



Airborne Engineers Association

Registered Charity No. 1009201

Newsletter

APRIL 2000

PRESIDENT

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Brigadier G.A. Hewish, MBE

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From the Chair

Dear Members,

Millennium, Year 2000, New Century - all these expletives have been telling us we are in the New Year! I am aware that our situation is moving into a new phase. It is 60 years since Airborne Forces was formed and we know where we have come from; Dunkirk, Arnhem, Palestine, the Falklands and many other areas of conflict. Squadrons have been amalgamated down to just 9 Squadron. Although that is all in the past, it is this very history that has made us what we are and it must be preserved.

Consequently we must come up with new ideas, new initiatives to build upon and so carry forward the Association. We must go from strength to strength ensuring it will last into the next century - 2100.

The February OGM was held at Aldershot, superbly organised by Dick Brown. I felt we had an excellent meeting with a full agenda, everyone participated and from that two significant ideas were agreed. We decided to up-market the Newsletter, we also discussed the movement of the Rock Room as well as a lot of memorabilia when it has to close down. Blackpool was discussed and it whetted everyone's appetite. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone for their kind hospitality over the weekend. This really is the start of our move ahead.

Bob Prosser
Chairman

Email from Maj Rob Rider

OC 9 Para Sqn (Designate) August 2000

A special greeting to all AEA members. I'm thrilled that I've finally hit the AEA website. Although 9 Para Sqn is currently re-rolling I can assure you that it will retain its "Airborne" qualities and ethos long into the 21st century. I am currently working at the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) at Northwood and the awesome reputation of 9 Para Sqn is well known amongst all 3 services there. I have almost daily dealings with Maj-Gen Cedric Delves who remembers the Sqn fondly from the days when Peter Wall and John Mullin were OCs (early 90s). Only 59 Cdo has a similar reputation throughout the Armed Forces. A request for all AEA members to stay in touch, either via the Sqn direct, or through this page, and we will let you know the latest in Airborne Engineering!

Warmest Regards
Rob Rider

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held at the United Services Club Birmingham on 16th October 1999

1. Opening Address

The Chairman, Tom Ormiston, opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and stated how delighted he was to see such a large gathering, many having travelled long distances. In particular he would like to acknowledge the dedication of Terry Disley from the USA and Dave Rance from Canada, who had journeyed so far to attend the AGM/Reunion. Tom gave the apologies of our President, Brig. G.A. Hewish MBE, who regrettably had a prior engagement. The attendance of 88 members was a credit to the Association.

2. Apologies

There were 31 notifications of apology.

3. Silent Tributes

The members stood for one-minute silence in respect to the following colleagues who had passed away during the past year:

Bryan Andrews	Michael Gratton	Keith Molyneaux
Leslie Bryant	Stanley Halliwell	Leonard Raggett
Colin Cameron	Anthony Hepper	Gordon Shaw
Robert Codd	Geoffrey Norton	John Shinner
John Coleman	William Owens	Andrew Stirling
Brinley Joynson	George Paine	Norman Towler
Thomas Lewis	Dennis Parker	Basil Ponder
Charles Gilbert	Eric Lancaster	Ernest Warrender
Adino Tunningley		

4. Minutes of the 1998 Annual General Meeting

Proposed by: Louis Gallagher

Seconded by: Tom Tuddenham

That the minutes of the 1998 AGM, held at Great Yarmouth were a true record of the proceedings.

Agreed: Unanimously

5. Chairman's Report

Prior to his report on the Association, the Chairman gave his usual enlightening and humorous communique on the state of the nation, which was enjoyed by all.

Reporting on the Association he stated that we are progressing in all spheres. He highlighted the excellent relationship that we have with both 9 Parachute Squadron RE and the Royal Engineers Association and explained how supportive they had been. The Chairman wished to express our sincere gratitude to Col. James Ray, who is retiring as Controller of the REA, for the support and advice he had always given so readily since our formation. Finally, he confirmed that this Association had accepted the responsibility of laying a wreath on the behalf of the "Corps" at Arnhem each year when presenting our own tribute.

6. Treasurers Report

The Treasurer, Capt. Dick Brown RE, gave a detailed report of the Association account as at 15th October 1999.

