



Airborne Engineers Association

Registered Charity No. 1009201

Newsletter

JUNE 1998

PRESIDENT

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Brigadier G.A. Hewish, MBE

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Committee Members

Position	Member	Address	Postcode	Telephone
President	Brig GA Hewish MBE			
Vice President	Ian Wilson			
Vice President	Lt Col CM Davies MBE			
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 Fld Coy (Airborne) RE	Mr TH 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			

Secretary's Report

Since our last Newsletter much has happened within the Association. Unfortunately, a number of stalwarts have passed away and will be greatly missed.

Our Chairman - Tom Ormiston, Derek Taylor and Capt. Dick Brown, RE have recently toured East Anglia to inspect locations which can accommodate this year's Annual General Meeting. They have decided on Great Yarmouth during October. Further details will be given in the near future, when facilities and times have been confirmed. The World Cup Lottery is progressing extremely well, as we are now in profit. Thank you to all those who have returned their counterfoils and money, and request those who have still to act to do so as soon as possible. I have made provision to accept returns as late as 13th June, 1998 which is the day of the draw and I assure you they will be entered.

I hope to see you all at Great Yarmouth for the AGM and therefore, until then, have a wonderful summer.
Ray Coleman – Secretary
Airborne Engineers Association

Annual General Meeting

11th October, 1997 – Minutes

1. Opening Address - (No. in Attendance - 102)
The Chairman - Tom Ormiston welcomed everyone present and stated how great it was to see such a vast number of members from all parts of the country assembled. He introduced our President - Major General G.W. Field, CB, OBE who is retiring from the post this year.
2. Silent Tribute
The members stood for one minute in respect of the following colleagues who have passed away during the past year: Alfred Pratt, Lucky Luckhurst, John Sinclair-Lee, Les Plummer, Patrick Dedman, George Emsley and G.W. Barke.
3. Apologies
Sir Donald Spiers, Maj. Gen. Peter Campbell, Maj. Ian Robbie, Peter Yates, Alan Graham, Bob Prosser, Albert Sweetlove, John Smith, Sid Hoyle, Stan Halliwell, Jack, Hobbs, Ned Parker, Mal Joynson, Kenn Hart, Tom Carpenter, Ollie Atkins, Ken Cole and Eric Rundle.
4. Minutes of 1996 Annual General Meeting
The minutes of the 1996 AGM were passes as a true record of proceedings.
Proposed : Brian Jones • Seconded : John Davies
Agreed unanimously
5. Chairman's Report
The Chairman stated that, during the past year the Association has become very united and have done extremely well in all we have undertaken. This was due to hard work and enthusiasm at Branch and Club level and he thanked those responsible for their tremendous efforts.
6. Treasurer's Report
Capt. Dick Brown, RE gave a full and detailed statement of the Association's accounts, as at 1st October, 1997.

Current Account	£	
Deposit Account	£	
Value of Shop Stock (at cost)	£	
Cash in Hand	£	

Proposed: Bob Ferguson • Seconded : Graham Hawkins
That the figures, as presented, be accepted.
7. Membership Secretary's Report
Chris Chambers gave an up-to-date report of the Association's memberships, which has now reached 934. He praised the efforts of our two new branches in South West/Bristol and Hameln, and forecast that many new members can be recruited from these new areas. Chris challenged all members to help in recruiting, and stated that by wearing the Association tie to social functions this can be a first recognition between colleagues. We will continue to advertise in military publications.

8. Election of Officers

The election of officers was as follows:

President	Brig. G.A. Hewish, MBE	Proposed:	Brig. R.F. Semple
		Seconded:	Bob Ferguson
Vice-President	Col. I. Wilson	Proposed:	David Rutter
		Seconded:	Tony Jackson
	Col. C.M. Davies, MBE	Proposed:	Col. I. Wilson
		Seconded:	Fred Gray
Hon. Secretary	R.P. Coleman	Proposed:	B. Brown
		Seconded:	John Thompson
Hon. Treasurer	Capt. R. Brown, RE	In Office	
Membership Sec.	C. Chambers	In Office	

9. Election of Representatives

1 Squadron	Bob Jones	Proposed :	B. Brown
		Seconded :	G. Barrett
2 Squadron	O.N. Atkins	Proposed:	A. Jackson
		Seconded:	F. Gray
3 Squadron	R. Sullivan, MBE	Proposed:	Bob Jones
		Seconded:	A. Jackson
4 Squadron	E. Richards	Proposed:	J. O'Donnell
		Seconded:	R. Sullivan
9 Squadron	OC. SSM. CPLS Mess	In Office	
131 Squadron	B. Brown	Proposed:	G. Barrett
		Seconded:	Bob Jones
147 Squadron	I. Robbie	Proposed:	F. Gray
		Seconded:	A. Jackson
591 Squadron	A.F. Jackson	Proposed:	Brig. R.F. Semple
		Seconded:	R. Sullivan
9 Field Coy (Airborne)	T.H. Carpenter	Proposed:	E. Blenkinsop
		Seconded:	Bob Jones
Aldershot Branch	M. Metcalf	Proposed:	D. Taylor
		Seconded:	F. Gray
Birmingham Branch	G. Barrett	Proposed:	B. Brown
		Seconded:	Bob Jones
Chatham Branch	E. Blenkinsop	Proposed:	M. Farrow
		Seconded:	A. Cheesman
North West Branch	Brian Jones	Proposed:	W. Rudd
		Seconded:	B. Brown
Yorkshire Branch	W. Rudd, MBE	Proposed:	B. Henderson
		Seconded:	T. Thornton
South West Branch	E.F. Rundle	Proposed:	F. Gray
		Seconded:	C. Chambers
Hameln Branch	WO2 P. Moore, RE	Proposed:	E. Blenkinsop
		Seconded:	C. Chambers

10. Confirmation of Trustees

The following members were nominated again as the Trustees of this Association:

Tom Ormiston Col.

