Since the last Newsletter, it has been a busy time for the Aldershot Branch. Airborne Forces weekend saw many former members of all Squadrons and Companies appear. The John Rock room was filled to capacity, as was "The Squadron" bar and Bar-B-Q area! Many old friendships were renewed over a pint or two and a few stories of deeds past. Unfortunately, one reunion that did not take place was between Dave Thomas (1st Para Sqn) and Bill Helsdon (9 Field Company-Airborne). They last saw each other in 1941 when they were in 696 Company before both volunteered for Airborne Forces. Dave was only standing fifteen (15') feet from Bill who was sitting in his wheelchair near the bar and both were unaware of each other! It was only two weeks after Airborne Forces weekend that I found out they were great friends during the war!

The other major event has been the AGM, which has fully occupied the branch. This was well attended and approximately 150 members and families packed the John Rock room and bars. Our thanks to Captain Bob Mathews and the Quartermaster and his staff, for all the help they gave us in staging what turned out to be an excellent AGM. Dave Rutter our Entertainment Member has been extremely busy over the last nine months, organising the reunion field in the evening and a separate report on this event is in the Newsletter.

We look forward to our Xmas Dinner at the Falcon Hotel and some of us will be attending the "River Dance" show in London, early in the New Year.

We were sorry to see that Tom Armstrong has now left "The Squadron," and consequently our branch, for the wilds of Yorkshire. Thanks to Tom for his support and best wishes in your new posting! Congratulations to Bill Morris, SQMS, and his wife on the birth of their daughter and we hope babysitting duties will not preclude Bill attending our meetings. We have now reverted to Sunday meetings for the winter months and hope the lunches of last year can be arranged, as they proved to be very popular.

Lastly, the Aldershot Branch would wish to extend to all members of the AEA, Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year.

Birmingham Branch

by Pete Thornett

Our settling in period at our new venue for meetings, The Royal British Legion Club, Coventry Road, Birmingham, has gone well! The venue is about a mile past the Airport and NEC, going towards the City. We are now an accepted part of the Club organisation and we are well looked after by their committee!

The year's social events have all passed, with the "Clay Pigeon Shoot" a particular success. A few members went home with "bruised" shoulders and wondering why they missed the clay that seemed to hang in the air "after the pull!" The shoot is a laid back affair, with club members all wearing the obligatory, ex-Army gear and badges! The guns we borrowed were excellent and any Armourer would have been proud of them! The shoot was followed by the usual Bar-B-Q and the local cricket club opened their bar for us.

The annual AGM was attended by a few members and all travelled down by mini bus, so no problems were encountered with drink and driving laws. All members had a great weekend, so thanks to the Aldershot branch and "The Squadron" for the bar and buffet lunch! The evening function was well attended, with a few members taking a little time to walk down into Aldershot, for a memory lane reunion. Where does everybody go in Aldershot on Saturday night?

Our Xmas Dinner/Dance evening is in the planning stage, with a Hotel booked at the entrance to the Birmingham International Airport. Rooms are available and if you would like to attend, ring Roger Howies on [REDACTED], who can give you all the details.

Attendance at our meetings at the Ivy Leaf Club is going well, with a few new members turning up to see what is going on. We also had some visitors coming home from the US and New Zealand, to give members an update to their careers abroad. If you are in the area of the NEC on the 1st Wednesday of the month, come and see us at the Ivy Leaf Club, Royal British Legion, Coventry Road, Birmingham. To all AEA members and their families, a Happy Xmas and Prosperous New Year!

Chatham Branch

by Eric Blenkinsop

Bar-B-Q-Sunday 16th June 1996

It is always a moment to savour, when planned things or events exceed your expectations. Well; the Bar-B-Q proved to be such an event! The day got off to a good start with the Association OGM in the morning, held in the WO's & Sgt's Mess at Brompton Barracks. All the committee members and their ladies were made most welcome and comfortable and we are very grateful to RSM Ian George and his members for their consideration!

Meanwhile our own branch members were hard at it, setting up the Bar-B-Q at the RAFA Club. Following the OGM, many committee members and their wives joined us at the RAFA Club. It was a real pleasure for the branch to share the afternoon with them all! When we arrived at the RAFA Club, we found the Bar-B-Q was in full swing and the hall was virtually packed with members and their families. Hats off again to our entertainment team, our ladies, with a special mention for Danny Exton. Danny throughout the afternoon, kept the "pot boiling," so the tea and coffee could flow, while coping with the "washing up" virtually single handed! Again, many thanks Danny! This indeed was a great family occasion and the total involvement of Mike Fisher and his family, in cooking the food and running the quiz, was a major factor in our success with this event!

Friday 13th September - Reception Buffet Dance (Chatham Veterans Weekend)

Having used so many superlatives in reliving the Bar-B-Q, I am left almost speechless by the resounding success of this event. As always much of the success is due in no small measure to the visitors, who put themselves about to take part in the weekend. It was good to welcome again, Bill Rudd and his "outlaws" who joined with Horace Stokes and his "merry men" from Chesterfield. They literally arrived by the coachload! A special mention for those who travelled from further afield, Albert Sweetlove and Bill Holmes from Northumberland and Bill Oliphant from the Wirral. The lads from the Potteries, Sid, Joe and Lew, with Lew Jnr, added their bit of spice to the evening. Unfortunately, one of their team, Joe Gallia, fell at the last hurdle, having to be whisked into Stoke City Hospital from the Coach Station. Our best wishes to Joe and we hope by the receipt of this Newsletter, complete recovery will have been made!

The "Press Gang" was in evidence in Chris Chambers and Maurice Metcalfe and we believe that they netted a trio of new members at Brompton Barracks! It was also good to welcome back into our company, Peggy Neave and our walking wounded Lischie Farrow and Sue King!

