



Airborne Engineers Association

Regd Charity No: 1009201

NEWS LETTER

SEPTEMBER 1997

PRESIDENT

Major General G Field CB OBE

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From the Chair!

Dear Members,

Since the last "Newsletter" two new Branches are up and running! One in Hamblin and the other in Bristol, newly named the "The South West Branch." My congratulations to both Chairmen on their future success!

The June 1997 General Committee Meeting was held at Ripon on Saturday 14th June. During this meeting a great deal of time was spent discussing the question of the AEA, becoming part of, or having a closer association with the Royal Engineers Association (REA). Clearly, there is quite a depth of feeling on this subject and it has been decided that all members should have the opportunity to cast their vote.

Unfortunately, as we still do not have clear proposals of how the AEA would fit within or alongside the REA, I am not proposing to ask for a vote in this "Newsletter." I would hope final proposals are available for the GM in October 1997, which would allow every member the opportunity of voting!

Having a closer association with the REA should have "no effect" on how we recruit members or manage the AEA! We would still wish to have complete financial and management control of our Association. Also, there is no substance in the theory that if our members were not already members of the REA, they would have to pay to join them! The benefit would be a "closer tie" to our major source of benevolent support and in the long run it must be seriously considered by the membership. If we move forward it must be with the full support of the majority of our members!

Tom Ormiston-Chairman Airborne Engineers Association

Committee Members

Position	Member	Address	Post Code	Telephone
President	Geoff Field			
V/President	Ian Wilson			
Chairman	Tom Ormiston			
Secretary	Ray Coleman			
Membership	Chris Chambers			
Treasurer	Capt. Dick Brown			
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			
147 AB Pk Sqn RE	Major Ian Robbie			
9 Field Coy (Airborne) RE	Mr T.H. Carpenter			
Aldershot	"Moggy" Metcalfe			
Birmingham	George Barrett			
Chatham	Eric Blenkinsop			
Yorkshire	Bill Rudd			
North West	Alan Marshall			
South West	Tom Brinkman			
Shop	Jan Chambers			
Hameln Germany	WO2 Jim Hillman			
N. Ireland	WO1 Keith Molyneaux			

Ray Coleman - Secretary

The AGM is fast approaching and the Chatham Branch look as if all is well set Given the 'Draft' diary of events I am sure all of us who attend this function will have a very enjoyable weekend and one I personally look forward to It is encouraging to see this Unique Association continuing to grow with the addition of two new Branches. To both Branch Chairman and their members I wish a most sincere welcome

Event	6th Airborne Div. RE Reunion-London	Chatham Veterans Weekend	Double Hills Ceremony- Paulton	A.E.A - Annual AGM - Hosted by Chatham Branch
Date	6th September	5th, 6th & 7th September	21st September	10th & 11th October

News from "The Squadron" & Around the Branches

"The Squadron"

"EX-OAK APPLE 97" – Kenya

9 Parachute Squadron started to pack to go to Africa in November 1996 but our final destination was to be Zaire (OP PURPOSEFUL?) The BBC provided us all with the answer when they showed thousands of refugees flocking back across the border into Zaire, no longer needing to be 'saved.' Once the OC returned from the Zaire recce we received official news and started to prepare in earnest for a three-month construction tour in Kenya between January and March 1997.

Support Troop by L/Cpl Jim Whitfield.

After a cold and wet Christmas, the whole squadron was looking forward to the warmth and sunshine of Kenya. It came as a pleasant surprise to find that SP TP were to be situated at Lewa Downs Wildlife Conservancy for the first 6 weeks of the tour. The 55,000-acre sanctuary was formed originally for the preservation of rhino but is now home to a wide variety of African wildlife. Our main tasks were to improve two of the access tracks leading into the park.

PT each morning was an eventful experience, with varying numbers of elephants carrying out their own form of demolition training only 300m from out from tented camp. One morning, whilst running along our local route, we spotted an elephant lying on its side only 20m away. As we ran past, it rolled on its feet and made a charge at us. As you can imagine the squadron "bomb-burst" in every direction. The exception was SSgt Kenny Turk who tripped on a log and decided to do a quick press up session.

The improvement of the track consisted of laying "Murrum" as a wearing course onto the existing surfaces. The owner of the lodge was very hospitable. He let us use his swimming pool at weekends and even took most of the troop up in his private aircraft for a sightseeing tour. The job finished with a barbecue, plenty of beer and we presented him with a hand carved Squadron plaque.

The troop then left Lewa Downs to start the construction of two waterholes at Mpala Farm. Cpl. "Mac" McKenzie took charge of the first task, which eventually had to be completed during shift work after one of the two dozer's was put off the road with head gasket trouble. Completed to schedule, we left the locals to finish the job by planting poisonous cactus along the crest of the wall, which would apparently stop the elephants wrecking our work. After completing our next waterhole we moved on to our final task which was to level a sports field for the local Catholic girls school

1 Troop by Capt. Tom Meek

One troop got as far as Jomo Kenyatta International Airport early on the morning of 8 January. Having heard that it was dusty and far removed from civilization up country, they elected to stay surrounded by the creature comforts offered by BATLSK in Nairobi.

Not quite as it happened, but this was to be as far as 1 troop went in Kenya. Our job as part of Ex OAK APPLE was to construct an MT Servicing Shed (MTSS) for the British Training Liaison Staff, Kenya (BATLSK) who are based in a postage stamp size backwater of the major Kenyan Army barracks just outside Nairobi, Kahawa Barracks. The troop had been supplemented by a section of Pioneers in anticipation of a large workload, so 51 strong we settled in and prepared to work. That is to say we would have done had there been any stores to work with. Assurances were given that the stores were on the way and work would commence shortly. I'll come back to this.

In the meantime the Troop management had discovered a suitable gym nearby and arranged a reduced membership rate for a three-month period of the tour. This was quickly taken advantage of and soon the aerobics classes full of Al Al-Italia air hostesses and other "holiday" darlings were being "ogled" at by "hard working" "sappers" doing some serious training. Of course, if it all got too much then a dip in the freezing pool followed by a sauna or steam bath could take your mind off being away from home. Alternatively, a Jacuzzi and massage if the fancy took you! Back to work and the late arrival of stores, another delay! February 4th had been given as the latest arrival date despite the fact that our major job could not start. Because of this, the troop did not spend all of the time lying by the pool or in the gym. To tide us over there was a small task of a classroom for the garrison primary school, a job the CO BATLSK had identified and also agreed to fund. At first the remit was to complete the foundations of the floor slab. This work was carried out on a stop-start basis as we experienced "Kenyan Time" for our deliveries. However, the work was completed in two weeks and we stepped back, expecting the imminent arrival of our own stores to start the real work.

Surprisingly enough, the stores were again delayed. Fortunately there was still sufficient money from the CD's fund to carry on with the classroom at the school. Work recommenced on Feb 10 and the walls were complete to wall plate height a further two weeks later with all the windows and doorframes placed. A satisfactory task and one with which the CO BATLSK, the school headmaster and the Garrison Commander were all extremely happy.

So, what of our own job? And how else did we occupy ourselves while waiting Nairobi can be diplomatically describe as a "colourful city," with many pit falls to snare the unwary. Nights out cost next to nothing, as long as you are prepared to bargain for the taxi home, but you take your life in your hands if tempted to try the local version of kebab vans. Quickly identified were the hotels used by the airlines for crews stopping over, also hotels with satellite TV to provide coverage of important sporting events. BATLSK itself provides a bar and satellite TV, so if you're really poor, staying in is always an option. Adventure training has also been undertaken by most people, choosing from a variety of activities.