Ian Wilson

Col. Chris Davies, MBE Agreed unanimously

11. Affiliation to the REA

The Chairman informed the meeting of the exchanges that have taken place with the REA concerning our contemplation to gain affiliation. He read out a proposal from the REA which would cover our acceptance and then asked for comments from the assembled.

There then followed a lengthy and comprehensive debate, with points of view both for and against. Many stalwarts of the Association voiced their opinions with fervour and relish, until it was obvious that much more discussion, at Branch-level, was required. After an extremely protracted debate, a vote was taken that we do not, at this time, apply to join the REA. However, any member can, at a later date, propose to have this matter raised again.

12. Date and Venue of Next Annual General Meeting

The date of the next Annual General Meeting will be Saturday, 10th October, 1998 at a venue to be notified later.

9 Parachute Squadron

Royal Engineers

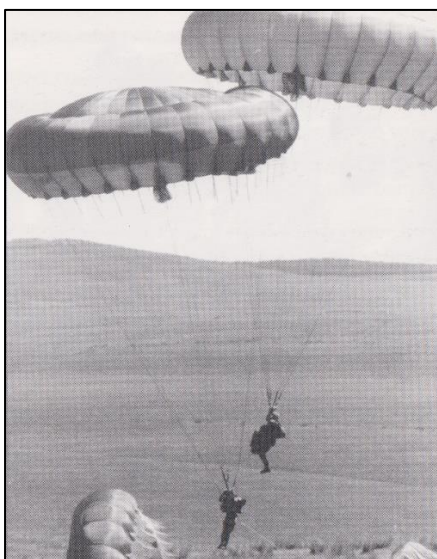
Just Another Month at 9 Squadron

January 1998 - situation, no change, the New Year started as last year finished, busy! The main priority in early January was the 9 Squadron support to the 2 PARA Battle Group (BG) TESEX on Salisbury Plain. The three-week package began with low level platoon and troop level training. The SPEARHEAD grouping of Lead Parachute Battalion Group (LPBG) Troop, airborne EOD and support elements began brushing up their combat engineer skills and combined arms training in preparation for the forthcoming FTX. During this initial period, the engineer group also supported 2 PARA in all its infantry training to battle group level.

Once the 2 PARA BG completed its own training, preparation for the FTX began. The aim was for the battle group to be strategically inserted into a hostile area and carry out a delaying operation against an armoured OPFOR. The highlight of the exercise was to para drop the entire LPBG onto three DZs across the Plain. The preparation began the night before, pushing through late into the night with briefing, rehearsals, chalk parades and checking our equipment. This took slightly longer than expected, with some of the personal kit (including ammunition, etc) having to be re-distributed, as the RAF dispatchers could not lift the para containers!

The next morning began early as we saw our kit loaded on to the transport, bound for RAF Lyneham. The next time we would see all of our worldly exercise possessions would be forty minutes before we went out of the door of the Hercules. After the short journey from West Down Camp we arrived at Lyneham and moved to the prepared reception area. Once there, the RAF informed us that 'P' hour had been brought forward considerably. The whole battalion transformed into a frenzied mass of activity, frantically fitting the parachutes, reserves and life preservers before being checked by the RAF. Finally, after more doublechecking and moving to the aircraft, the entire Hercules flight took off only minutes late. The main thought on all our minds was the question of whether or not our kit, (last seen the night before) was on the aircraft, or would I end up with a container with a mortar base plate attached to it? After a short amount of low level flying, the word was passed down the plane that the "lob" was to go ahead - the tension, unsurprisingly, increased two fold. Forty minutes before 'P' hour we were told to "prepare for action" lifting up the seats and preparing to pass the equipment down the plane, hopefully to the right person. However, before that, came the new Commander 5 Airborne Brigade from the flight deck, beaming all over. He was about to lead part of his Brigade into exercise - the first man out of the door. Eventually, after some quick reorganisation I was passed my container, and prepared for the inevitable "lull before the storm."

Further check after check followed, until we stood up with all our equipment attached and hooked up to the para cable. Twenty minutes went by, rolling with the aircraft on its low level course, with up to 160lbs of equipment strapped to us.



THE PARACHUTE JUMP
"Beware!! Bag of spuds landing!"

As the rear door opened, the light and fresh cool air spilled in over the equipment wedge. As the side para doors opened, word was passed back that the wind speed was just within limits and we were "good to go." On the command "Action Stations," the Brigadier assumed his position in the door. As the red light changed to green, the wedge was cut free, falling from the aircraft's rear. The Commander's arm cut down from the door to his equipment, and he vanished out of the door. The surge from behind pushed me down the plane and before I knew it, I was tumbling down from 800 feet. My canopy was good, and I was in clear airspace. Only the landing to worry about, I lowered my equipment and prepared to hit the ground. Days of rain softened the impact as I landed like a bag of spuds - at least I was all in one piece! After fighting out of the parachute's harness, I unpacked my weapon and gathered all of the para kit. As I "tabbed" off to the RV, the sight of "waves of paratroopers" descending from the other thirteen aircraft in the sortie, as well as the hive of activity on the DZ, was awe inspiring!