Assets	£
Cash in bank	
Deposit Account	
Value of shop stock (at cost)	
Property Value	
Total Assets	
Liabilities	

Newsletter	████████
Total Liabilities	████████
Net Working Capital	████████

The Treasure further commended Jan Chambers for the tremendous work that she does on behalf of the Association. He stated that the finance she generates operating our "AEA Shop" is the fundamental reason why our funds remain so healthy. A unanimous vote of appreciation was recorded in appreciation for Jan's sterling work.

Proposed by: John Thompson
 Seconded by: Brian Jones
 That the Audited Treasures Account as presented be accepted
 Accepted: Unanimously

The Chairman asked that a vote of thanks be recorded in the minutes in appreciation to Capt. Dick Brown for a well-presented Statement of Account.

7. Membership Secretary's Report

The Membership Secretary, Chris Chambers, gave an up to date report of the membership of the Association. He stated that he had recently issued enrolment number 1020. However, over the past 10 years many comrades have passed away which has reduced our numbers. He requested that each one of us present accept the challenge of recruiting at least one new member before the AGM at Blackpool (year 2000).

8. Amendment to the Constitution

The following amendment to Rule 7 of the Airborne Engineers Association Constitution was agreed unanimously:

9. Committees

a) Executive Committee

An Executive Committee comprising of the following officers elected at the Annual General Meeting shall control the affairs of the Association. The President, 2 Vice Presidents, Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Assistant Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Membership Secretary and Entertainment Member. From these, three members shall be selected to act as trustees of the Association.

Retiring Officers shall be eligible to become candidates for re-election without nomination. All other candidates for election as officers shall be nominated in writing by two branches/clubs not later than the 31 July each year. Names of those nominated shall be circulated with the notice of the Annual General Meeting. In the event of there being no nomination in accordance with the foregoing for any office, nominations may be received at the Annual General Meeting.

b) Advisory Committee

An Officer or Committee Member considered to have made an exceptional contribution to the Association of not less than ten years continued service shall be eligible for election as a Life Vice President. Nominations for new holders of this office shall be made in writing to the Hon Secretary by the 31 July each year.

9. Election of Officers

The election of officers was unanimous and is as follows:

President	Brig G A Hewish MBE
Vice Presidents	Col C.M. Davies MBE Maj. W Rudd MBE
Chairman	Mr. E.C. Prosser BEM
Hon Secretary	Mr. R.P. Coleman
Hon Assistant Secretary	Mr. C.J. Dunk
Hon Treasurer	Capt. R. Brown RE

Aldershot Branch

By Fred Gray (██████████)

The New Year started on a very sad note with the death of Mrs Margaret Pedder. Margaret had been taken ill in October and passed away on 7 January in the Frimley Park Hospital. Our deepest sympathy are extended to Ralph and his family.

The period over the Christmas and New Year was very quiet with very little activity at branch level. We had decided that the Christmas dinner would be held at the end of January enabling us to get away from all the hype and expense of the New Millennium. The delay did not deter anyone as fifty-two members and guests sat down for dinner. Charlie Edwards came over from Gloucestershire, with Dennis Healey and Louis Gallagher travelling over from Somerset. Mrs Betty Andrews and her son came up from Horley in Surrey. A number of our regular attendees travelled from as far as Wiltshire and the south coast of Hampshire. Wally Clift managed to persuade just about everyone present to buy raffle tickets and raised a considerable amount of money for our branch funds. Bud Grocock, who had travelled down from his home in Chesterfield, took the opportunity to inform us how much money he had raised from his charity fund raising events. His latest achievement was a cycle ride from Canada to Mexico.

We have been able to welcome a new member to our branch since the last newsletter. Ken Roberts re-joined the branch, and with his wife Sylvia, attended our Millennium dinner. We welcome them both, and look forward to seeing them at our functions throughout the year.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Captain Chris Gosling on the award of the MBE in the Queens New Year Honours list. No doubt a very well earned award. His investiture was at Buckingham Palace on 7 March. His wife Jean and parents were there to witness the ceremony

The Aldershot Branch would like to hear from any former Airborne Sapper living in the catchment area of Hampshire, Surrey, and Wiltshire with a view to joining our already thriving branch. You will be made very welcome. Our meetings are held at midday on a Sunday. This allows members with distance to travel to drive during daylight hours. We meet on alternate months, which have proved most successful, as attendance figures have improved, and we also had the pleasure of having Sunday lunch in local restaurants/hotels with the ladies in our life. Come along, you will enjoy the company.