Finally, 53 days late, our stores arrived and the serious work began, we managed to get a great deal of work done although because of the late start it had to be finished by local contractors. Even during the last few weeks of the tour we continued with the evening gym sessions and true to form had a great time.

3 Troop by Cpl Jimmy Hill

It was 3 Troops task to go forth into the wilderness and create dormitory blocks at a Livestock Improvement Center. We were located at a site 3 Armoured Squadron had built near Oloisboit in the Dol Doll, or as we came to affectionately know it "The Dust Bowl from Hell."

The site was at least two and half-hours from Nanyui, the nearest town and apart from a small community of about eight people, there was no living person as far as the eye could see. There were, however, plenty of camels and every evening the "camel train " would pass our tented camp on the way to their waterhole.

The job itself was the construction of a large dormitory with an accompanying long drop latrine. After a few initial problems with a rather large unreliable local supplier, work began. Cpl Sid Thornton soon had the hardcore base in and we started to pour the concrete base pad. Before we could finish this, the charity we were working for seemed to run out of money, but after some frantic negotiations, we were back in business. Just as the real work started our Troop Commander, Lt. Fletcher and L/Cpl Andy Weller decided to take a three-week holiday to make an attempt on the summit of Mt Kenya. In their absence the workers soon had the walls of the dormitory erected, and using labour, the excavation of the latrine started. The locals worked on a strict and efficient shift system, five of them outside the hole sleeping with one man in the hole leaning on a shovel. After one week they had excavated to a depth of three feet so in desperation we gave them a Cobra Breaker which pleased them immensely it was much more comfortable to lean on! Our carpenters then applied the finishing touches and after eight weeks we were proud to hand over a well finished job which will be hope fully appreciated by the locals

During weekends there was plenty of opportunity to get away either SHQ or the Aberdare's Country Club. Everyone had a chance to do some adventure training, with a choice of camel trekking, patrolling, climbing Mount Kenya, white water rafting or diving! 3 Troop also picked up an excellent section task at the end of the tour, constructing a bridge at the Aberdare's Fly Fishing Club, and an extension at Lewa Downs

Back in the UK

Since Kenya, "The Squadron" has had lads in Belize and Brunei. The diving team has spent a week diving in the waters around Jersey and the Cyprus detachment has just left for a six-month operational tour. This summer 2 Troop are deploying to Canada for six weeks and the remainder of the Squadron is looking forward to a Brigade FTX in Scotland after the annual bridging camp at Weymouth. On the sporting front L/Cpl Terry Brennan recently won the Army Individual Boxing finals and operations permitting, "The Squadron" is as ever looking forward to the rugby season.

Aldershot Branch

by Fred Gray

Chairman: - Derek Taylor

Entertainment's: - Dave Rutter and Tony Manly

Secretary:- Fred Gray

Our Sunday meetings in February and April, followed by lunch in the Potters International Hotel, (originally the Officers Club Aldershot), have proved to be very popular both with members of the branch and their families. Maybe it's because of the very reasonable prices charged and also that the wives can take a break from the cooking on a Sunday. Although we have now reverted back to Friday evenings for the summer the Sunday lunches will resume in the winter months. The purpose of the Sunday meetings was to give those of our membership with long distances to travel the opportunity to drive in daylight hours.

The Annual General Meeting was held in May, despite many of our members being away on holiday or on business abroad, we had a very good turnout. The previous years committee all volunteered to carry on for a further term and our treasurer (Dave Rutter) had kept our financial account in such a healthy balance that we were able to reduce our subscription rate.

The Aldershot Branch continues to be very active. In addition to our eight monthly meetings and four social functions, we have an organized Christmas Dinner in December and the Airborne Forces Weekend in June. The branch is always well represented at the Double Hills Memorial Service in Somerset and Chris and Jan Chambers are our representatives on the organizing committee. This year we had a very good attendance at the REA weekend in Ripon and in addition the branch have no fewer than seven members serving on the AEA committee. Colin Parker is also the Editor of the Newsletter

On the not very good side two of our stalwart members have been experiencing health problems but are now in the recovery stage. Wally Clift will be starting work again very soon on a trial basis of two mornings a week to see if he is sufficiently recovered to go back full time, which he is very determined to do. Bryan Andrews suffered a brain haemorrhage in February and has only recently been able to return home. He is in the early stages of learning to walk again and with a determination known to most of us he expects to be walking without the aid of frames or crutches later in the year. We wish them both a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing them at our meetings soon

Finally on behalf of the Aldershot Branch I would like to congratulate Bill Rudd and his branch for a very enjoyable weekend we spent in Ripon. From our arrival to final departure on the Sunday everything went like clockwork. Obviously both the Yorkshire Branch of the AEA and the REA carried out a great deal of planning and hard work.

Birmingham Branch

No news from the "Brummie" Branch on this occasion, look forward to hearing from you next time!

Chatham Branch

by Eric Blenkinsop

Well now, would you believe it, there is not a lot to report on! However, we do have an awful lot to look forward to come the autumn, but more about that later.

We have been deliberately been settling into our new venue quietly and the response from our members has been most heartening. The average attendance is 14, plus of course four to six of our ladies. This is very good for a Monday night and there is no reason now why we should not go from strength to strength. Our entertainment's supremo Moke Fisher cannot wait to get the hot coals going again, so he is busy organizing a BBQ for Sunday July 27 which will be our first social event of the year.

The Chatham REA Veterans Weekend, 5,6&7th September.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible during this weekend. As we are now part and parcel of the Brampton Barracks with regard to our venue, we considered that it would not be in keeping with the spirit of the weekend, for us to organize a separate function on the Friday night. However, we do plan to be there in some strength on the Friday evening to give you a warm welcome.

The 6th AB Div Re-Union. Saturday 6th September

A 24-seater mini coach has been booked to take members to the Victory Club and at the time of writing (1 June) there are ten seats available. A ladies Dinner is also being arranged at the Victory Club and a preliminary bid has been made for eight to ten places and as I write there are 2 places available. Should you wish to avail yourselves of either of these services, simply ring me on 01622-759137.

The AEA-AGM on Friday & Saturday 10/11th October 1997

This is the one that we have been working hard at and we trust it will be a glorious occasion. But please, DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE!

Security. The security measures, as you would expect, are most stringent and all drivers are first of all directed to the vehicle search bay just inside the gate. Taxis are not allowed into the barracks, but arrangements have been made to deal with this and you can be sure of receiving the warmest of welcomes. We would just ask you to be as cooperative as possible on arrival.

Reception Details Are As Follows

Friday.

Following the car search, all drivers must report to the guardroom where they will be issued with a two-day pass. From there they should proceed direct to the WO's & Sgt's Mess office where they will be received by [REDACTED] (Office Tel No: [REDACTED])

Saturday.

Reception will take place at the Study Center (adjacent to the Car Search Bay), which will be open throughout the day. This will avoid the need for individuals to book in through the Guard Room You will be received by [REDACTED] (Study Center Tel No: [REDACTED]). All members and their ladies residing in the hotel accommodation are advised to travel to the barracks by taxi.

In the run up to the mid-day and evening functions a 12-seater mini bus will be available to shuttle those members who arrive by taxi or on foot, from the Study Center to the mess. At the end of the afternoon and evening functions, whenever you feel it is time to leave, we will get you back to your hotel! Enough from me on this matter, as "OUR GRAHAM" has presented a revised program for the day, which is enclosed in this edition of the "Newsletter." We look forward to seeing you on the day!