TESEX 8 then moved off pace with the imminent arrival of the OPFOR armoured recce and main body. 2 Troop, without vehicles, were initially employed laying light mine fields supporting the tactical plan, having to “tab” across Salisbury Plain with the bar mines. Once the obstacle plan was completed the light wheeled tractors continued in the preparation of dummy defensive positions, whilst the field troop moved in support of the infantry.

The exercise culminated in a battle group attack on Copehill Down FIBUA village. For this phase of the attack the 9 Squadron troop was utilised as a rifle platoon, as well as assisting the “break-in”. Following a night in sub-zero temperatures, crammed with activity, the attack began well and ended with 2 PARA accomplishing the mission, despite heavy casualties. Sapper Glendinning was unanimously voted the “Battle of Copehill Down Hero” for destroying an enemy tank with a bar mine, by personally moving to a position where he could place it in the vehicle’s tracks.

Following the successful capture of the village, “ENDEX” was called. The usual postexercise admin followed the after-action review, and the troop returned to Aldershot two days later. TESEX proved to be an extremely useful aid to training and preparing for high intensity operations, at all levels, teaching valuable lessons across the spectrum. The 9 Squadron group supporting TESEX returned to a period of leave, looking forward to the forthcoming months. MACC tasks and adventure training fill the months ahead, as well as numerous 5 Airborne Brigade exercise and most importantly, two training periods at Wyke Regis.

IN MEMORY

Colonel Ian Wilson, MBE, MC, RE



One of the sad duties the Squadron was asked to undertake, was to provide the bearer party for the funeral of Colonel Ian Wilson, MBE, MC, RE - a former OC of the Squadron. In front of a very large congregation, including seven former OCs and a number of high- ranking officers, the coffin was borne on the shoulders of six Junior NCOs commanded by the Squadron Sergeant Major. After the Church service, the cortege was escorted to the place of internment, where again the bearer party performed their duty with precision and dignity. After the internment, all those assembled in the cemetery,

returned to Byrny Cottage where Mrs Wilson was able to thank WO2 (SSM) Blair, Corporals Worsford, Frazer and Campbell, and Lance Corporals Wilkinson, McCormack, Jordan and Lambon in person.

Aldershot Branch

By Fred Gray

Chairman: DEREK TAYLOR
Entertainments: DAVE RUTTER & TONY MANLY
Secretary: FRED GRAY • Tel: [REDACTED]

The year started with the sad news of the death of Colonel Ian Wilson. This came as a blow to us as he was such a stalwart member and a great influence on our Branch. A good number of the Aldershot Branch attended his funeral in his home village of Kings Somborne, where we met up with many other former members of the Squadron. A description of the funeral is elsewhere in the Newsletter. In April we also had the sad and sudden death of John Davies, another stalwart member of our Branch and former 131 Para Engineer Regiment Sapper, who passed away in his sleep on Friday, 24th April.

We continue to meet on Sunday lunch times, to enable people with long distances to travel to have the opportunity to drive in daylight. It was also an opportunity to have lunch with our wives at a nearby hotel. Unfortunately, because of the very poor service, and the deterioration in the quality of the food, that is no longer an option. We are now looking for another restaurant/hotel within a reasonable distance of the barracks where we can eat after our meetings.

We have the pleasure of being able to welcome two new members to the Branch, Mick and Sheila Porter, and Ron Day. Mick served with the Squadron from 1956 to 1963 and then a further spell with 131 Para Engineer Regiment. Ron is a veteran from Palestine days, when he served with 3 Squadron, followed by seven years with 9 Squadron. We look forward to seeing them for many years to come.

Bryan Andrews continues to make progress from his very serious illness and will be moving to a bungalow in the near future. This will help him get around the house much easier without the need to climb stairs. The last time we saw him was at the Christmas dinner, accompanied by his wife Betty. We hope to see him much more in the future as he continues to progress. He's always pleased to be able to have a chat on the phone with friends, so if you could spare a few minutes give him a ring on [REDACTED].

We shall be holding our AGM in May, followed by Ripon Weekend in early June. Then in Mid-June there is the Presentation of Colours Parade to be held in Aldershot, so it looks as though we shall be quite busy in the next few weeks.

If you find yourself in the Aldershot area any weekend that coincides with one of our meetings, then you are most welcome to come along and enjoy the delights of the new 9 Squadron bar. You can always check on our meeting dates by phoning the above telephone number.

Chatham Branch

By Eric Blenkinsop

The January AGM saw us moving into the New Year with an entirely new executive committee, which we all hope will give us a new impetus and some new ideas. For those of you who need to contact the Branch on official matters, the details of the Committee are as follows:

- Chairman: Arthur "Ageless" Cheesman • Tel: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
A long serving member of 131 Para Engineer Regiment TA, coupled with several years' experience in the Corps. Thanks to Bert Fordhams initiative he also has a big hammer!
- Secretary: Ron "Smokey" Gibson • Tel: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
A Normandy Veteran, a bit long in the tooth, but young at heart and well used to dodging the Flak. He will surely brighten up most meetings with his ready Cockney quips.
- Treasurer: Bob Seaman • Tel: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
A very experienced, professional mechanical engineer, who surely knows what makes the wheels go round. More importantly, he was an Army Apprentice, so he learnt at a very early age how to make every penny count.
- Vice-Chairman: "Gentleman" Jim Rogers • Tel: [REDACTED]
409 Maidstone Road, Wigmore, Gillingham, Kent ME8 0NY.
A 3 Parachute Squadron Veteran with a good head of hair. A bit of a 'rough rider,' Jim who spent several of his early post-war years as an intrepid member of the West African Pony Express.