The backdrop to the evening was the Falkland's War and John Stubbs a veteran of 2 Troop throughout the campaign and Graham Harrison, who served there after the war, did an excellent job of providing a most interesting exhibition of the events. Thanks are also due to the OC of "The Squadron," for the loan of Citations and miniature medals of those honoured during the campaign. All of this was delivered by personal courier, courtesy of Captain Bob Mathews. The "icing on the cake" was the presence of our "Guest of Honour" Colonel Chris Davies MBE with his wife Jenny! Colonel Chris was OC of "The Squadron" during the Falkland's War and so we were treated to a firsthand personal appreciation of the war. This being a social evening, the talk by Colonel Chris, was from necessity, short and Chris was only able to give a brief account of the operations. His book "A Memoir of 9 Parachute Squadron in the Falklands" gives a full account of his appreciation of "The Squadron's" involvement and is recommended for those with a keen interest in the History of Airborne Operations! The message that came over loud and clear was, "when conditions are arduous, when the going is tough and the chips are down, the Airborne Soldier is still second to none!"

Thank you to Chris and Jenny for your company. Again there was a tremendous input to the evening from all our members and their ladies, for which we are most fortunate and grateful!

Other Branch News

Since the last Newsletter, the attendance at monthly meetings has improved tremendously. It has become apparent that there is a stronger bond between us all. This has been enhanced by the influx of lads from Essex, Ron Gibson, Ben Taverner and Sandy Reid, who regularly make the journey. Are there any more from Essex out there?

Having reached a good strength in membership and consistency in attendance, it has been possible for some of our more active members, to rally to the aid of one or two members whose health has deteriorated recently. Thanks to Graham, Dave, Keith and Andy!

A recent development has arisen, which has determined that the branch must relocate to another venue for our monthly meetings and activities. We would like to think our next move will be more permanent, but in today's changing scene, who knows? In any event we will keep you posted!

Looking Ahead

The AGM will have come and gone by the time this Newsletter is delivered. However, we look forward to the main function of the year, this time at Aldershot, where we can look forward to renewing old friendships. Rumour has it, there will be a few surprise appearances!

Sunday 15th December is when the branch Xmas lunch will be held at 13:00 hours at the Inglenook, Newington. If you wish to be included, contact Mike Fisher on [REDACTED]. A few hours to savour each other's company and reflect on the year's events. We take this opportunity of wishing you all a Merry Xmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Yorkshire Branch

by Kenn Hart

Due to our quarterly meetings and the deadline for this edition, falling just a few days before our next meeting in October 1996, this entry will be both brief and dated! The July 1996 meeting saw the lowest turnout of members (with apologies from Africa and Russia), but the largest turnout of ladies and children, possibly caused by our ANNUAL BAR-B-Q! A considerable amount of time, effort and money was put into the catering side by Glyn Davies and his team, for which they deserve the thanks of the Branch. Working on previous numbers attending meetings, we had catered for 40 but had only 11 members present, but we have 50+ on the books! All was not lost because with the ladies and children, the well prepared and cooked food soon disappeared! All the remaining food and charcoal were raffled off and that in itself was a story!

Only "Ginge" Goodfellow remembered to bring a prize for the raffle! Well done that man and shame on the rest of us! Dennis Lyons and John Waite were swinging a few lanterns when the raffle was being drawn and managed to win everything they needed to make hot dogs, apart from the charcoal! John however with a gesture of generosity, for which he is famous, gave away the 80 bangers he had just won to Charley Dunk's sister-in-law, who had the most children there! Young Chris Dunk was disappointed; he had not been asked to pull a ticket, but the raffle was over before I knew of this, so I let him take one anyway. He pulled "258", which his elder sister had! I gave him an empty box for which he was right chuffed and he was last seen heading for the gym with the box over his head and his sister telling him off for not pulling her ticket in the "proper raffle"! Kirsty Copson and her friend did a good job selling the tickets, but what happened to my winning ones?

Marie Curie Cancer Care Appeal. Much fun was had with the balloons from this worthwhile charity. Lindsi Hart collected a total of £17.75 from the members and their families at the meeting, for the sale of badges. Thanks to everyone for their generosity!

Still no sign of the ever elusive "Serving Member", but we live in hope! Details of meetings can be obtained from Kenn Hart [REDACTED] or Bill Rudd [REDACTED] - new number, and all are welcome! As this, is the last Newsletter of the year a Happy Xmas and Prosperous New Year to you all!

North West Branch

by Brian Jones

Little has happened since the last meeting and our October meeting will have been held too late to get any news into this edition of the Newsletter. However, a visit has been arranged to 38 Engineer Regiment at Claro Barracks at Ripon. This is due to take place on the morning of Friday 15th November at 0830 hours. Overnight accommodation can be arranged at Deverell Barracks Ripon, for anyone who would like to attend. Anyone wishing to join the visit, should contact me ASAP (Brian Jones-Chairman North West Branch), as the clock is ticking on this visit!

We are hoping to arrange a social activity in early 1997, subject to receiving good branch support! Jim Percy is our social man and a report will be provided at our October meeting. Jim is currently contemplating a weekend at Llandudno in North Wales! I am also looking at local venues for 1997, where a social event can be held.

The branch membership is eighteen (18) fully paid up members and we are still very keen to recruit, so if you know of anyone out there who has not signed up, please give them my number! Our meeting dates for the New Year is as follows and the meeting are held at the Royal British Legion Club, Thatto Heath, St. Helens.
Saturday 25th January 199? Saturday 19th April 199?

As this is the last Newsletter before 1997, from the North West Branch, our good wishes to all Airborne Engineers and their families for a good Xmas and a Happy New Year!

Northern Ireland Branch

by "Moly" Molyneaux

The Northern Ireland Branch was invited to represent the Association at the Falkland Islands Memorial held at Palace Barracks on Sunday 16th June 1996. The memorial stone and service were organised by Mr Albert Owens of the PRA and it is hoped that a service will be held yearly on or around the 16th June in Palace Barracks.