Yorkshire Branch

by Charlie Dunk

It's that time again, thoughts into words and first contribution to the "Newsletter" on behalf of the "Yorkshire Branch." The Branch has been experimenting with meeting days and we have tried both Saturday p.m. and Sunday p.m., but it appears what is best for the regular attendee's is Friday night! The kind hospitality of the TA at "Penny Pot Barracks" allow us to use their facilities and they even lend us "maggots" for the night!

Our members travel from South Yorkshire and "Geordie" land to be with us. However, we do get the usual excuses and apologies for absence from Africa and Russia, - no commitment some people! Our Branch during the Ripon Weekend hosted the Bi-monthly General Meeting and everyone I believe, had a good time! I left while most were still queuing up for Sunday lunch at the "Other Ranks Restaurant" - used to be called the Cookhouse! On behalf of the Branch I would like to thank Bill Rudd and the Ripon REA committee and members for making our mini-reunion such a success! A point to note is that Bill Rudd was awarded the REA Medal of Merit for the work he has carried out for the REA - Congratulations to Bill!

After the Sunday "Crown" - sorry, Church Parade - during which I counted about 20 "Red Berets," I think I managed to encourage 6 or so serving members to attend our next meeting. (Chris - if they are not already members of the AEA I will get their forms to you ASAP). Our next meeting is Friday the 8th August 1997 (19:00 for 20:00 hrs) at Penny Pot Barracks, Penny Pot Lane, Harrogate! You are most welcome, whether passing or wishing to join!

North West Branch

by Brian Jones

Chairman: Brian Jones
Secretary: Alan Marshall
Social: Jim & Stephanie Percy
Treasurer: Ken Cole

Having been absent from the "Newsletter" for a while as there was not a great deal to report. However, I thought I would put pen to paper to let you all know that the branch still exists but indulging in a spot of "Egyptian PT " Our AGM came and went with 12 members attending.

The committee remains unchanged with myself as Chairman, Alan Marshall secretary, Ken Cole treasurer, and Jim Percy (assisted by his wife Stephanie) social.

There are a few members, despite reminders, who have defaulted with their subscriptions and we would very much appreciate their co-operation by paying at the earliest convenience.

In an effort to move the branch along Jim has organized a " Pub " Lunch (with ladies) for our next meeting. This is in Cuddington (Cheshire) on 19th July at 14:00.

I am delighted to welcome Mal Johnson on board (ex 59 & PSI with 131 Para). He knows a few more ex Squadron members in our catchment area and will do all he can to encourage them to join our branch. Also very welcome is Eric Matthew's (1 Troop MOASCAR). We look forward to seeing them both at future meetings.

That's all for now, we would like to see many more ex Airborne Sappers at our meetings and anyone in the area would be made most welcome, so come along and meet old friends and maybe make new ones at the same time.

Best regards to all

Northern Ireland Branch

No news from the Northern Ireland Branch again this time-hope we hear from you next time!

South West Branch

The inaugural meeting of the Southwest Branch was held at the Royal British Legion Club, Rodway Road, Patchway, Bristol on the 21st April 1997 at 20:00 hrs. Unfortunately, only seven members attended with four apologies for absence. This was a little disappointing after spending so many hours in front of my computer with a full list of members. Nonetheless, we elected a Chairman Mr E.F. Rundle (myself) Tel: [REDACTED], as well as a Secretary & Treasurer Mr T. Brinkman & Mr R. Richards, list below their addresses and telephone numbers, should any current or future member wish to join our newly formed Branch, you will certainly be made most welcome!

Chairman: E.F. Rundle
[REDACTED]

Secretary: T. Brinkman
[REDACTED]

Treasurer: R. Richards
[REDACTED]

Since the initial meeting another meeting has been held and it is pleasing to report our membership list is slowly growing! Lastly, I must thank all that have helped me in forming this Branch, which includes the committee of the Royal British Legion Club!

Hameln Branch (Germany)

No news from this Branch as yet! Look forward to hearing from you!

“Draft Outline”

1997 AGM Hosted by the Chatham Branch 10th/11th October 1997.

Friday 10th October:

From 14:00 hours onwards, there will be a reception and welcome for those who booked accommodation in the mess. We believe officers have their own accommodation facilities available at Brompton. Limited W.O. & Sgt's Mess single room accommodation will be available on first come first served basis for males only. The cost for this will be £10.00 per night or £12.00 for two nights and the price includes breakfast. All bookings for accommodation must be via Graham Harrison and NOT the Mess Manager!

20:00 Hours - 23:59 Hours is Welcome night in the Mess.

Saturday 11th October:

10:00 Hrs-12:00 Hrs	Visit to RE Museum (New display, not to be missed!)
12:00 Hrs -17:00 Hrs	Bar Open
12:30 Hrs	Curry or Vegetarian salad for lunch TICKETS ONLY
14:30 Hrs	AGM & OGM
14:30 Hrs	Ladies programme of Flower arranging, hair & beauty consultants available.
19:00 Hrs	Welcomed with a drink and a smile!
19:30 Hrs	Guests arrive
20:00 Hrs	Dinner
22:00 Hrs	Coffee & Mints while the dining room is cleared. (All hands on deck please!)
22:00 Hrs - late!	Dancing to the magic of the RE Band, then to a Disco
02:00 Hrs - 03:00 Hrs	Champagne Breakfast
03:00 Hrs	Bar Closes

Should anyone require a dedicated table for campaign, squadron troops, branch or for friends, we will attempt to arrange the same; just indicate your requirements or requests on you booking form.

Sunday 12th October: All rooms to be vacated by 10:00 Hrs

A mini bus will be available from 10:00 Hours Saturday until 04:00 Hours Sunday to ferry people to and from their Hotel or to take the Ladies shopping etc. We will also take home any local members who would prefer to leave their car at home if at all possible or those who prefer to collect their car the next day! Again, all requirements for transport are to be booked via Graham Harrison. The Branch will meet the cost of this service, but members using the service will be invited to "tip" into a central collection box.

As we write there are ONLY 30 places left-so hurry up, if you do not wish to be disappointed! Please telephone Graham Harrison immediately!

We hope to have the services of a photographer throughout the evening. You will be invited to have your photograph taken with a Bandsman in the picture, upon arrival at the mess. The photograph will be delivered to you later in the evening at a cost of £1.00. We hope to arrange collective group photographs after the meal for those who wish to have this service.

Dress

You are asked to observe and respect the dress code in the mess. Smart casual wear will be accepted, but no jeans, trainers or tee shirts please! On the Friday and Saturday evenings, Lounge suits or Mufti and Ladies are respectfully asked not to wear trousers or culottes. Failure to observe the dress code will result in admission being refused. DJ's and evening gowns will not be out of place for those with the nerve. Normal mess rules and behaviour are expected.

Closing date for booking is 1st September 1997. (Maximum seating 240 people). Cheques to accompany bookings and are to be made payable to "A.E.A. No: 2 Account, "please.

With the advent of contracted services in Army establishments, there is very little room for flexibility. You must not and cannot turn up and purchase a meal ticket when you wish or want under this type of regime! The caterer demands prior notice of our needs, your assistance in prior bookings and advanced payment would be much appreciated and is a requirement for this weekend.

Costs

(A) Accommodation	£10.00 or £12.00 per room
Friday (B) Lunch	£ 4.00
(C) Evening Meal	£ 4.00
Saturday (D) Curry/Salad Lunch	£ 4.00
(E) Formal Dinner	£15.00
(F) Champagne Breakfast	£ 4.00
(G) Transport request	Yes/No
(H) Attendance Only	£ 5.00

We have built into these prices an anticipated increase in the cost of food and staff wages between now and the event. Hopefully, prices will not exceed these projected figures, so please bear with us on this point.