Other Non-Executive Members:

- Property: John Stubbs • [REDACTED]
Entertainments & Branch Rep: Eric Blenkinsop • [REDACTED]
Auditor: Eric Blenkinsop
Welfare: Vacant position - any volunteers?!

MEMBERSHIPS

At the last count we had 32 paid up members, which when all said and done, is a firm base on which to build. This total includes our most recent member - David Mayne, accompanied by his wife Elsie, and we trust that we can look forward to seeing them on a regular basis. For those of you that are interested, David was a member of 3 Troop (Jock Brazier & John Smith) on Operation Musketeer (Suez).

LOOKING AHEAD

Summer Barbecue

Date and time to be agreed. The venue is Bert and Dee Fordham's home in Newick, Sussex. An opportunity to reach out to all AEA residing in Sussex, who are generally too distant to join in at Branch-level.

Portsmouth Spectacular (PRA)

Sunday, 12th July, 1998

REA Veterans Weekend - Chatham 1998

Friday 11th, Saturday 12th & Sunday, 13th of September.

6th Airborne Division Reunion Dinner

Saturday, 12th September at the Victory Club, London - A coach will be provided for members as usual, and a separate dinner will be arranged for the ladies in the Grill Room. If you wish to come on board, then early notification will avoid disappointment and would be most helpful, should you wish your lady to be included.

Finally, from the Chairman and all members of the Chatham Branch, "Good Luck" for a complete success to the Association Committee regarding the World Cup Lottery.

Yorkshire Branch

By Charlie Dunk

Hello once again from a sunny and warm Yorkshire. We continue to meet on a Friday evening every two months. Currently, we are looking forward to the Ripon weekend where we will be hosting the AEA General Meeting. Will this be another mini-reunion? The Yorkshire Branch certainly looks forward to hosting you for the weekend. I would like to thank the ladies who attend our meetings, we don't mention you very often and thought it was about time we changed that. Thank you for your support and letting us go out to play!

The Branch had an excellent Annual Dinner in the WOs and Sergeants' Mess 38 Engineer Regiment at Ripon. Guest of Honour being Chris Davies, who at very short notice, stood in for Brigadier Garth Hewish; he was unable to attend due to overseas commitments. We also chose to pick the only day of the year when it snowed heavily and several guests were delayed. We finally sat down to dinner about an hour and a half late. Thanks to the chefs, dinner was not spoilt and we all enjoyed the food. Chris Davies gave the after dinner address followed by a rendition of an "Airborne" poem by an extremely nervous Colin Walker. You did an excellent job Colin!

For those of you that are computer literate, I had developed an Internet site for the Airborne Engineers Association. Unfortunately, as I was about to publish the site live, I had problems with my 'hard drive' (it's my age you know) and lost all the data.

I now have to do it all again. Another few weeks should see it through. If any of you out there want to contact me, my e-mail address is 'HYPERLINK' [REDACTED] - I look forward to receiving some e-mails from all over the world.

Summer is now here, enjoy it while it lasts. Hope to see some of you at Ripon, all the best until next issue, regards to everyone everywhere.

South West Branch

The South West Branch has been formed since June 1997 and has 33 members on its books to date. We have meetings every month, with an average attendance of ten people. We meet at Patchway Royal British Legion, Bristol. Contact Eric Rundle on [REDACTED] for a detailed map. If you are in the area you are all very welcome. We will be organising a social evening at the next meeting and details will follow later. I was voted in as 'Chief Scribe' (CS) at last year's AGM, because I felt it would be interesting for members of the branch to recall their experiences with the Squadron. I intend to then keep a diary for everybody's future interest, this time I have asked Eric Rundle, the Branch Chairman, to give us his story. 'He bought me a beer,' so let's pull up the old sand bag and swing that lantern with Eric.

"Eric joined the Squadron in 1954 (the year I was born) when they had just come back from Egypt. He obviously fell in with bad company, what choice do you have! Sapper Pocklington taught Eric to ride a motor bike that they quickly crashed, and Eric was laid up in the Cambridge Military hospital with a broken leg! This was obviously bad, because he ended up at Marchwood for the rest of his time in the Squadron, eventually leaving the Army in 1956. That should have been the end of his involvement, until a little trouble with a canal in Egypt meant he was again called up as a reservist in 1956. He was posted to 1 Troop and sent to Cyprus (come to think of it, the Squadron had more of a claim to it than the Greeks or Turks, we always seem to be there) before landing (from a boat) at Port Said on 5th November 1956. He was there for a few days doing general engineering tasks. He was then shipped back to Cyprus for another month before being flown back to the UK in a Shackleton of the RAF. In December he was de-mobbed. Eric decided that the army should have the pleasure of his company again in 1962 (he just didn't learn), and joined up in the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment and drove various tracked vehicles, he was in Cyclops Squadron. This, I am told, was the forerunner of the RAC Airborne Squadron formed a little later. Eric eventually left the Army and worked as a pub landlord, bus driver, MOD driver and security officer, amongst others. He would like to be remembered to all his old colleagues, especially Denis Scott and Rick Mogg, but if anyone remembers Eric he would love to have a talk over old times ... Anytime!"