The event was attended by Ian Rosenvinge (Branch Chairman) Larry Hosick, "Moly" Molyneaux and Bob Phillips. Larry laid a wreath on behalf of the Association; Bob laid a wreath on behalf of the OC and all ranks of "The Squadron." Due to the absence of 2 Para, "Moly" was asked to lay a wreath on behalf of the CO and all ranks of 2 Para.

The service was conducted by the senior Chaplain Northern Ireland, The Reverend Derek Heaver RChD, (Chief Devil Dodger 2 Para during the Falklands War). Some more recent members may remember him as the Minor Units Padre for 5 Airborne Brigade, he is now the "Chief Devil Dodger" for Northern Ireland!



The "Roll of Honour" was read out by three serving members of the Parachute Regiment and consisted of 44 names in all, which included:

Cpl S Wilson RE
Cpl AG Mcilvenny RE
L/Cpl JB Pashley RE
Spr WD Tarbard RE

The Last Post and Reveille were played by buglers of 2 RGJ. After the service, we all agreed that the whole event was a very moving experience and one the Branch should give its full support to any future events.

Association Membership Secretary

Chris Chambers

Since the last "Newsletter," a further thirty-four (34) have joined us, detail as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Alfred Lowery | 9 Airborne Squadron RE | 1944 -1947 |
| Derek Kemp | 9 Field Coy. RE & 9 Para Sqn RE | 1944 -1947 |
| Alan Craven | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1990-to present |
| John Foran MM | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1980-1984 1986-1991 |
| Lindsay Horton | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1979-1983 1985 to present |
| Philip Brain | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1996-to present |
| Paul Bilton | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1991-to present |
| Chris Grantham | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1993-1995 |
| Stephen Tomlin | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1978-1983 |
| Roy Lawson | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1983-1988 1995-1996 |
| Jason Worsfold | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1989-to present |
| Steven Melin | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1979-1982 1986-1988 |
| Fred Pinckney | 9 Indep. Para Sqn RE | 1960-1966 1968-1970 |
| Frank Brady | 9 Jndep. Para Sqn RE | 1960-1968 |
| Colin Walker | 9 Jndep. Para Sqn RE | 1966-1969 1974- 1977 1982-1984 1994- 1996 |
| Farley Drakeley | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1987-1990 |
| David Hudson (OC) | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1985-1989 1995-to present |
| Anthony Caswell | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1982-1984 1986-1987 |
| Jack Braithwaite | 9 Para Sqn RE 300 Para Sqn RE | 1954-1963 1964-1967 |
| Duncan Keys | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1991-1995 |
| Alexander McGregor | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1990-to present |
| Brian O'Sullivan | 9 Indep Para Sqn RE | 1963-1966 |
| James Nicol | 131 Para Engr Regt | 1959-1967 |
| John Donaldson | 131 Para Engr Regt | 1957-1968 |
| Henry Mennie | 131 Indep Para Sqn RE | 1971-1976 |
| Brian Stuttard | 9 Indep Para Sqn RE | 1959-1960 |
| Derrick Poole | 9 Field Coy RE 12 Para Sqn RE 3 Airborne Sqn RE 9 Indep Para Sqn RE | 1942-1952 |
| Donald Sylvester | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1945-1947 |
| Nick Blair (SSM) | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1996-to present |
| Colin Sangwin | 9 Indep. Para Sqn RE | 1973-1979 |
| Thomas Brinkman | 9 Para Sqn RE | 1950-1956 |
| John Wilding | 5 Airborne Logistics 9 Para Sqn RE | 1989-to present |
| John Smith | 9 Indep Para Sqn RE | 1973-1978 |
| Ben Guest | 9 Indep Para Sqn RE | 1956-1967 |

To all the above, "Welcome to the Association"

Please remember to keep me informed of any changes of address or change of units. Also, if you change your telephone number or post code, please advise me, as this needs to be amended as well. Send all your details to: Chris Chambers membership Secretary [REDACTED]

This year has been most encouraging, with many 9 Squadron personnel joining the Association. They are very much our future, as we are well aware! If we are to grow, it is important that we maintain our links with "The Squadron" as strong as it is today. I would therefore wish to take this opportunity to thank them for all the assistance afforded to us over the recent months. I would especially thank OC Major David Hudson and the lads, for the fine turnout at "Double Hills," their presence was very much appreciated by Peter Yeates and the villagers of Paulton. They look forward to seeing "The Squadron" and all the personnel who attend each year! Next year the memorial service is to be held on 21st September 1997, I hope to see you all there! Merry Xmas and a Happy Hew Hear to you all!

"Happy fundings" Chris

News Items

Information

Mrs Carol Hodson is researching her father's life history and would like to hear from anyone who served with him. Corporal Robert Evans of Mountain Ash, South Wales served in 153 Railway Construction Company and No: 2 Platoon 9th Field Company RE (Airborne). He was killed in action at the Arnhem Road Bridge in September 1944 and buried at the Airborne Cemetery at Oosterbeek, Holland If you have any information, please write c/o

9 Squadron-fun, Booze & Rugby!

During my many years in various armies, British, Rhodesian and South African, with many theatres of operation including UK, Europe, South East Asia, North Africa, Middle East and Southern Africa, I have enjoyed a life, which I consider to be second to none! I feel extremely privileged to be able to say, if had my life over, there would be little if anything, which I would change!

One period where there would be a definite "no-no" in the change stakes, would be my time in "Jhe Squadron." While I have had many exciting times and some tough soldiering on occasions, I can say with total honesty, I had more fun and camaraderie with my fellow soldiers in "The Squadron," than any other unit! We "Super Sappers" always did our bit and pulled more than our weight in the Para Brigade, which is confirmed by the respect and high praise bestowed upon us, by our fellow Airborne Soldiers. We had something unique and extra, which other units could not match, always to be remembered as JBR-Fun, Booze & Rugby!