Should you not wish to attend the dinner, there will be an admission charge of £5.00 for all attendee's to help offset the costs of the overall benefits arranged for your enjoyment. Please indicate on the booking form if this is your preference!

Brief Outline of the Ladies Programme

Saturday 11th October 1997

Objective:

A planned programme of distractions is offered for the ladies, which will take place in the Mess.

1. A display of cooking from 14:00 hrs onwards (2 x 30 min sessions) and/or napkin folding tricks.
2. A display of flower arranging from 14:00 hrs onwards (2 x 30 min sessions)
3. A hairdresser will be available all day, we suggest you book your preferred time via Graham Harrison ASAP!
4. A beautician will be available all day, we suggest you book your preferred time via Graham Harrison ASAP!

The cost of making these personnel available will be borne by the Branch, but any purchases or services you use will be for your own account! A price list for the hairdresser and beautician will be on display.

Free coffee and biscuits will be available all afternoon and/or transport will be available for shopping trips or site seeing if preferred. Alternatively, the bar can be propped up while we hold our meeting and/or any other ideas would be greatly appreciated!

Revised List of Hotel Accommodation for the AGM Weekend

Gibraltar House Hotel, Gibraltar Hill, New Rd, Chatham, Kent. ME4 4RY

Tel: 01634-400128 - Small family Hotel close to the Railway Station

and near Rochester & "The Historic Dockyard."

Prices Per Night:	No of Rooms:
Single: £22.0-£25.00 Max	-
Double: £45.0 Max	6
Twin: £40.0 Max	2
Family: £55.0 Max	1

Take "Eurocard/MasterCard/Visa" No "En-Suite" Available."

Holmwood Hotel, 158 Maidstone Rd, Chatham, Kent. Tel: 01634-842849

Family run Hotel with large terraced garden close to Railway Station/M2/M20

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Single: £21.50-£22.50 Max	5
Double: £33.00-£36.75 Max	1
Twin: £33.00-£36.75 Max	2
Family: £46.75-£46.75 Max	1

Take "Eurocard/MasterCard/Visa" "Mostly "En-Suite" some without."

Carol & Graham Chambers 7 College Rd, Officers Hill, Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent. ME4 4QW Tel: 01634-831615/828436

Meant to be Excellent, Luxury Accommodation located in the Historic Dockyard.

All rooms have a hospitality tray!

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Single: £38.00 Max	1
Double: £44.00 Max	1
Twin: £44.00 Max	1

No Credit Cards Accepted - Non-Smokers Only "Single Room is not "En-Suite"

Mrs S Knott, 3 King Edward Rd, Rochester, Kent. ME1 1UA Tel: 01634-844148

Late Victorian House in quiet road close to city centre

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Twin: £32.00-£34.00 Max	1

No Credit Cards Accepted – Non-Smokers Only "Room is not "En-Suite"

Mrs P. Mills, 12 Abbots Close, Priestfields, Rochester, Kent. ME1 3AZ

Tel: 01634-815926

Executive Bungalow set in quiet close near the river and all amenities

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Double: £32.00-£40.00 Max	1
Twin: £32.00-£40.00 Max	1

No Credit Cards Accepted – Non-Smokers Only "Both Rooms are "En-Suite"

Mrs M. Slater, 24 City Way, Rochester, Kent. ME1 2AB Tel: 01634-843792

Comfortable, clean & friendly accommodation near city centre

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Single: £17.00-£17.00 Max	1
Double: £34.00-£34.00 Max	1
Twin: £34.00-£34.00 Max	1

No Credit Cards Accepted- "Rooms are not "En-Suite"

Mrs P. Spindlow, The Cottage, 66 Borstal Rd, Rochester, Kent. ME1 3BD
Tel: 01634-403888

Victorian cottage in quiet location close to city centre & overlooking the river

Prices Per Night:	No of Rooms:
Double: £34.00-£34.00 Max	2

No Credit Cards Accepted-Non-smokers Only. "One room with "En-Suite" one not.

Carol & David Rands, Normandy House, 143 Maidstone Rd, Chatham, Kent. ME4 6JE Tel: 01634-843047

The Best Accommodation!

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Single: £15.00-£17.00 Max	1
Twin: £30.00-£32.00 Max	1
Family: £40.00-£45.00 Max	1

No Credit Cards Accepted-Non-smokers Only. "Rooms are not "En-Suite"

Mrs H. Colvin, St Martin, 104 Borstal Rd, Rochester, Kent. ME1 3BD
Tel: 01634-848192

Comfortable Victorian family home overlooking the river Medway, convenient for Rochester & the Kent countryside

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Double: £28.00-£30.00 Max	1
Twin: £28.00-£30.00 Max	2

No Credit Cards Accepted- "Rooms are not "En-Suite"

Mr & Mrs Cracklen, 23 Watts Ave, Rochester, Kent. ME1 1RX Tel: 01634-844922
Victorian home a short distance from Rochester high street

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Single: £17.00-£17.00 Max	1
Double: £34.00-£34.00 Max	1
Family: £34.00-£34.00 Max	1

No Credit Cards Accepted- "Rooms are not "En-Suite"

Mrs B. Craddock, Wingham Lodge, 56 St Margaret's St, Rochester, Kent. ME1 1TU
Tel: 01634-843072

Georgian Villa with many period features overlooking the river & close to all amenities

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Twin: £28.00-£32.00 Max	1

No Credit Cards Accepted- Non-smokers Only "Room is not "En-Suite"

Mrs N Heward, 3 Hawkswood Close, Rochester, Kent. ME1 1HW Tel: 01634-842923
Family home close to the centre of historic Rochester and the Railway station

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Double: £30.00-£30.00 Max	1
Twin: £30.00-£30.00 Max	1
Family: £30.00-£35.00 Max	1

No Credit Cards Accepted-Non-smokers Only "Rooms are not "En-Suite"

Mr & Mrs A. Hext, Walnut Tree House, 21 Mount Rd, Rochester, Kent. ME1 3NP
Tel: 01634-849355-Fax: 01634-402730

Comfortable family home in quiet residential area, 5 min by car from Rochester city centre

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Double: £30.00-£32.00 Max	1
Twin: £30.00-£32.00 Max	2

No Credit Cards Accepted-Non-smokers Only "Rooms are not "En-Suite"

Mrs Iris 19 Roebuck Rd, Rochester, Kent. ME1 1UE

Tel: 01634-827153

Modern comfort in a Victorian home. Quiet location 5 min walk from city centre

Prices Per Night:	No: of Rooms
Double: £30.00-£34.00 Max	1
Twin: £30.00-£34.00 Max	2

No Credit Cards Accepted- Non-smoker's Only "Rooms are not "En-Suite"

Caravans:

Those of you who wish to bring your own caravan into the barracks, please apply direct to: 



Historian - Fred Gray

Operation Freshman

Recent editions of the Newsletter have been enhanced by the inclusions of personal memoirs. For the s" of "Operation Freshman" there can be no memoir. The following summary, prepared by request, has been taken from wartime writings, from public records and extracts from a number of published books. (Donald F Cooper. HQRE 1 Air Div 1942/46)

On 19 July & 22 August 1945, all the flags in the Norwegian town of Stavanger flew at half-mast. In quiet, dignified ceremonies, with full military honours, men of 1 Airborne Divisional Engineers re-buried their killed and murdered comrades. Each coffin was draped with the Union Jack and covered with red roses from the people of Stavanger.