Eric sends his thanks to all those who sent him cards and good wishes after his recent triple heart by-pass operation. He would like to send his best wishes to all members of the Association from the South West Branch. Finally, the Branch are organising a short service at the grave side of all those 9 Company men killed on their way to Arnhem and who are now buried in the church yard at Weston Super-Mare. Details of this can be obtained from Eric on [REDACTED], closer to September, when the date for Double Hills is known.

North West Branch

Our third AGM was held on 18th April, with ten members attending. There being no volunteers to hold office, the existing team was re-elected:

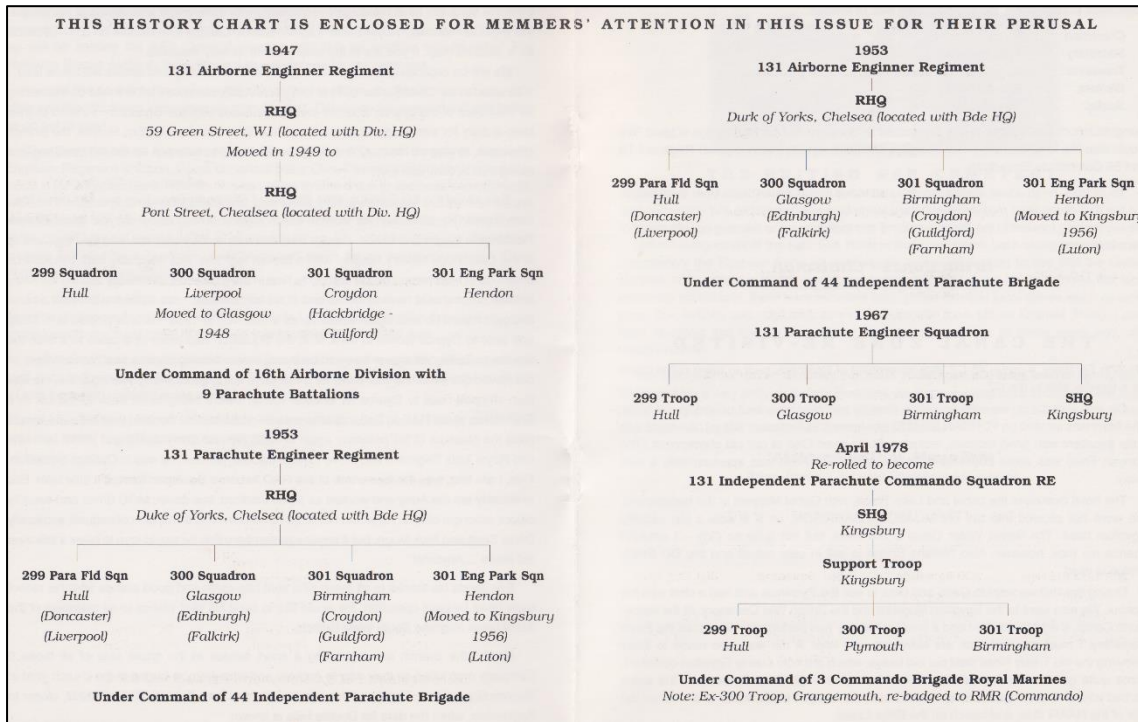
Chairman: Brian Jones
Secretary: Alan Marshall
Treasurer: Ken Cole
Welfare: Eric Mathews
Social: Jim Percy

Congratulations are in order to Joe Timberlake on the award of the REA Badge of Merit. We would also like to welcome our new member, Mal Joinson (131 Para Engineer Regiment TA and 59 Commando Squadron).

Yours truly, Brian Jones, paid a ten day visit to the Canal Zone (Stella Beer even better, but the flies recognised me) for what turned out to be a very enjoyable and interesting trip. We are looking forward to the Ripon weekend and look forward to meeting up with many of our old friends.

Brian Jones - Chairman
Airborne Engineers Association

History of 131 Independent Parachute Engineers



THE CANAL ZONE RE-VISITED

On 27th February, a group of 48 CZ Vets assembled at Heathrow prior to flying out to Cairo for a ten-day visit to the CZ.

On arrival at Cairo, we went by coach (heavily escorted by armed police) to our hotel. The hotel was located on FORSAN ISLAND (we knew it as Pegasus Village), the hotel was quite excellent with good facilities, including Stella beer! One of our old checkpoints (The Banyan Tree) was some 200m up the road, also Ferry Point was approximately a mile away.

The hotel overlooks the canal and Lake Timsa, with Gebel Maryam in the background. We were not allowed into the old MOASCAR GARRISON, as it is now a top security Egyptian base. The Sweet Water Canal is still there, but not quite so dirty - I wouldn't chance my luck, however. Also Nefisha Bridge is still in use, rebuilt and the DD Bailey Bridge is used.



THE BRITISH WAR CEMETERY

During the visit we went to Cairo and Giza to see the Pyramids and had a chat with the Sphinx. We also went to the Egyptian Museum and the British War Cemetery. At the former North Camp, a wreath was laid and a small ceremony was performed. We visited the Fayid Cemetery, I must say that both are extremely well kept. A trip was also made to Suez following the old Treaty Road past our old bases, which are now mainly Egyptian occupied, some quite good and some derelict. Our old camp at Fayid was derelict with the same

barbed wire and tent bases. We also called in at the Morgan Hotel, which is almost on the site of the NAAFI club, and beach on the Bitter Lakes.