Who could ever forget Fred Moss and "Geordie" Richardson exhibiting their version of wrestling, or "Biddy" and "Tommo" doing they're very special rendering of "passing strangers" in the N A.A.F.I. (Roundabout) Club. Also the excitement, of seeing a minor unit rugby team, defeat many major units, using a combination of "brute strength and ignorance," with the likes of Bert Pethick, Bob Varey, Charlie Edwards and Rick Mogg in the pack. They were ably complimented by Mick Qarikau, "Foxy" Quinlan and others equally fleet of foot in the backs!

After my move to Hereford and other distant places, rugby had to be put on the "back burner" for a few years, until my arrival in Rhodesia, where the game was played with the same exuberance as "The Squadron." In those days, Rhodesia was an integral part of South African rugby, which over the years, has led the World! Yes, the South African record is even better than the "All Blacks," read the record books!

During the last twenty-five (25) years, I have become an avid "Springbok" fan and travel all over the World watching them play. Next year, 1997, the British Lions is scheduled for a visit to South Africa and of course I shall be at every Test Match! If there are any AEA members who would like to join me, you just have to contact me at: [REDACTED], or by fax to: [REDACTED]

Since the communist government came into power here, our currency has plummeted, which means a very cheap trip for you, when spending pounds! All you need, is an airfare and lots of beer money! Through the South African SAS and Airborne Forces Associations, can put people up at no charge throughout the country. Regards to my old Squadron mates and I look forward to hearing from you PS. Anyone want to buy a can of petrol?

Hazardous Material information Bulletin

"Taff" Brice

(Cliff Joy – Taupo, New Zealand)

Woman: Chemical Analysis

Clement: Woman

Symbol: WO

Discoverer: Adam

Atomic Class: Accepted as 53.6 Kg, but known to vary from 40 Kg - 200 Kgs.

Occurrence: Copious quantities in all urban areas

Physical Properties

1. Surface usually covered in painted film!
2. Boils at nothing without known reason!
3. Melts with special treatment!
4. Bitter if incorrectly used!
5. Found in various states, ranging from virgin metal to common ore!

Chemical Properties

1. Has great affinity for gold, silver and a range of precious stones!
2. Absorbs great quantities of expensive substances!
3. May explode spontaneously without prior warning and for no reason!
4. Insoluble in liquids, but activity increases by saturation in alcohol!
5. Most powerful money reducing agent known to man!

Common Uses

1. Highly ornamental, especially in sports cars!
2. Can be a great aid in relaxation!
3. Very effective cleaner!

Tests

1. Pure specimen turns a rosy pink when discovered in their natural state!
2. Turns green, when put by a better specimen!

Hazards

1. Highly dangerous, except in experienced hands!
 2. Illegal to possess more than one, although more than one can be maintained at different locations, providing the specimens do not come into direct contact with each other!
-

Reunion – 1st Air Troop & 1st Para Sqn RE

by Stan Pellow

The forty-first Annual Reunion Dinner of the 1st Parachute Squadron was held on the 29th September 1996, at the "Friendly Stop Inn" at "Bicker," which is situated some four miles from the unit's pre-Arnhem base at Donington, from where they left fifty-two (52) years ago. Master of Ceremonies for the evening was "Pinky" White, who started the proceedings by asking the Reverend John Moon to say Grace. The Loyal Toast was proposed by Len Hook and Bob Jones asked to remember "Absent Friends" and "The Squadron."

Dick Robb introduced Jan "The Shop" Chambers and her husband Chris, to which Jan replied. Our very hard working secretary Eric Booth, read out the correspondence and gave news of members of the Squadron who could not be with us. Also, the names of all those who had died in the past year.

The cake was cut by Dorothy Stainforth and Peter Stainforth made a presentation to Jan Chambers. Fred Gray presented a citation to the daughter of Corporal Joe Simpson, which was the citation concerning the award of the "American Silver Star" and his "Mention in Dispatches." Fred gave details of the AEA and its role for serving and ex-members of Airborne Engineers. This was followed, by an account of the life of, RSM Reg Orton and details of the action in which he was awarded the DCM. After a very enjoyable meal, everyone moved to the bar and spent a very pleasant time reminiscing and renewing old friendships.

On Sunday 29th September, members of the Squadron marched to the village Church from the Red Cow, led by the Airborne Engineers Standard and the Spalding PRA. The Standards were presented to the Altar and the first lesson was read by Lieutenant Peter Stainforth. The second lesson was read by Sapper Eric Booth and the service was conducted by the Reverend John Moon. The names of members on the Roll of Honour were read out by Tom Hicks. A wreath was laid on behalf of the Squadron by Len Hook, with those from the AEA and on behalf of the Widows by Jan Chambers and Mrs Diane Wright. The homage was read out by Norman Swift. After the Last Post and Reveille, a piper played the Squadron Lament and the National Anthem brought the service to a close, with the Standards offered back to the Bearers.

Members gathered around the "Arnhem Oak," which was planted in the Church Yard in 1962, for the usual photographs to be taken. We finally retired to "Cissie" Albans house for tea and cakes, and a final chats before goodbyes and handshakes until next year!

Lost Touch with Pals?

A free service is offered by Channel IV teletex No: 676, in placing adverts, to enable tracing of service pals you may have lost touch with over the years! Next time you have a spare minute, tune in and see what you can offer, remember its Free!

Historian - Fred Gray

Operation Musketeer

5th November 1956 was the fortieth anniversary of Operation Musketeer, the Anglo French invasion of the Suez Canal. General Abdel Nassar, President of Egypt had nationalised the canal in an attempt to raise money for the building of the Aswan Dam, after the refusal of the British and French Governments to provide the necessary funds. The invasion was intended to reassert International control. Among those taking part was 9 Independent 3 Troop in the parachute role.

The Troop Commanders Account by Jock Brazier

Port Said is an island and can only be approached, either from the south along the Canal Road into town, or alternatively, from the Nile Delta over the bridge, which lies one mile further west from the Port Said Airfield. The Marine Commando Brigade was tasked to assault the town in the area of the entrance to the canal, using landing craft and "Buffalos," old wartime tracked amphibious vehicles. Additionally, a Commando was to make history by being put ashore in a helicopter. 3 Para Battalion Group was given the task of seizing El Gamil Airfield, to secure the western flank of the main landing.