In the summer of 1941 a scientific committee reported to the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill there was a reasonable chance an atomic bomb could be produced by the Allies before the end of the war. After the project received the blessing of the Chiefs-of-Staff Committee, the Prime Minister discussed the development of such a weapon with the President of the United States, during his visit to Washington in June 1942. The development of a joint Anglo-American weapon and the path to the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima is a separate story. The immediate problem was a likely German development of a similar weapon. Winston Churchill wrote: "We knew what efforts the Germans were making to procure supplies of 'heavy water' - a sinister term, eerie, unnatural, which began to creep into our secret papers. What if the enemy should get an atomic bomb before we did! However sceptical one might feel about the assertion of scientists, much disputed among themselves and express in jargon incomprehensible to laymen, we could not run the mortal risk of being outstripped in this awful sphere"

Heavy water was the technical name for a fertiliser by-product of hydroelectric power generation at the Norsk Hydro's plant at Vemork, near Rjukan, in Southern Norway. The danger lay in its use as a feedstock for advance research in nuclear fission. This, British scientists were convinced at the time, was the route to the atomic bomb. The Germans had to be prevented from success in this field or the war would be lost.

From this strategic appraisal a number of possible tactics were considered. The plant had been built on a broad rock shelf, above a steep ravine, at the foot of Gausta Fjell. Most proposals including bombing were rejected as impractical. Ultimately, at the request of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), " Operation Freshman" was conceived. In simple terms, aided by pathfinder SOE Norwegians who were to be parachuted - in a few days earlier, two glider-loads of "sappers" were to land on a frozen lake close to the plant. Their brief was to attack the plant and disperse the stocks. Simultaneously, they would damage the plant sufficiently to prevent further heavy water production. They were not to destroy the whole of the generating capacity as; much of that part of Norway was reliant upon the plant for its electricity and fertiliser production. The troops were then to escape as best they could across snow-covered mountains to Sweden. At worst it was calculated that if caught they would be interned; more likely, they would be repatriated.

CRE 1 Air Div, Lieut. -Colonel Mark Henniker, who was called upon to implement the plan, was very unhappy at the possible outcome.

He raised four objections. Firstly, he claimed it was illegal; he was subsequently persuaded it was a legal operation and there was no violation of the Geneva Convention. Secondly, he offered the opinion that the Royal Air Force was not capable of getting the troops there; the RAF said that it could. Thirdly, he said that he did not believe the results justified the high risk. He was told he did not know enough about physics to be a judge. Fourthly, Henneker said that even if the Royal Air Force managed to land the troops in the right place, the troops were being asked to undertake an impossible task.

He sought permission to lead it personally, but the Divisional Commander, Major-General F.A.M. Browning refused to allow him. In the end, all of his objections were over-ruled. In later years with all the facts available to him, he believed the government was right to insist on the attempt being made. It was an operation that

haunted him for the remainder of his life; indeed, it scarred everyone who was in any way connected with it. With such a high-risk operation, planning took place in great secrecy. Elements of the Norwegian plant had to be destroyed, whatever the cost.

The actual target was unknown to any of us other than the CRE and even he did not know the ultimate purpose of the raid. Thirty high calibre soldiers were selected from 9 Field Company RE (Airborne) and 261 Field Park Company (Airborne). A cover story was devised around a fictional contest in Scotland with American Airborne Engineers, for the prize of the "Washington Cup." The men were familiar with gliders and were also qualified parachutists. The decision for the method of transportation that would prevail was not taken until a late stage in the planning. After vigorous training in the mountains and familiarisation with specialised power plants they left their units for Scotland. They never returned.

On 19 November 1942 the two gliders, tugged by Halifax aircraft, set off from Skitten airfield near Wick in Scotland. One tug and both gliders were reported as having crashed somewhere on the western coast of Norway. The Field Security Officer who covered the training and departure was full of praise for the "sappers." All were aware that an abnormally high risk was involved; yet they went off with a cheerful courage. On the morning of 22 November, newspapers carried a German report, "On the night of November 19-20 two British bombers each towing one glider flew into Southern Norway, one bomber and both gliders were forced to land. The sabotage troops they were carrying were put to battle and wiped out to the last man."

Late in November, and behind locked doors, we burned all papers, documents and even Norwegian money in the boiler in the Headquarters' office. For nearly three years the operation remained a closed book; we knew nothing of the fate of our friends or the horrors perpetrated the other side of the North Sea. There was some bitterness and a feeling that the force had been sent on a suicidal mission, but complete secrecy prevailed. Limited information was made available to SOE. 1 Airborne Division's last news until after the end of the war was the German press release, which said that all had been killed in battle. Notwithstanding, hope remained that there maybe one or two survivors.

On 8 May 1945 the 400,000 strong German force in Norway surrendered. On 9 May, 1 Airborne Division was flown in, its 4,000 men being dispersed over key cities. Three days after our landing, Lieut. Jacobsen of the Norwegian Army and I set off from Oslo for Rjukan. The aim was to see for ourselves what had been involved in the operation and if there were any trails that might be followed. We were more fortunate than we deserved; stopping at Kongsberg to discuss a route with the local Norwegian garrison, we stumbled across a member of the SOE Norwegian party. Knut Haugland was responsible for the glider reception and he explained that he had already reported fully to the War Office in London concerning his limited knowledge of events. During that fateful evening the weather had deteriorated steadily and there was cloud cover with some snow. An hour or so before midnight he heard heavy aircraft overhead and he waited to signal to the descending glider, but none came. He subsequently heard that the gliders had landed somewhere to the south-west, but knew nothing of the fate of the soldiers involved.

Haugland was most helpful and arrangements were made to visit Rjukan and the power plant three days later. A few of us, under the leadership of Major John Chivers, OC 261 Company, went to both Rjukan and Vermork. Little that would help discover the fate of the troops was found on this visit. However, after studying the location of the plant and the proposed approach from the lake by troops who were unskilled in snow-warfare and survival, we wondered how and why such an operation had been conceived. (It must be remembered that this was May 1945 and the everyday use of the word 'atom bomb' was still in the future).

Subsequently an important lead came from a "sapper" travelling by train from Stavanger to Kristiansand. Casual conversation with a local railway porter, led to western Telemark, the discovery of graves and the bestial murder by firing squads. 9 Company led the "sapper" search.

A glider released from the surviving aircraft crash-landed at Fylesdalen on a snow-covered mountain top. The officer in charge, David Methven G.M., his lance sergeant, the two glider pilots and four other were killed immediately. Four others were severely injured in the crash and were taken by the German Army to Stavanger hospital and the handed over to the Gestapo. Five persons survived the crash; they were tending their wounded when they were taken prisoner and removed to Grini concentration camp near Oslo.

The second glider, under command of Lieut. A.C. Allen and its towing plane crashed after crossing the Norwegian coast in the mountains northeast of Helleland. All the crew of the plane were killed on impact. Amazingly, only three of the glider forces were killed in the crash. However several were severely injured and the Force was hopelessly adrift from its target. Some soldiers enquired of the Norwegian who found them about the practicality of escaping. They first suggested Sweden and when that was out of the question, they asked the way to the North Sea coast. Whoever remained in charge decided to protect the injured, send for a civilian doctor and surrender. They were subsequently taken to the German camp at Slettebo near Egersund.

As the jigsaw of events was put together, the story became more and more horrific. Eventually, over July and August 1945, all of the bodies discovered were re-buried. Later a black granite headstone was designed and erected in the cemetery in Stavanger. The carving on the stone of the winged Pegasus was followed by words for all of the Royal Engineers and the glider Pilots who flew them.

It was almost a legal decree: but not quite. To be acceptable, such a command would have had to be made known not only to troops under command but also to the enemy. The illegality of the Befehl hinges on the fact that it was issued under 'Top secret' cover. For implementation within his Norwegian Command, Von Falkenhorst had penned a savage addendum; if a man is saved for interrogation he must not survive his comrades for more than twenty-four hours." The British High command was not aware of this directive at the time "Operation Freshman" was launched.