Birmingham Branch

by Bunny Brown

Another New Year another new Committee - changes from last year are:

Steve Brown in the Chairman's seat

Vice Chair: Brian Care and Gordon Page

Secretary: Still yours truly

Branch Membership: George Barratt,

Entertainments: Dave Clarke, Mike Holdsworth and Myself.

Treasury is still held by our ever-faithful Wendy Clarke, assisted by Mike Holdsworth

Just a line or two about our Annual Dinner Dance which was held on the 4th December last year at the Posthouse Birmingham Airport. The meal was a splendid five courses, arranged by our ever-faithful Dinner organiser Roger Howies. We sat down in excess of 90 people with Brigadier Barker Wyatt as our Guest of Honor. This year many of us decided to take up the generous discount on the rooms that Roger procured for us, I was happy to see that I am not the only one who suffers on the morning after, although the breakfast was first class. Thanks to all who travel far and wide to attend this Annual function.

We are at the moment filling our diaries for the coming year; I look forward to seeing old faces at Ripon, Elvington and Blackpool.

The Trent Chase Tragedy

As remembered by Bunny Brown

The Cromwell Lock Tragedy where 131 Para Sqn RE (V) lost 10 members of 300 Tp.

On the Weekend of 26/27/28 September 1975 elements of the Sqn gathered at Burton on Trent for a river navigation exercise named Trent Chase. The Sqn had four assault boats with Johnson outboard motors, (which had a bad malfunction rate). The boats and crews were put into the water early on Saturday morning with the intention of going down stream towards the sea, and finishing near Carlton on Trent (north of Newark) on Sunday morning.

The weather was clear and dry but quite cold for the time of year. I RV'd with the crews occasionally or when they had a mechanical breakdown, when I would exchange the engines.

The Jocks (300 troop) had a bad time of it. All of their engines had problems, and they dropped so far back that I was told to get them out of the river during the Saturday evening. I recovered them from the water at a place called Radcliff on Trent, ferried them to an RAF camp near Syerston, where they had a brew and some hot soup. The Sqn QMSI and myself re-launched them at a marina near North Muskham. By now 301 Troop had also broken down, and with no more spare engines available were recovered from the water. At dawn on Sunday I received a radio message to take my party to the final RV. While driving up the AI we noticed a Wessex helicopter hovering over the river near to the village of Cromwell. On arrival at the Final RV, the QMSI informed me that there had been a tragic accident, and that most of the Jocks had perished when their boat went over a weir.

We were told to return to barracks immediately. News bulletins later confirmed our worst fears, that 10 out of the 11 occupants of the boat had lost their lives.

Cromwell Lock Memorial Service

1st October (1400 hours)

A memorial service is to be held on Sunday 1st October at the Cromwell Lock Memorial. On the behalf of the Birmingham branch, we extend a cordial invitation to all members of the Association and their families to attend this tribute service. If you are going to attend, please convey to me the names and numbers, so that sufficient buffet and refreshments can be provided. The buffet will be held at the "local" aptly named "Memory Lane" following the service.

A full program will be available later in the year. It looks like being a good turnout, as applications to attend have been received from: PRA (North), The Royal Artillery, British Waterways, The Lord Mayor of Nottingham & Civic Dignitaries, The Royal British Legion, 73 Engineer Regiment and 131 Commando Engineers.

Chatham Branch

by Eric Blenkinsop

On reflection, we must look at 1999 as a bit of a mixed bag for the Branch!

On the positive side:

Numerous pleasant and fruitful meetings were held throughout the year, culminating with a most successful Christmas lunch in the Pegasus Suite (designated for the day) at the King Charles Hotel on 12th December. It was most pleasing to see so many of our outstation members who had made a real effort to be in attendance - President John & Sue Grosvenor from Bexhill, Bert & Dee Fordham from mid Sussex, Bob & Pauline Woolley from Rochford (Essex), Ron Gibson and family from Hornchurch, John O'Connor from Mottingham (it was great to meet your family John), and Bill & Freda Perry from Eltham. Swelling our numbers even further^ were of course our locally residing members and their ladies. Regrettably, Mike & Uschie Farrow was unable to attend as Mike was still in the recovery stages from his recent surgery.