Two companies of French paratroops with a small detachment of British, including Sappers, were tasked to capture two bridges on the exit from the town. Although this article does not directly concern the French party, some brief details are worth mentioning. It was a most gallant affair; after a brisk fight they captured the main swing bridge (CL60) intact. The Egyptians managed to blow the smaller bridge before it was overrun. The swing bridge was then successfully held against counter attacks for nearly thirty-six hours, until relieved by the 6th Royal Tank Regiment.

3 Troop of 9 Para Sqn had as a main task, to prepare the bridge a mile from the airfield for demolition. Nothing was known about the bridge, which was surprising when you consider it was less than six-months since we had withdrawn from the Canal Zone! We did however have an excellent photograph and the consensus of Engineer advice was that it was a class 100RC construction and we should plan accordingly. All we could hope to achieve with our limited resources, was to blow the abutments with cratering charges and overload the three nearest arches with pressure charges! We had packed rather more than one ton of plastic HE to do this task, with a few general field engineer tools in CLE Containers. The containers were spread over several aircraft to ensure that at least a proportion would arrive. The 3 Battalion Group task was static and to hold the western approaches of Port Said. Resupply could be difficult, which resulted in the Troop carrying on their person, ammunition of all nature and more than they could be expected to march with. The plan was to "totter" into the Troop RV and shed most of it to form Troop reserves.

At the time of Suez, there was a serious gap in British Airborne capability. Gliders had been withdrawn from service in 1948, yet we still did not have a tail loading aircraft with a heavy duty drop facility! This resulted in the Troop being faced with moving nearly one and half tons of explosives from the DZ to the bridge, using Airborne trolleys!

Because of mounting UN pressure against military action, spearheaded by the US, the government felt it was imperative, if we were going to intervene, to do so quickly! The only part of the military intervention it was possible to bring forward, was the Airborne assault, which was being mounted from Nicosia. Therefore, this was brought forward by twenty-four hours before the main landings. The CO of 3 Para showed me the latest PR photo's before emplaning and to my horror, the RAF had blown a sizeable hole in "our" bridge. Later inspection revealed it was faced up with masonry and back filled with rubble, so much for CL100RC!

The troop carrier force going to Gamil comprised Valletta and Hastings aircraft and the first Valletta taxied away for take-off, just before 0500 hours. The air plan was such, we would all be dropped quickly on a short run of DZ, in order to produce a heavy density of men on the DZ. Unfortunately, a slight tail wind had been forecast and we encountered a 10mph head wind! This slowed some Hastings aircraft with crated jeeps underneath, of which there were only six to carry the Battalion 106mm guns, which had been specially purchased from the US for this operation! A few Hastings aircraft did arrive slightly late over the DZ, but it did not affect the issue. The stream of troop carriers had crossed the Egyptian coast at Damietta, about twenty-five miles west of Port Said and then turned east for their run in towards the DZ at Gamil Airfield.

Looking out of the door of the aircraft, it all seemed rather quiet and peaceful. Below us the fishermen were quite visible tending their nets and the Feluccas were still playing in the Nile Delta, just as they had done for thousands of years. As we approached the DZ, we could see the coast road towards Port Said and there appeared every prospect of seeing our ill-fated bridge! Unfortunately, some Egyptian light ack-ack spoilt things and the pilots had to take evasive action. Many troops who were now standing with their weapon containers ready to jump, were suddenly thrown over. Because we were incredibly overloaded, well over double our normal weight, we had already dispensed with our reserve chutes, which had not long been introduced, as there was no room to fit them in! Nonetheless, we soon sorted ourselves out once the aircraft was on an even keel. After leaving the aircraft, we could see there was a reasonable amount of fire over the DZ, from both LMG's and mortars. Additionally, a fuel store near the control tower was burning furiously, emitting a great sheet of flame and thick black smoke!

The Troop Sergeant's Account by John Smith

Having endured the trials and tribulations of an Infantry Battalion Group, frantically preparing themselves for an operational descent onto El Gamil Airfield Suez, over a period of five days. Then to have a two-hour flight in an old Valletta and Hastings aircraft, which were noisy, overcrowded and overweight, the parachute descent by 'X' type parachute onto the airfield DZ at approximately 0600 hours on the 5th November 1956, was a welcome relief! This was despite the very hostile reception afforded to us from the Egyptian defence, who were well prepared and of course expecting us! This was entirely due to some earlier news broadcasts, put out by Cyprus radio, warning Egyptian civilians to stay clear of the beaches in Port Said! We never did know whether it was because the Egyptians had laced the beaches with POMZ anti-personnel mines or a "tip off" that a parachute assault was expected. If it was the latter, it quickly ridiculed our efforts to maintain strict security throughout!

We jumped at 600' and by sheer good fortune, safely negotiated the descent, which was raked by anti-aircraft shells and heavy machine guns, using tracer rounds. They criss-crossed their fire upwards into the flight path of the aircraft and parachutists. Consistent mortar bombs fell erratically around us, often burying themselves in the soft wet sand, before exploding, which mercifully kept Troop injuries down! We quickly gathered our kit and set off for the RV point with our heavy burdens, often having to take cover behind large oil drums, which were liberally scattered around the DZ. On to our feet again, we lurched forward until we eventually reached the RV and check-in! The procedure roll call established one of our members had a part of his parachute blown in "tatters" by an exploding AA shell. This caused some shrapnel injuries, resulting in a shattered pelvis and two broken legs on landing! He was stretchered to the Regimental Aid Post and helicoptered to a Hospital later that day. Soon after, according to our briefings we took up defensive positions on the edge of the DZ and promptly started to "dig-in" some 400 metres south west of the control tower and adjacent to the tarmac strip landing. We soon discovered, if we dug deeper than 12", the trench filled with salt water, so we resorted to piling sand around a shell scrape to height of some 18"-24", shrouding ourselves with parachutes and hoping it would suffice for the time being!