The four wounded men put in the hands of the Gestapo at Stavanger suffered a horrific fate. All four were given a number of injections of experimental poison; three were then brutally strangled; the fourth was shot in the back. Their weighted bodies were dumped in the sea and never recovered.

The five captured men sent to the Grini concentration camp just outside Oslo lived only a few weeks longer. At dawn, on 18 January 1943 they were executed by firing squad. The survivors and their wounded from the second glider taken to Slettebo were the first to die. Within ten hours of arrival all, including the severely wounded, were executed by firing squad. The wounded were first of all left by the roadside near the camp, while others were executed, one by one. Then the wounded were dragged to the site of execution and shot. The bodies were thrown into a trench; dug in the sand dunes near Oagna.

After the war, the Germans involved were tried before War Tribunals. Von Falkenhorst was sentenced to death, but the sentence was later commuted to twenty year's imprisonment. Some of those who carried out the murders were hanged and some were shot; others were given long sentences of imprisonment.

When the case of the individual members of the firing squad came to trial, Mark Henniker, who had albeit reluctantly mounted the raid, volunteered evidence in their defence. He submitted that if he an officer with fifteen years of service had the instinctive view that the operation was illegal, how was it that a group of young and inexperienced soldiers, probably conscripts with one or two years' service, could be blamed for obeying their orders to shoot? It was a chivalrous gesture and typical of the man who made it, but the Court would have none of it. The President of the Court was a distinguished soldier, Major-General Coxwell-Rogers, who earlier in the war had been CRE 4 Infantry Division. The young members of the firing squad were each sentenced to thirteen year's imprisonment.

Death in battle is an acceptable hazard of war; cold-blooded murder is not. The circumstances of these "sappers" deaths at the hands of the German Gestapo will always remain unforgivable. When Mark Henniker and I met on a number of occasions after the war, the subject of "Operation Freshman" and its justification or non-justification always came to the surface sooner or later. He was particularly concerned that he had been required to order a high-risk venture and then refused permission to command it. I know it troubled his conscience, even as late as the end of the 1980's, only a few months before he died.

In the late-1970's Norsk Hydro, the plant owners and for whom I worked as a consultant, demolished the whole of the Verork complex. In later years I flew over the Rjukan site in a light plane with directors from the company. The pilot flew uncomfortably low and followed roughly the approach through the mountains the gliders would have had to take. It was a difficult route but a skilled glider-pilot might have achieved it.

In Memory of Thirty Royal Engineers of the 1st British Airborne Division, Two Glider Pilots of the Army Air Corps

and Two pilots of the Royal Australian Air force, the occupants of the gliders which crashed at Helleland and Fylesdalen on 20th November 1942, whilst engaged on a gallant mission against the German atomic bomb research installation at Rjukan.

Og det er det stora
Og det er det glora
At merket det stend
Um mannen han stupa

Freely translated, the verse of the Norwegian poet Per Silve, means; "For this is the greatness of this the glory, that the cause goes forward, even though the man falls."

When the re-burials took place we were still unaware of the full horror surrounding the deaths of our fellow sappers. Investigation by the War Crimes teams has since completed the story.

It was just not the legality of Operation Freshman in itself that was questionable; so also was the treatment of the captured men. The chief of all-military land, sea and air forces in Norway, General Nicolas Von Falkenhorst, together with other senior generals, had received from Adolf Hitler a personal instruction dated 18 October 1942. This was only a month prior to the Operation Freshman.

In principle it was a direction that all raiding and sabotage troops, even if in uniform, were to be exterminated to the last man. If they surrendered they were still to be executed. Leading German Wermacht generals such as Von Runstedt and Rommel ignored it. It was essentially a 'no-quarter' directive; of the four critical paragraphs' two were as follows:

"From now on, all opponents brought to battle by German troops in so-called commando operation in Europe or in Africa, even when it is outwardly a matter of soldiers in uniform or demolition parties with or without weapons, are to be exterminated to the last man in battle or while in flight. In these cases it is immaterial whether they are landed for their operations by ship, aeroplane or descend by parachute. Even should these individuals, on their being discovered, make as if to surrender, all quarter is to be denied them on principle. A detailed report is to be sent to the OKW on each separate case for publication in the Wermacht communique. " "If individual members of such commandos working as agents, saboteurs, etc. fall into the hands of the Wermacht by other means, e.g. through the police in any of the countries occupied by us, they are to be handed over to the SDF immediately. It is strictly forbidden to hold them in military custody, e.g. in PW camps etc., even as a temporary measure."

Of the further two, one excluded from the dictate, all soldiers captured in open battle, all sailors captured after naval operations and airmen descending from a plane involved in an air-battle. The other threatened the Court-Martial of any commander failing to implement the order.

On another day, in cool Spring weather we walked the planned route, which the "sappers" untrained in mountain skiing or snow warfare, would have taken in conditions of heavy snow and ice. We studied the immediate vicinity of the plant and proposed direction of the attack the "sappers" were to mount into the plant itself.

It may not have been a 'mission impossible', but it was not far removed!

Chris Chambers

Association Membership Secretary

Since the last "Newsletter," a further sixteen (16) members have joined, detail as follows:

David Deegan	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1976-1979
Walter Scott	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1950-1954
James Wilson	9 Fid Coy RE (Airborne)	1942
Robert Kay	131 Para Engr. Regt. RE	1952-1960
John Marshall	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1954-1957
Roy Whittaker	1st Airborne Squadron RE 9 Para Sqn RE	1946-1956 1970's
Ian Rogalski	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1972-1977
Alfred Hines	4 Airborne Sqn RE	1944
James Wood	3 & 9 Airborne Sqn RE	1947-1950
John Beer	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1968-1974
Robert Watts	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1966-1973
Nigel Jaxon	9 Para Squadron RE	1983-1986
Atunaisa Laqeretabua	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1962-1968
Norman Sangwin	299 Airborne Sqn RE	1948-1950 1955-1959
Brian McKean	300 Para Sqn RE	1957-1967
Keith Reid	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1965-1967

To all the Above, "Welcome to the Association"

The 1997 Membership Directory has finally been printed. The reason for being late is because of all the errors that came to light, both "Fergie" and myself "burned the midnight oil" for several weeks, implementing the changes and making the corrections. It is therefore essential that ALL of you ensure that you advise whether your own details are correct. I cannot stress how important it is to keep ME informed of any changes to address, rank/unit or telephone number, as and when it occurs. By doing this, it enables us to hold accurate and correct records. IF YOUR ENTRY IS INCORRECT IN ANY DETAIL, PLEASE ADVISE ME DIRECTLY NOT VIA A THIRD PARTY, AS OFTEN THESE CHANGES FAIL TO REACH ME. Send all changes to:

Chris Chambers Membership Secretary [REDACTED]

We now have two new Branches, bringing the total to eight (8). Congratulations to WO2 Paul Moore who formed the Hameln (Germany) Branch and Eric Rundle who was responsible for the formation of the Southwest Branch (Bristol). Well done to you both!

Mal & Joan Scott from Australia took time out from their holiday to pay a short visit to Aldershot in May. Jan met up with them at their Hotel in Farnham for a bit of a "chin wag." They send their good wishes from al, the Airborne Sappers in "Oz" to all of us here in 2Blighty." Sorry to have missed you Mal, maybe next time!

The membership is still growing steadily, thanks to all of you who help by sending names for recruitment. Keep it up, there are still many ex-Sappers out there who are not aware of our existence and perhaps this year will be the year they hear about us! I hope to meet up with you all at one of the events scheduled for this year. Take care!