On the negative side:

Several Branch members suffered quite severe setbacks in their health. However, we go forward into the year 2000 in great heart; happy in the knowledge that resolute colleagues, Frank Shepherd, John Elliot and Mike Farrow have come safely through their various ordeals. Confident also, that with a dedicated Chairman and branch committee we can look forward to going from strength to strength.

Looking to the Future

The following information and programme of events is published particularly for any Association Members who may find themselves in the Chatham locality during year 2000. A warm Medway welcome awaits any Association member/visitor who may wish to join us.

Branch Monthly Meetings

The branch will commence meeting on the 3rd Monday of each month in the WO's & Sgt's Mess, Brompton Barracks. Timings - 7:30 for 8:00 p.m. Due to the military recess periods and other commitments, there will be no meetings held in the months of August or December.

Away Days

30th April - 12:30 for 13:00 hours Sunday lunch at the Harrow, Knockholt - reaching out on the chance of meeting up with Association members who reside within travelling distance.

20th August - 12:30 for 13:00 hours Sunday lunch at the Five Bells, Chailey, East Sussex. This will be followed with afternoon tea and cakes in the company of Bert & Dee Fordham at their home, 'Orchard Cottage' (not Rose Cottage, as was incorrectly stated in the last newsletter)!

Other Events

9th September - A coach trip will be organised for those wishing to attend the 6th Airborne Division RE re-union at the Victory Club, London.

December - Christmas lunch. Venue and dated to be decided.

Finally, we welcome into the Association, Ray Peters from Crayford. Perhaps we can look forward to meeting Ray sometime during the year?

Northern Ireland Branch

By Chris (Poncho) O'Donovan

NI Branch has been fairly active despite our casual formation! We attended the Airborne Forces memorial service at Palace Barracks, which had been organised by the PRA on the 21st November. This was a moving ceremony, which was very well attended by British and American airborne veterans. The memorial garden is a beautiful and tranquil spot that overlooks Belfast Lough, and should be included in the itinerary of anybody making a visit to the island. It's a perfect place for reflection on the sacrifice made by so many young men, in particular the Squadron's great sacrifice in the Falklands.

We were delighted to spot our comrades from Spalding who had made a very long journey to be in attendance. Most would say that the high point of the afternoon was the march past with Mrs Col 'H' Jones VC, taking the salute, but many found it difficult to suppress their amazement at Phil Chatterley's short, sharp, sh*t hot drill movements as he marched up and laid our wreath in a smart and soldier-like manner. Taff Anthony would have cried tears of joy had he been there to witness it!

Geordie Lightowler organised our Christmas lunch which we shared with some of his posse. The venue was the Marquis Downshire, a congenial restaurant in Hillsborough, Co. Down which is to be highly recommended to anyone who might be simultaneously peckish and in the province. No sign of Mandy and Bob despite our closest surveillance! We are now enthusiastically planning our Welsh 3000 campaign (details below), the bookings have been made and names are rolling in. If you fancy joining us, call me on [REDACTED] (home), or [REDACTED] (work) or email [REDACTED] for further information.

NI Branch 'Welsh 3000'

NI Branch AEA is going tabbing on the 19th, 20th and 21st of May in Snowdonia. The object of the exercise is to bag a (good) few Welsh 3000 peaks. If you fancy it then we would love to have you along. We have organised cheap but good accommodation at the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre Indefatigable by Menai Bridge for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. It has a gym, climbing wall, and an indoor swimming pool, sailing and cooking facilities. No eating irons provided so dig out your old racing spoon.

I have booked four family rooms and four six bed dormitory rooms, which currently gives us accommodation for about thirty bodies. At this stage it should be a simple matter to increase or decrease the booking. Camping facilities are also available with up to thirty tent pitches.

Most importantly, there is a bar!

Yorkshire Branch

by Charlie Dunk

Hello, good evening and welcome (said in the voice of David Frost).

We are now coming towards the end of the winter months and spring is just around the corner. The days are getting longer and believe it or not even in Yorkshire the sun is starting to shine and get warmer, thank goodness. Don't you just hate winter?

Over the winter months things have been very quiet here in Yorkshire a couple of meetings in our new home at Minden House in Pontefract. We have our branch AGM on the 10th March, which will have been and gone by the time you are reading this. Our annual dinner is on the 28th April and will be the first dinner in our new meeting place.