Because RAF Canberra bombers had earlier attacked and damaged our bridge target, 3 Troops' priority had changed and needed reassessment. Meanwhile, we assembled the Recce Sgt with a section from 3 Troop and a section from 3 Para, to reconnoitre and report the extent of the RAF bomb damage to our bridge. Other's from the Troop, checked runways for craters, then went on to clear the airfield of all obstacles, such as large oil drums, heavy crash pans and CLE containers, now emptied and abandoned after the first drop had moved on. We were assisted by RASC DZ clearance party, with removal and storage of personal weapons containers, heavy drop parachutes, 'X' type parachutes and various bits of equipment, either lost or discharged by troops overburdened. This took some hours, as everything had been hand carried, as Airborne trolleys in soft sand, do not make ideal means of transporting heavy loads!

One half of a section was dispatched to check out a "pillbox" situated by a mine field, North West of our position. A report came back over the radio, the "pillbox" was full up with boxes of explosives and the beach was heavily mined with POMZ anti-personnel mines, interlaced with trio wire! They stood up quite high in the sand, due to the sea water periodically washing over them, but they were live, as a single well aimed shot from a rifleman demonstrated. We marked the minefield, coordinated our maps and advised Battalion Group Headquarters accordingly. After that we left well alone for others to dismantle; subsequently the unstable explosives were destroyed by controlled means, for the safety of us all. By mid-afternoon, the second lift was arriving on schedule, which meant we had another DZ clearance task to undertake and we eagerly got stuck into it!

On the 6th November we started moving off on foot from our temporary position, to a more suitable and sheltered building, closer to Suez Town. While on route we noticed a rather nice American GMC pick-up truck, offloading dead Egyptians inside the cemetery gates. Unfortunately, I was compelled to relieve the driver of his load of corpses and his truck! We assured him our need for such a fine vehicle was greater than those of the dead Egyptians! After looking down the barrel of my SMG, he was happy to agree our point and 3 Troop suddenly had the best vehicle of the task force on which to carry our equipment and ourselves! Life was now becoming more tolerable, as we had "wheels" to go about our tasks. We quickly offered our services to repair a fractured main's water pipe and restore water supply to the control tower buildings, which was the RAP.

We assisted 3 Para clearing the cemetery of machine gun nests and snipers and backfilled mine craters, while repairing roads for vehicle passage. This was achieved by knocking down cemetery walls and using the stone as hardcore! We obtained and installed mobile diesel electric generating sets and set up lights for Battalion Headquarters, RAP, 3 Troop and other deserving bodies! Water supply was an on-going problem in those hot conditions, so we set up and maintained a drinking supply point from the tap by the Control Tower. By way of demonstration, we showed visitors how to supplement their meagre water bottle, by removing the rubber bladder carefully from their Mae West Lifejacket, filling it with water and wearing it around one's neck for ease of carriage! It caused a few laughs at the time, but became the norm, while water supplies lasted. Sadly supplies were exhausted within twenty-four (24) hours, so we suffered severe shortages for another forty-eight (48) hours, until the problem was resolved by other means!

In the early morning of the 7th November, talks of surrender were being muted, we were instructed to ease up, but maintain our vigilance. Confirmation of the cease fire was received around mid-morning and withdrawal plans received some hours later.

It is now history, a history we were all privileged to be part of. After all, the Suez Canal dispute returned into the hands of the politicians, some thirty-six (36) hours after the initial landings, which was no mean feat! To say a lightly equipped French and British Parachute force, of some 1,000 men, compelled a garrison four times their size to request a cease fire, within twelve (12) hours of landing, was testament to their pedigree!

Although "Operation Musketeer" has been quite rightly described as a disastrous episode in British Foreign Policy, it is fair to say, throughout the operation 9 independent Parachute Field Squadron RE, worthily upheld its traditions and the motto of the Corps of Royal Engineers:

QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT UBIQUE

Obituaries

9 Independent Parachute Squadron RE

Maika (Mick) Qarikau 1941-1996, enlisted in the Royal Engineers in 1961, along with 200 young Fijians who were recruited in their homeland, for service in the British Army. At the time, the Army was in a transitional phase, from the National Service era to the ethos of the "Professional Soldier," which is now well established and taken for granted today.

On completion of basic training at 1 Training Regiment RE, Cove, Mick volunteered for service with 9 Independent Parachute Squadron. Along with several other Fijians, they started pre-para. Progressing through 'P' Company and Parachute training and eventually joining 3 Troop in late 1962, becoming the first Fijian to wear the red beret! Mick quickly made his name in "The Squadron" as an outstanding rugby player, either at fly half or inside centre. The team reached the semi-finals of the Army Major Units competition twice in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Early in this period, Mick was offered professional terms with a major Rugby League Club, but turned it down to pursue his Army career. With a trade in mind, he reported to Chatham for a "fitters" course.

During his time with "The Squadron," Mick made many friends both on and off the rugby field. He was well established as a man of loyalty and integrity - also a "demon drinker" of Draught Double Diamond (the "in" tipple at the time!). In 1969 he met Brenda, his wife to be, who was then serving with the WRAC in Aldershot. They married in 1970 and their son Robert was born in 1971, followed a few years later by Daughter Kalisi. In 1975, after thirteen (13) years in "The Squadron," Mick was posted to Hameln in BAOR. By this time, he had given up engine fitting and Double Diamond and was a Corporal in charge of the crane section of 44 Support Squadron, 35 Engineer Regiment. This was a big change from Aldershot and "The Squadron," but with the onset of the mid 70's LOA boom in Germany, it became for Mick and Brenda a most memorable period and settled time in their life together. It was a period they reflected on with much pleasure and satisfaction in later years!