After having lunch at the Red Sea Hotel in Suez, we came back along the canal road (surprisingly the Egyptian Army let us through). It was interesting to see that the Gebel Maryam area is now a beach resort and holiday village for the locals. I found the food extremely acceptable, there were excellent fresh grilled fish and local dishes, such as lentil soup, rice, kebabs and chapattis, as well as European food, but no Khansia (Pork). I also have to report that the same family of flies that plagued me all those years ago, still recognised me!

On Saturday we had an excellent barbecue at the hotel and were entertained by belly dancers! After a very early start (3am Reveille), we made our way back to Cairo for the flight home. Altogether a most enjoyable visit and I would recommend it for a future visit. It was well organised by the Suez Canal Veterans Association.

'Alikum Salam Masalam'

Brian Jones - Airborne Engineers Association

News Items

LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

From Western Australia and ex-members of the Squadron known to be out here

Pegasus Airborne Forces Association of WA, membership of which is open to ex-serviceman who have, in war and peace, served in any arm of the Imperial Army, known as Army Air Corps or Airborne Forces of any member country of the British commonwealth, or its Allies, and who is domiciled in Western Australia.

Members of the above being ex-RE as follows:

Jim Crozier	9 Para Squadron, early 1960s
Bob Waddell	9 Para Squadron, 1960s (Percy Planter of Bahrain)
Ken Barnes	9 Para Squadron, late 1960s ACC
Derek Withers	1 Para Squadron, 9 Para Coy, WW 2 period
Don Newman	9 Para Squadron, early and late 1960s

Others: George Jones, who many will be aware of after recent visits to the UK and McCabe, younger of the two brothers. He enquired about Pegasus, but nothing further was heard, so he may well have returned home. There is an Ex-Corporal Bedding, storeman from the early 1960s, the name of which escapes me, but Big John Smith would know, he is the ex-Vice President of the Dunkirk Vets.

We are an ageing association, unable to attract and keep younger members. Over half served in World War 2, but even so, we have been getting a turnout of 54 plus for the past few years on our Annual March through Perth, on what is known as Anzac Day.

As a nomadic association, we book space where and when we want it, committee meetings now bi-monthly, usually at a member's home. General meetings are now quarterly at a Returned Service League Club, both meetings were previously monthly. The first Wednesday in every month is a lunchtime social get-together in the Anzac Club, Perth. Ex- Airborne visitors from the UK are always welcomed, several have appeared from time to time.

Annual events include the Anzac Day March and social, the Annual Dinner - previously Dinner/Dance on A/B Forces Day, Christmas drinks and barbecue at a member's home, and several invites to various remembrance parades supporting other associations. Past activities have included barbecues, "bring and buy sales" and river trips on the Swan River (may ring a bell with some of those who served in the Squadron Higher Echelon who loved to go on a swan). Car rallies and pub-like picnics, invites to other association's functions, namely ex-RAF, the RN, Submariners, Royal Marines and Guard Units.

We have also been known to mix with Australian Associations, and there have been several occasions when groups of members have been invited to the Sergeant and Corporal Messes of the Special Air Service Regiment, which resulted in a general invitation to Pegasus members for official functions. Still, as stated, these are past activities, the armchair being more inviting for some. Street walking for 'oldies after dark is now not recommended and drink driving is a definite No No!

In competition with the Guards and Royal Marines, we strive to be better ambassadors for the UK on our Annual March. We have been pleased to receive compliments to that effect, albeit after reminders to button blazers, place the beret correct and a general gee up!

Ken Barnes, at present, is in his third year as President, and we still make use of his catering skills, which he does for a living. Pegasus is a "Busman's Holiday" for him, at least two thirds of his time is spent away from civilisation. Our membership is now under 80 and volunteers do not come forward to serve on the Committee, but somehow we struggle on - the willing horses still being flogged!

Chris Chambers

Association Membership Secretary

Since the last Newsletter, another twenty-six (26) members have joined us, they are as follows:

Anthony Dalton	59 Independent CDO Squadron RE 9 Para Squadron RE 49 Field Sqn (EOD)	1976-1981 1982-1986 1986-1989
James Fleming	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1966-1969
Tod Rothwell	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1954-1956
David Rance	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1959-1964
Keith Robinson	131 Independent Para Squadron RE	1967-1976
Alfred Scott	1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th Para & Airborne Squadrons RE 249 Field Coy RE (Airborne)	1944-1945 1945-1946
James French	9 Para Squadron RE	1982-1985
Peter Claridge	131 Para Engineer Regiment RE	1953-1965
Thomas Disley	131 Para Engineer Regiment RE	1960
Joseph Davidson	9 Para Squadron RE	1997-Serving
Danny Wyer	9 Para Squadron RE	Serving
Harry Evans	9 Independent Field Squadron RE	1954-1958
Roderick Townley	9 Para Squadron RE 59/131 CDO Squadron RE	1979-1984 1987-1997
Derek Leggett	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1956-1959
John Tucker	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1957-1959
Gordon Scott	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1957-1960
John Henry	21 SAS Regiment 22 SAS Regiment	1966-68/1974-84 1968-1974
Christopher Garrard	9 Para Squadron RE	1990-1996
Mike Holdsworth	131 Independent Para Squadron RE 131 Independent Cdo Squadron RE	1967-1978 1978-1994
Phil Taylor	9 Para Squadron RE	1984-1987
Peter Jackson	9 Para Squadron RE	1989-1996
Peter Myatt	9 Independent Airborne Squadron RE	1949-1956
Stephen Gordon	9 Para Squadron RE	1988-1994
James Barton	131 Para Engineer Regiment RE	1959-1973
Derik Latham	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1970-1972
James Dudley	9 Independent Para Squadron RE	1958-1959

To all new members

“Welcome to the Association”

MEMBERSHIPS

I’ve had a number of telephone calls and letters regarding Special Forces personnel joining the Association, so I would like to put the record straight on this matter. It was proposed and passed at a previous AGM, that “Sappers” who have or are serving with any unit that has a parachuting capability in its order of battle, are entitled to join the AEA.