The Blackpool 2000 committee, - well Bob Prosser and Tom Thornton - are very busy getting everything set up for the Association AGM in October. From the feedback I am getting I think that Blackpool 2000 is going to be an excellent "Do". If you haven't got your booking in yet you had better do so pretty sharpish or you may find that there is no room at the inn.

Well notes from Yorkshire a bit thin this edition; I will try to do better next time.

I will leave you with a word from my mate Forrest Gump.

"Your chances of winnin' the lottery get a lot better if you buy a ticket."

Good luck - Charlie Dunk

I know Charlie Dunk, my able secretary, has already submitted an article to this newsletter, but admits that it is a little short on content. So here goes with a little more news from the wilds of North Yorkshire. (Don't mention the weather).

I must say that Charlie has been out and about recently; I heard he went to Glen Coe for a week with Lorraine, and obviously, Lorraine had to do all of the map reading! The snow was 4 foot deep and Charlie forgot to pack the skis. Due to his short holiday

Charlie missed the general meeting at Aldershot, we missed you Charlie! Tom Thornton and Baz Henderson made the effort and joined me for what was a very interesting meeting with much detail for the way ahead from our new Chairman. It was nice to sit in the front row with Tom Ormiston who was very relaxed, and I am sure enjoyed being on the other side with no pressure or hassle, well done Tom you did a great job as our Chairman. It is always a great pleasure to meet the members from other branches for a chat and a few beers. A special thanks to Dick Brown for his excellent organisation and from the Yorkshire Branch, many congratulations on his recent marriage to Mary, such a lovely girl. Dick is now posted to Ripon (38 Engr Regt) so we may see him a little more often? Baz and I had a forage into the pubs of Aldershot, the beer is getting better and it was nice to meet some of the 9 Sqn Guys in the Pegasus Pub.

Blackpool 2000 Update

It's now five months since the booking forms went out at the AGM in Birmingham. I know that Tom Thornton - Chief Co-ordinator - has issued a flysheet for Blackpool 2000 in this newsletter but a little more information with regard to availability of rooms at the Norbreck Hotel won't do any harm.

All single accommodation has now been booked, and only a small number of double rooms for a minimum of two nights stay are available. These figures are based on the last check (17 Feb 00). Any member still requiring single accommodation can share a twin bedded room and this can be arranged by contacting the hotel direct. We may well get some extra rooms, but there is no guarantee. I might explain that at the time of booking 12

months ago we had to sign a contract, and any rooms booked and not taken would have to be paid for. Our bookings were based on Great Yarmouth and Birmingham attendance. Anyway all is not lost, and the Norbreck are prepared to run an overflow system into sister hotels if required. The prices for this alternative may be a little dearer!

I do feel that this is going to be a tremendous weekend with many new faces. Incidentally, most of the bookings are for the full three days except for the Birmingham boys who have booked for four!

A quick mention and congratulations to Dave Grimley and Christine who are to be married that weekend at 1130 hours Saturday 14 October. A wedding lunch will take place in the Norbreck for those invited by Dave.

As discussed at the General Meeting on 20th February the AGM will now be held at 1100 hours on Saturday 14 October followed by an OGM. This timing allows members time to travel if not booked in on the Friday night. This will give everyone a chance to relax in the afternoon or attend the wedding lunch prior to the Annual Dinner in the evening.

Finally our Branch Annual dinner will be held in Pontefract on Friday 28 April any members from the Association who wishes to attend please contact me on [REDACTED]. Cost of ticket is £15.00.

Bill Rudd Chairman Yorkshire Branch

Tribute to Courage

A new museum highlighting the role of the Airborne Forces, which helped liberate Europe during the Second World War, is to open in Elvington, near York. The venture will be launched on 25th June at the Yorkshire Air Museum as part of a day commemorating the 60th anniversary of Winston Churchill's request for the establishment of the British Airborne Forces. It will include displays, a march past and a visit by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. The organisers are inviting all former airborne and "special forces" veterans to attend. The Airborne Forces Museum will include displays memorabilia and unique exhibitions.