However, times were changing and in 1977 the Defence Chiefs announced an optional redundancy package (what's new!) for soldiers who had completed 16 years' service. Mick knowing it was unlikely to get back to "The Squadron," volunteered and left the Army in 1978. On demob he went back to Fiji for a short time but returned to settle with his family in the Stockport area of Cheshire. He then was employed for several years on security work in West Africa and it was there in 1992 that he contracted the tropical illness, which was eventually to prove terminal.

The family went back to Fiji in December 1995 for a holiday and although at this stage, Mick was very poorly, he made sure his children were properly introduced to their Fijian family background, culture and tradition. They returned home in January 1996 and Mick passed away peacefully in his sleep, with his family at his side on the 6th June 1996.



Maika Qarikau was many things to many people, a loving husband, a proud father, a valued friend and comrade, a warrior and a rugby player, but above all, he will be remembered by all who knew and loved him, as a Gentleman! Our sincere condolences go to his wife Brenda, son Robert and Daughter Kalisi.

Mick with his Rugby Playing friends and Comrades of 9 Independent Parachute Squadron RS. (Pete Kershaw-right and George Dunn-left)

591 Squadron RE

Donald Duncan

In the last Newsletter we had been advised by Major Tony Jackson of the death of Mr Donald Duncan, who died on the 27th January 1996. At the time of going to print, very little was known of Mr Duncan, other than he was in 3 Troop and later transferred to 3 Parachute Squadron RE.

Subsequently, we have received a letter from Bernie "Mac" McDonough, a friend of Donald Duncan. We now publish the details given by Bernie, so that any comrades out there, whose memories may be fading, can recall their Comrade Donald Duncan.

Donald served with 3 Troop in 591 (Antrim) Parachute Squadron RE, 6th Airborne Division in Normandy, the Ardennes and the Rhine. After this, he served with 3 Parachute Squadron RE, 5th Independent Parachute Brigade Far East. This took him to India, Singapore, Malaya, Java and finally Palestine, to join the rest of 6th Airborne Division. Eventually he returned home to "Blighty."

Don and one of his son's; Mike, along with Bernie McDonough and son-in-law Tony Williams, were regular attendees' at the Airborne reunion in London each year. Don will be sadly missed this year, but his two sons, Mike and Stewart, will be attending along with Bernie and his son-in-law Tony. Don made it to the "D Day" anniversary in June 1994, where we received the commemorative medal by the French at Troarn. Don leaves a lovely family, his wife Irene, two sons, five daughters and eighteen grandchildren.

Wreaths and cards of condolence were sent by Bert Haffenden, "Spike" Doran, "Scouse" Newell, Tony Williams, Major Tony Jackson, John Shave and Bernie "Mac" McDonough, may God Bless him.

Major Maxwell James Allison MBE RE

Max Allison died on the 7th June 1996 at the John Ratcliff Hospital in Oxford, after a brief illness. He is buried with his wife at St. Peter's Church Eynsham. His funeral was attended by four members of the AEA and many ex-comrades from his service days and triumphs on the rugby field.

Max was born in 1927, his father being a serving Sergeant in the Education Corps at the time. He joined the Army in 1945, attending No: 9 Short Course at Manchester University. He was commissioned in December 1946 and having completed his parachute training, joined 6th Airborne Division RE (147 Airborne Park Squadron) in Palestine. He transferred to 9 Independent Airborne Squadron via 1st Airborne Squadron and served in BAOR and the UK within Airborne Forces. Following a wide ranging career, including Staff College and exchange appointments in Canada, Max served three years in Berlin, during which time Her Majesty the Queen visited, as did the President of the US.

Max married Peggy Casey a QARANC nurse in 1953. They had two sons, Michael a TA officer for several years, who now lives in the US and Patrick who currently serves as a Squadron Commander in 2nd Royal Tank Regiment in Germany. Most Airborne Sappers will be aware Max represented BAOR and the Corps at Rugby; his photograph features prominently in the Tom Purves book "The 9th."

Jim Benson

James Benson, better known as "Darcy," died after a short illness on the 3rd December 1995, aged 64. "Darcy" was a local lad, born and bred in Whitehaven, Cumberland. He left school at fourteen (14) to work in the local coal mine, where he remained until he was seventeen (17). Being the adventurer, he was, "Darcy" left the pit to join the Regular Army and enlisted in the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders in January 1948. Twelve months later he re-badged and joined the Royal Engineers. He volunteered for and was transferred to 22 SAS (Malayan Scouts) where he saw active service for several years in Malaya. After completing three (3) tours with the SAS, "Darcy" then joined 9 Para Squadron RE in January 1959. After three years with "The Squadron" he felt the urge for more excitement and volunteered for another tour with the SAS, which he completed in 1965, after seeing action in Borneo. "Darcy" then rejoined "The Squadron" where he remained until his demob in May 1971, having served a total of twenty-three (23) years.

After leaving the Army, "Darcy" worked in various security jobs, until he teamed up with a fellow ex-Para and in 1984 they set out to drive overland to China. After several scary situations, they arrived at the Afghanistan border, only to be turned back because of the dangerous situation in that country.

"Darcy" was stalwart of the West Cumbrian Branch of the PRA, very rarely missing a meeting and always turned out on parade. The branch turned out in full for his burial service, with four members of the branch, acting as bearers, while the remainder of the branch formed a guard of honour at the entrance to the Church. Our deepest sympathy goes to his family, relatives and his dear friend Elaine.

Lt Colonel John Martin Perkins RE (Retired) MiD

Lt. Colonel "Aeneas" John Martin Perkins aged 77 years, former OC 4th Parachute Squadron RE died suddenly at Littlestone (Golf Course) on Thursday 5th September 1996. As OC commanding the Squadron, which was part of 4 Para Brigade 1st Airborne Division before the Battle of Arnhem, he was injured when landing on the DZ. Soldiering on, he was wounded a few days later and finally taken as a POW.