If some of our members object or feel that Royal Engineers who pass the UK Special Forces or Commando sections, regular or TAVR, are not Airborne Sappers, they need to think again!! Gentlemen, we are not talking here about sport freefall parachuting, etc, etc. It’s about Wings presented to personnel by the RAF, after a lot of blood, sweat and tears have been shed to earn the right, and the pride, to wear them, the colour of the beret does not matter or even come into it.

Since carrying out the duties of Membership Secretary, I have rejected at least twenty applicant “wanna be’s” over the last few years. So don’t worry, all applications to join us are checked out, I’m not playing the numbers game to make the AEA look strong. I do my best to keep our Association true to what it was formed to represent “The Airborne Sapper.”

BOXING

On behalf of the members who attended the Squadron v 59 Independent Commando RE boxing finals night at Maida Gym, Aldershot, may I express our thanks to the OC Admin Officer and SSM of 9 Squadron for their kind invitation to what turned out to be a very enjoyable and entertaining evening.

59 Squadron won the final in great style and all credit must go to them. 9 Squadron put on a good show, a lot of guts and courage was displayed for all to see. 50 of the bouts were more like extended milling sessions, and one can only have the highest admiration for the contestants for giving 100% and doing the business.

The curry and booze afterwards, courtesy of the Squadron, made it a night to remember for everyone!

CONGRATULATIONS

Jon Stubbs (Chatham Branch) has won three first prizes at the British Military Models Display held in the Princes Hall, Aldershot.

Everyone who saw the Airborne Engineers display section at the Chatham RE Museum during the AGM Celebrations last year will be familiar with his work.

You can contact Jon on [REDACTED], should you require to commission a model for any presentations in the future.

PERSONNEL

The news of the loss of two of our members since the last Newsletter, Colonel Ian Wilson and John Davies, has left us all very sad and the AEA is now without two very popular gentlemen, who will be very much missed indeed. Our condolences go to all of their families and loved ones.

Finally, many thanks to the members who have kept me updated with the change of address and telephone numbers and for names of potential new members.

“Happy Landings”

Chris

CHRIS CHAMBERS

Membership Secretary

[REDACTED]

Association Shop

Items available & applicable prices

Description	Price	Postage & Packing
Association Ties (Pegasus logo)	£12.50	75p - UK
Association Bow Ties (Pegasus logo)	£7.50	60p - UK
Association Blazer Badges	£12.00	60p - UK
Association Jumpers Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo and embroidered "Airborne Engineers" (Sizes: 38-48")	£18.50	£2.60 - UK*
Association Sweatshirts Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo Embroidered "Airborne Engineers" (Sizes: M/L/XL)	£14.00	£2.60 - UK*
Association Polo Shirts Fred Perry style • Maroon or blue with Pegasus Logo Embroidered "Airborne Engineers" (Sizes: M/L/XL)	£14.50	£2.50 - UK*
Association T-Shirts Maroon only with Pegasus Logo Embroidered "Airborne Engineers" (Sizes: L/XL)	£8.50	£1.00- UK
Association Shields	£15.50	£2.60 - UK*
Book 'The 9th' by Tom Purves, Ex-9 Indep Para Sqn RE	£14.00	£3.50 - UK*
A Memoir of 9 Parachute Squadron RE in the Falklands Campaign 1982 by Major C.M. Davies, MBE RE	Membership Price £12.00	£1.00- UK
Stick Pins (Parachute Wings)	£2.60	60p - UK
Anniversary Silk Ties Double logo of Pegasus and Wings	£15.00	75p - UK
Christmas Cards (6's) AEA badge on cover	£3.25	60p - UK
Pair of Association Cuff Links /As Blazer Badge but slightly smaller	£8.50	£1.50-UK

Cheques should be made payable to:
Airborne Engineers Association

'Recorded Delivery

Would overseas members please send cheques in £ Pounds Sterling from your local Bank or International Money Order from your Post Office.

"My thanks to you all for your continued support. Until next time, yours aye!"

Jan

Obituaries



COLONEL I.T.C. WILSON, MBE, MC

Ian Wilson, Vice-President of the Association, died on 17th January 1998 after a short illness, aged 74. He was commissioned in May 1943 and as one of the youngest Platoon Commanders in the Corps and took part in the invasion of France on 'D' Day 6th June 1944.

He landed with his platoon from 73 Field Company shortly before 'H' Hour. Each man carried 24lbs of explosives and their task was to clear a lane through the beach obstacles before the arrival of the following waves of assault landing craft. This, they managed to do, despite casualties sustained while working on foot on the open beach and before the next high tide covered the obstacles.

He was awarded the Military Cross for his gallantry on 'D' Day. He went on to serve throughout the campaign in Northwest Europe, during the course of which he was involved in bridging operations on the Rivers Seine, Maas, Rhine and Elbe. He was then posted to Palestine where he served with 23 Field Squadron, before returning to the UK to join 3 Airborne Squadron after initial parachute training. During a long career, he subsequently served again in Airborne Forces as Adjutant of 131 Airborne Engineer Regiment (TA) 1952- 1954, OC 9 Independent Parachute Squadron 1961-63, and British Airborne Liaison Officer to the US Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 1963-64.