"Happy Landings" Chris

The Most Sensuous Feet in All the Land

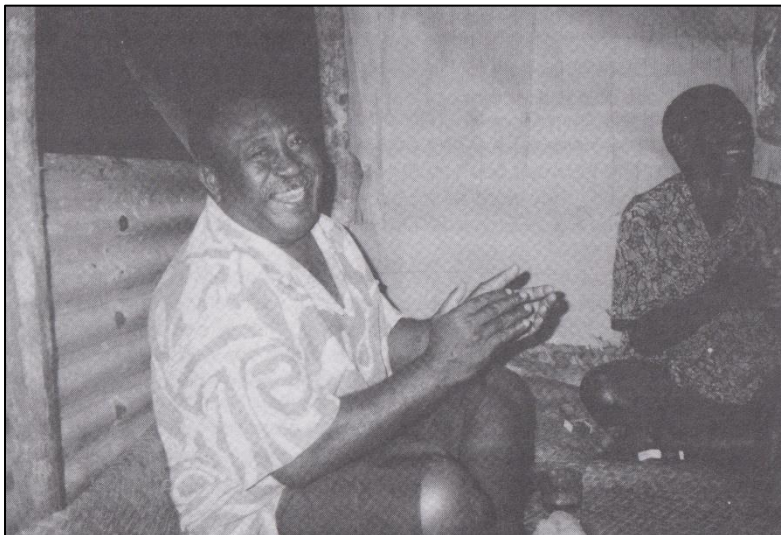
This morning my girlfriend and I went for a very long walk.
We walk so fast we hardly ever talk.
With our new boots and weatherproof gear,
Through rain, snow, hail we have no fear,
After a few miles I felt a pain,
But still kept going through the pouring rain.
A six-mile round trip was our goal,
To exercise the heart and gratify our soul.
When we finally reached our front door,
It was so painful I couldn't take much more.
With blood on my socks, a great blister on my heel
No one could imagine how I feel?
My feet through all these very long years
Have never given me cause for tears!
I've marched through deserts, over mountains high,
Through forests with trees that reached the sky!
I've plodded through rivers and jungles too,
Feet shod with a jungle boot type of shoe.
Today lying on my bed, I don't feel so grand,
Whatever happened to the most sensuous feet in the land?
In the long years that have come to pass
My feet were the fascination of many a young lass.
Together on the bed we would lie,
They would stare at my toes and give an ardent sigh!
Never a bunion nor a corn could they detect,
Both feet had a very sensual effect.
Now is my disgust and a little shame,
A bloody blister has ended my fame.
Will my feet now be covered in lots of plasters?
With corns, bunions, blisters, all sorts of disasters.
A chiropodists nightmare will I become?
Hardly able to walk, sitting all day on my bum.
From the Ramblers Association will I be banned?
Once the Most Sensuous Feet in All the Land!

John Thompson-January 1996

News Items

Prayer for the Middle Aged!

Lord you know that I am growing older.
Keep me from becoming talkative or possessed with
the idea I must express myself on every subject.
Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs.
Keep me from the recital of endless details.
Give me wings to get to the point.
Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of aches and pains.
They are increasing with the years and my love to
speak of them grows sweeter as time goes by.
Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.
Make me thoughtful and not nosy, helpful but not bossy.
With my vast store of wisdom and experience, it does
seem a pity not to use it all.
But you know, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end!



Atunaisa Laqeretabua

Picture supplied, by "Froth Beer"

Life Was Never To Be The Same Again!

It was early in 1947 and there we were in Barton Stalag Camp. All bright eyed and bushy tailed, trying hard not to walk too obviously "crab like" with right shoulders leading, now adorned with Para Wings. Strangely enough, it all started just a few months before, here at Barton Stacey, but across the way in another camp with the Airborne increment.

That had been a short sharp period of physical endurance, which was both character and endurance searching. The impact of that experience had left a lasting impression on me. Service life had taken on a new meaning and a challenge had been presented. There was freshness and efficiency about the place, which in the space of a few weeks, was to leave the names of the staff indelibly, printed on my memory. They were SSM Underwood, Sgt. (Darkle) Menage, Cpl's Gooch, Fiander, and L/Cpl Jock Windar. With one exception, I was never to meet any of them again, but that one exception is still doing the Arnhem march at seventy plus, which demonstrates the calibre of the team!

During this period of preparation for "P" Company, the staff took part in a demonstration drop; no doubt to prove to us all that parachuting was a simple operation! Unfortunately things did not go quite according to plan and Jock Windar managed to get himself hooked up outside the fuselage. Some morale booster I must say! Nevertheless, after several circuits the retrieval gear worked to good effect and Jock returned to earth a little bruised but none the worse for his experience.

So here we were kicking our heels, waiting for an imminent draft for BAOR, where we were to join 3 Parachute Squadron at Neumunster, when I was summoned to report to the OC. It appeared that the draft was to be a large one, but there were no NCO's included. That being the case I was there and then, given the temporary promotion of "draft" Sgt., or on reflection a "daft" Sgt. might have been a more suitable title!

Thus, returning to the barrack room with a handful of stripes, I informed the lads of the situation, tossed the stripes on the bed and headed off into Andover to bid farewell to my favourite landlord. The lads had been most helpful in my absence and had sewn on all of the stripes, but unfortunately they were all on the right hand sleeve of my greatcoat. Thank you Don Roscoe, Joe Boyle, Eddie Edwards, Greavsie, Shumanski, and others!

Anyway, off we went to BAOR and all went relatively smoothly with an overnight stop at 50 RHU and on again as an elite band to Neumunster. It was early evening when we arrived to be met by SSM Colin (The Beast) Evetts. He looked me up and down and said "You can come into the mess tonight but you get them down tomorrow" tapping the heel of his left palm with the two leading fingers of his right hand as he spoke, just to make the point. I declined the offer and was directed to a room in HQ block.

There were three beds in the room, two of which were occupied so I made myself as comfortable as possible on the vacant bed. Suddenly the door burst open and in came two of the grimmest individuals I had ever seen, who just flung themselves on their respective beds just as they were, and lay prostrate without a word being said. Suddenly the door burst open again and in came the duty NCO, Cpl. Pete De Pledge who wanted to search everybody. It seems somebody had left their watch in the ablutions and it had gone missing. Needless to say, he was completely ignored by the two incumbents, so without further ado, he tipped the contents of both of their kit bags into a heap in the center of the floor, making sure the contents were well mixed together. He didn't find the watch!

I had heard about the "Black Hole in Calcutta" and I was beginning to think I had found another one. At the time, I thought the two occupants were worn out by their labour on coal fatigues. I was to learn later; they were by name "Ogilvy" and "Luck" and were members of the Sqn Speedway Team and had in fact been "Riding the Cinders."

Time had moved on a bit, so I decided a visit to the beer bar would be in order. I had already sampled the "onion beer" at 50 RHU and hoped for better things, but it wasn't to be! The beer was lively enough, some of the lads were in good voice with a number I was to hear repeated many times in years to come. "Paddy" Donaldson with "Rose of Killarney" Jim Allingham with "Alleluia I'm a Bum" sung into an empty beer glass, and the notable "Dad," Jock Fraser with his monologue "The killing of Dann McGrew."

Then I witnessed a bizarre occurrence, as several of the drinkers got up and left, only to return minutes later with a large metal wash basin each, all of which were promptly filled with "Onion Beer." Presumably the contents were enhanced with the flavour of carbolic or Palmolive of the bowl. Either way it was obviously going to be a long night!