Since 1980 he has been President 4th Parachute Squadron RE Club and Chaired the Squadron reunion dinners. On retiring from Army life he became involved in Sevenoaks Council and a Governor of Wellington College. His other interests included the local Cricket and Rugby Clubs. For many years he worked for Wimpey Construction and Tarmac Construction. He will be sadly missed by all members of the Squadron Club and his many friends from his service life and latterly his civilian life.

Maurice James Harding - 1st Para Sqn RE & 1st SAS Regt.

"Jim" Harding sadly passed away and is survived by his Mother Elsie (aged 93), his three daughters Tina, Lynda and Carole, his four brothers and three sisters, Patrick, Norman, Michael Alan, Joan, Pam and Ann. The funeral was held at the South London Crematorium and was attended by his whole family, Lt. Col "Tanky" Smith SAS Association Secretary, Chris & Jan Chambers AEA, fourteen Chelsea Pensioners and many friends, relatives, serving and ex-service pals of Jim.

It was a very sad occasion and Jim's Mother and whole family were very moved by the attendance of so many people and pass their thanks onto everyone who attended. The AEA would wish to pass on their sincere condolences to all of Jim's family and loved ones.

Obituary Information

We recently received a letter from an AEA Member, Mr L. Jones (Member No: 545), who recently lost his wife after fifty-eight (58) years of a superbly happy life together. Mr Jones wished to alert all members, who may have recently lost a dear comrade in arms or a loved one, for a modest outlay of £5.00, a sapling tree can be purchased from the Airborne Forces Charities. This can then serve as a permanent remembrance of their loved one or comrade, in Pegasus Wood at Temple Newsam, Leeds.

As some of you will undoubtedly know, Pegasus Wood was conceived by Airborne Forces to mark the 50th Anniversary of their foundation. The wood has been planted with 15,000 broad leaf saplings and is approached through an avenue of 104 Horse Chestnut trees. This is a significant contribution to the environmental heritage of our country. Additionally, it has been designed to be a living memorial to those who have given and continue to give their lives, in the Service of their country, also a tribute to the living. It is not the intention of Airborne Forces to restrict the dedication of trees in Pegasus Wood, only to those who served. A tree can be dedicated by anyone, whether in memory of a loved one or to a dear friend, or to a member of your family. Descendants and comrades can then visit Pegasus Wood and enjoy watching your sapling mature in the years to come.

There is a handsomely inscribed Commemorative Stone in Pegasus Wood and should you elect to purchase a sapling; the dedication will be recorded by name, in "The Book of Dedications." Original copies of the page cost £2.00 per page or £1.00 for a photocopy. Anyone requiring further information, please contact [REDACTED] Manager, Airborne Forces Charities at Regimental Headquarters, The Parachute Regiment, Browning Barracks, Aldershot, Hampshire. GU11 2BU.

Association Shop

Items available & applicable pricing!

| Description | Price | Postage & Packing UK |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Association lies (Pegasus logo) | £12.50 | £0.60p |
| Association Bow ties (Pegasus logo) | £1.50 | £0.60p |
| Association Blazer Badges | £11.00 | £0.60p |
| Association jumpers Maroon with Blue Pegasus & words "Airborne Engineers" (Sizes: 38" - 48" to order) | £18.00 | £2.60p Recorded Delivery |
| Association Sweatshirt Maroon & logo as jumpers-Sizes: Med, Large, X-Large to order | £13.90 | £2.60p Recorded Delivery |
| Association Polo Shirts Fred Perry Style, Maroon with logo- Sizes: Large, X-Large | £13.60 | £2.90p Recorded Delivery |
| Association Shields | £15.50 | £2.50p Recorded Delivery |
| Book "The 9th" by Tom Purves | £19.00 Membership Price | £3.50p Recorded Delivery |
| A Memoir of 9 Parachute Squadron RE, in the Falklands Campaign 1982 by Major CM. Davies MBE RE | £12.00 | £1.00 |
| Stick Pins c/w Parachute Wings | £2.60 | £0.60p |
| Christmas Cards c/w AEA badge on cover - Packs of six | £3.25 | £0.60p |

Cheques should be made payable to Airborne Engineers Association

Please note the small increase in postal charges. Thanks to you all for your continued support, I hope to see you at the forthcoming events and hope you are all in the best of Spirits, "See you Soon."

Wishing you all a very Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year

Until next time, I remain yours aye!

Jan

*****Stop Press*****

Item No: 9 on the current shop stock list is well worth a read, according to those who have purchased the same. There are a few copies left for sale and it makes an ideal Christmas Present, so send for it ASAP, to avoid disappointment

From the Editor

Dear Members,

This is the final Newsletter of the year and I would thank all those who have sent in their contributions. I would also thank the member who corrected my spelling of the word "Donington." I can only apologise for the oversight on my part and I guess it shows my youth, not being in the squadron at the time! However, for those who like me, did not know, this Donington is in Lincolnshire and the squadron were stationed there before going to Arnhem! There is a commemorative oak in the local churchyard to mark this event. So if any member is in the area, pay the churchyard a visit and your respects to our comrades of the past. I am sure the RE members of the Spalding Branch of the PRA will make you most welcome!

Also for those members with "diminishing" eyesight, I have taken the list of committee members out of bold type and I trust I am no longer "straining" those eyes! I have also had lists of discrepancies pointed out to me, between members addresses and telephone numbers in the Newsletter, when compared to the AEA Directory. I am not responsible for the AEA Directory so I cannot comment, I believe this is within the confines of "Bob" Ferguson and/or Fred Gray. I am hesitant to change anything now, as I have only printed that which I was originally given, plus amendments. Perhaps somebody can clarify the situation as far as the Newsletter is concerned? If you can, just drop me a line! A special request for next year, please endeavour to pass as much material as you can on a 334" Floppy Disk, many hours are lost in trying to interpret and/or understand the written word!

Lastly, may I take this opportunity to wish all our members and their families a Very Merry Xmas and I trust a Peaceful and Prosperous New Year!

Closing date for copy for the January/February Newsletter is, the last Week of January 1997. Primarily, because I anticipate being out of the country on business for most of January