Between these tours he held a number of staff appointments and served in a variety of units, including the Bomb Disposal Unit, which he commanded from 1967-69. His last appointment was as the Defence Attache in Bangkok, after which he retired from the army in 1979. He was mentioned in Dispatches for service in Cyprus in 1958 and awarded the MBE in 1970.

In retirement he became a schoolmaster for a number of years, and devoted himself to local affairs and to Services Associations, which included the British Legion and the RE Association, in addition to our own.



The Standards of these Associations were paraded at his funeral in Kings Somborne, Hampshire, which was attended by a large number of his old comrades. 9 Parachute Squadron provided an impeccable bearer party and a bugler from the RE band sounded the last post and Reveille at the end of a very moving ceremony.

IN MEMORY
Colonel Ian Wilson, MBE, MC, RE

We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow Sally and her family.

MR SIDNEY BOWLER

Mr Sidney Bowler died on 1st November 1997, aged 75 after a long illness. He was a wartime soldier and saw more than his fair share of action and danger.

His military service first saw him as a young Sapper in 142 Field Park Squadron, part of 2nd Armoured Division in Greece and Crete. After losing all their equipment in Crete the Division was disbanded, but reappeared on the battle field in the Western Desert as 7th Armoured Division, with Sid now in 21 Field Squadron. After the successful desert campaign against Rommel at El Alemain, he volunteered for the new 'F' Parachute Squadron being formed at Moascar, Egypt.

After Tunis and Italy the now re-numbered 4th Parachute Squadron returned to the UK and joined the 1st Airborne Division.

In civilian life Sid gave a great deal of his time to ex-servicemen's organisations. For many years he was first Vice-Chairman and then Chairman of the Kemble and District Royal British Legion. He was the Standard Bearer and every year gave his time as a poppy seller during Armistice Week. At his funeral attended by many of his former colleagues and friends a collection was made and donated to the Poppy Appeal Fund.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Betty and son Christopher.

MR JOHN DAVIES

John Davies, a former member of 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment, passed away suddenly on 24th April. Very little is known of John's private life other than that he was a very active member of an amateur dramatic group and very keen sailor. He was a regular attendee at the Aldershot Branch of the AEA and will be sadly missed by all members.

Our sincere condolences go to his wife Margaret, son Peter and daughters Fran and Katherine.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL PAUL DICKISON

Colonel Dickison died on 17th April 1998 after a long illness. He was sixty-eight and grew up in New Zealand as a farmer's son, where he derived a fierce independence and a passion for rugby and cricket.

He was commissioned from Sandhurst in 1951 and served with 25 Regiment in the Canal Zone and then went up to Cambridge to read Engineering. It was there that he met his future wife Bunty whom he married in the summer of 1955. After commanding a troop he moved on to Brigade HQ as Staff Captain Adj. They then had a year at the US Army Engineer School, followed by two years in East Africa. He took the long Transportation Course and then returned to East Africa seconded to the Railways and harbours Board.

As OC 9 Para Squadron he returned with them to Kenya for a long road project. It was at this time that he became known as 'Super Swan.' After his tour with the Squadron, he was posted as Brigade Major to the RSME and on promotion to the Army Apprentice Collage Chepstow, and later to the MOD.

He retired early and worked for Fairy Engineering, and Saxon Oil on North Sea oil exploration. He became deputy chief of FIMBRA Regulating Financial Services and finally formed his own company COURTYARD.

The family lived in Suffolk and he was involved in local affairs. He was a prime mover in forming a cricket team and a fitting memorial to him will be a New Zealand oak to be planted on the cricket ground. He played cricket and rugby for Sandhurst, the Corps, and the Squadron. He continued playing cricket for the village until illness overtook him. He finally succumbed to leukaemia after a two-year fight. He was full of praise for the care and treatment he received from the NHS.

Our condolences go to Bunty and her family.

THUS IT WAS

It was descending from the sky on a bright Sunday lunchtime.
It was welcoming smiles and warm handshakes from Dutch civilians.
It was marching down leafy lanes and onto the quiet Sunday afternoon streets.
Suddenly it was machine guns.

It was stretcher-bearers.
It was hand grenades and shouts of 'die you bastard'.
It was dodging from doorway.
It was leaping from garden to garden.

It was smashing out of windows and the beating out of fires.
It was noise. It was night. It was morning. It was second lift.
It was more men, more strength, more chances of success.
Night followed days and days followed night.

And it was carrying in of the wounded and carrying out of the dead.
It was frantically waving yellow silk triangles.
It was choking at the sight of much needed supplies drifting out of reach.
It was cursing, it was praying.

It was the screeching of panzers and the whirring of mortar bombs.
It was the mutilated trees and the mutilated men.
It was crapping in the corner of a garage or the corner of a slit trench.
It was the victory V' sign, stuttered out on a Bren gun.

It was cries of 'Whoa Ho Mohammed!'
And the groans of the badly wounded men.
It was dirt in the mouth and the ringing in the ears.
It was rain soaked clothing and blood soaked earth.

It was shortage of food, of ammunition, of sleep, of hope.
It was surrender but not defeat.
It was a brave, brave try.
It was ARNHEM, 1944.

The late 'Lucky' Luckhurst
1st Parachute Squadron RE