The next morning I was waiting outside the OC's office in order to be marched in and formally demoted, when the doors were flung open and in strode a Captain who turned right down the corridor. Suddenly the doors burst open yet again and in galloped another Captain, who leapt on to first Captains back and rode him "pig a back" down the corridor. I had no idea who the two officers were, but could the jockey have been WAB?

Upon leaving the HQ building I was confronted by that man "Ogilvy," (later of Pig Fame) walking backward beckoning his driverless lorry and believe it or not, it was following him. If you do not believe me, ask Joe Gallea the next time that you see him. He was standing to one side suitably amused by it all. Those 72 hours to say the least, had been an eye opener and even more bizarre and amusing events were to come, but of one thing I am sure.

I was pleased that life for me was never to be the same again.'

Eric Blenkinsop.

Harrogate Boys

Mr Brian Grant is trying to locate all ex-Harrogate boy soldiers, especially those of group 58a, 1958. In particular he would like to know the whereabouts of Peter "Dai" Rees. He is compiling a register of all Harrogate boys with a view to re-unions etc. Mr Grant was not in the Squadron, but he is willing to advertise our association in his correspondence to his own members. If you are an ex-Harrogate boy and would like to have your name entered into his register, then please write to him at: [REDACTED]

Correction! - By Fred Gray

Many thanks to all those who wrote to me, pointing out the error of my ways! 1998 is not the 50th anniversary of the Squadron changing its name, but of joining 16 Para Brigade on its formation in 1948. What my error shows is a great many of our members read the newsletter. Please continue to send names of anyone you can remember that served with you. The nominal rolls of the Squadrons and Companies that formed the Airborne Element of the Royal Engineers is coming along very well but I will need many more names and dates!

A Visit to Australia & New Zealand

by John Barrie

Cliff and Marian Joy from NZ send their regards to all Airborne Association members as do Paddy (Brian) and Jan O'Sullivan from Australia. After a gap of twenty-five years it was amazing that Cliff and Marian Joys house overlooked the hotel we selected to stay at in Taupo. We had no idea of their whereabouts and obviously them of ours, a small world.

Cliff served with 9 Squadron, his latter years being with Plant Troop. After emigrating to Australia he worked as a plant Operator for a number of years before moving on to New Zealand, to take up his skill as a decorating contractor. Those who remember Cliff will know that he is very talented in the art field and continues to be so. Cliff and Marian have, since we met up with them, moved from Taupo to a small holding in Thames where they have taken up the "Good Life." Last news we had of Cliff was chasing the "chooks" and catching trout. Marian is



a nurse and has managed to secure a new job in Thames. Their children, a boy and a girl, have fled the nest but both still live in New Zealand. Marian says they are both Kiwis through and through. Cliff is on the committee of Airborne Forces NZ and John had the privilege of bringing back a commemorative plaque, which he presented, to the AEA. The plaque is placed in the John Rock Room.

Cliff with John



"Paddy" (Brian) & Jan O'Sullivan reside in Kings Langly, an hour's drive from Sydney. "Paddy" worked for the Roads Department for the last 20 years in Australia. Prior to that he tried his hand as a professional boxer and "Mr Fix-it" on construction sites, working by "Paddy's Regulations!"

"Paddy" with John

Canoeing is very much part of his life and he has come 2nd a few times in World Championships. Jan is also a nurse and works full time. Their sons Shaun & Brendan are

both married and "Paddy" and Jan are very proud grandparents to Patrick.

Jim Brierley "Free falling" in Sunny Australia



A letter was received from Eddie Woodman enclosing a photograph of Jim Brierley formerly of 2nd Squadron. Apparently Jim has just completed his 1,814 drop and hopes to compete in An International "POP's" meeting in Aqaba in June, "health permitting!" Jim's ambition is to complete the "magic" 2,000 jump before he hangs up his silk! Eddie says " he find it hard just to jump in and out of bed these days," but he wishes his old mate Jim the best of luck!

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 it's FREE!

From the Editor

Dear Members,

My apologies for the delay in the production of this "Newsletter." If any Branches have given dates in their material, which are now meaningless, again please accept my apologies. Unfortunately, in the interim period I have started my own business and I have been a little busier than originally planned, which is great news in one way, but has led to a delay in the production of the "Newsletter."

It certainly looks as if the AGM is well in-hand and bodes well for a "cracking" weekend! The new Branch additions continue to show the breadth of our "Unique" Association and long may it continue! Without apology for continually reiterating the same message, the "Newsletter" is the only medium we have to ensure that our Worldwide Membership can stay in touch with us all! Keep sending in the material and I am sure you will agree we have some first class stories for this issue. It's good to see "The Squadron" news back in this issue and interesting tales of "woe" are to be read! Funny how nothing changes really!

Closing Date for Copy on the October/November Newsletter is the second week of November, please be on time!

Obituaries

1st Parachute Squadron

"Curly" Les Plummer, formerly of 'C' Troop has sadly passed away. His close friend Tom Hicks has sent in the following piece.

I first met "Curly" in 1942 when 'C' Troop 1st parachute Squadron RE was being formed, with his mates "Ginger" Holland and "Bulham" Brooks. He joined us in North Africa when he came with the rest of 1st Parachute Squadron by sea and was injured when a 'U' Boat attacked the convoy. We served together in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, returning to the UK in December 1943 and hence to Donington in Lincolnshire. Nor long after, all the rabbits in the area took out "life insurance" policies, when "Curly, Bulham & Ginger" went hunting.

"Curly" had a rare sense of humour and nothing seemed to worry him. We used to envy him in tight situations, like the last day at Arnhem, when he dug me out wounded from my "crumbling" slit trench, found a jeep and whisked me off to the F.A.P., named "Gelders Hoff" near Sonner Berg Castle, all at great risk to himself. "Curly" subsequently escaped across the river and I believe he was the only from 'C' Troop to achieve this feat!

He came every year to our reunions at Donington with his old mate "Ginger," "Bulham" was killed at Arnhem. When "Ginger" died and he himself was in poor health, his son would drive him to meet his old friends. "Absent Friends" will have a special meaning this year; we have lost "Nipper, Lucky and Curly."

"WHOA MOHAMMED" OLD FRIENDS - TOM HICKS

Association Shop

Items available & applicable pricing!

Description	Price	Postage & Packing UK
Association Ties (Pegasus Logo)	£12.50	£0.60p
Association Bow Ties (Pegasus Logo)	£7.50	£0.60p
Association Blazer Badges	£11.00	£0.60p
Association Jumpers Maroon with Blue Pegasus & words "Airborne Engineers" (Sizes: 38" -48" to order)	£18.50	£2.60p Recorded Delivery
Association Sweatshirt Maroon & logo as jumpers-Sizes: Med/Large/X-Large to order	£14.00	£2.60p Recorded Delivery
Association Polo Shirts Fred Perry Style, Maroon with Logo- Sizes: Large/X-Large	£14.50	£2.50p Recorded Delivery
Association Tee Shirts Maroon as above logo Sizes Med/Large/X-Large	£8.50	£1.00p
Association Shields	£15.50	£2.60p Recorded Delivery
Book "The 9th" by Tom Purves	£14.00	£3.50p
	Membership Price	Recorded Delivery
A Memoir of 9 Parachute Squadron RE, in the Falklands Campaign 1982 by Major C.M. 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
Anniversary Ties (Silk, featuring Double Logo Pegasus & Wings)	£15.00	£0.75p

Cheques should be made payable to Airborne Engineers Association

My thanks for all your continued support!

Until next time, I remain-Yours Aye!

Jan

Order Form for the 1997 Member Directory

Name:	Mem No:
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Cost £4.00 plus £1.00p Postage & Packing Total=£5.00

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Forward Orders & Cheques to Jan Chambers