In the Line of Fire

by Tom Purves

In 1997, Iris and I flew to Canada to attend the first ever reunion of the Saskatchewan Smoke Jumpers since it was initially formed more than fifty years earlier with eight men. I had three individuals to thank for letting me know a reunion was being organised. The first was the only other "Jock" to serve with the S.S.Js, who, like myself, also came from Edinburgh, but now lives in Ontario. He had tried writing to my old address in Edmonton, Alberta and in Edinburgh without success, and as a last resort wrote a letter to the Edinburgh Evening News, which they published. Two members of the association, Ronnie Drummond and Ian Thompson saw it and phoned me. 'Thanks lads!

Smoke Jumping was not new, as both the American forest service and its Russian counterpart had parachute forest fire fighters in the early 1940's. The Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources (D.N.R.) had discussed several options on how to reach a fire quickly, none of which had much merit largely because of the many hours that it would take to reach the fire, and in that time weather conditions could have changed dramatically. So, in the early months of 1947, three forestry officials visited Missoula, Montana, a state in N.W. region of the U.S.A, to evaluate the American system of using parachutists to suppress forest fires. E.J. Marshall the fire control supervisor, his assistant Ansgar Aschim, and Dennis Kelly (an ex Canadian Para who would become boss of the unit all returned fully convinced that this was the best method available at that time. Thus it was, that the S.S.J. became the only smoke jumper unit in Canada. Approximately one hundred and forty men served with the unit over the twenty years of its existence.

Work got under way immediately, and by the summer, eight prospective smoke jumpers had been recruited, training facilities constructed, and equipment purchased. When the time arrived to make their first parachute jump, one of the eight decided that jumping out of a perfectly serviceable aircraft in flight just not 'cup of tea' and he resigned. But worse was to follow that winter! The hanger containing the smoke jumpers' stores and equipment caught fire and burned to the ground! Undaunted by this calamity, everything was up and running by the spring of 1948. A Norseman was the aircraft chosen to transport the men to the fire because it was the first purpose designed bush aircraft; built in Montreal Quebec by Noorduyn Aviation Company.

The unit spent about three weeks in the D.N.R. school at Prince Albert airfield leaning about forest fire suppression, first aid, radio communication, how to pack and repair parachutes - which were often damaged by landing in trees. We were taught the technique of how to drop large trees using chain saws, the use of Mercury or Wajax water pumps if any water was nearby etc, and of course the inevitable ground training and fitness programme.



We operated from Prince Albert until around the middle of May. The Norseman was still on wheels as the ice had not yet fully cleared from the Northern lakes, and by the end of May, the Norseman was put on floats and we moved about 200 miles North to Lac La Ronge where we had our barracks.

The Norseman (note chute between the floats)

La Ronge in the 50's was a small settlement with two stone buildings, the Ranger station, and our barracks, the rest were log cabins and tin shacks,

with a population of not much more than 100, (mostly Cree Indians). It was the "end of the line," a gravel road cut through the bush; mosquitoes and horseflies were in abundance, but we now received free meals and accommodation plus a very healthy pay cheque!

Smoke jumping was not the kamikaze type of work some might think, although it did have its dangers and crashing through the trees was not very pleasant, especially when close to where we landed, as the damn things happened to be on fire! The idea was quite straight forward, our task was to attack the fire and put it out, or keep it contained while still quite small, (usually around quarter to half an acre with flames around six to ten feet high), until reinforcements arrived overland or from the nearest lake or river. There was only one occasion when our crew had to run for our lives when the wind changed direction and the fire began to crown. A crown fire is bad news, fire fighters can do little at this stage but to clear off at high speed, our underwear changing colour as we went! A crown fire is when the flames reach the topmost branches, dragging oxygen in from below like a huge set of bellows! The temperature increases dramatically reaching 1,100 degrees C. Trees literally explode, the sky gets dark with smoke and pine needles, the heat, the noise, and acrid smell of burning timber, led me to question my sanity about why I was there in the first place!

If any pilot flying over the forests of Saskatchewan, or someone in a forest service lookout tower, noticed smoke rising from an area where there was no reason for a fire in that place, they would radio the D.N.R. building at La Ronge. The Ranger would confirm the location on the map and pass all the information to the smoke jumper unit. The Tannoy system would bark out "Jump fire!" and the "on call" team would explode into action. Each smoke jumper (there were two crews of four men for the first three years, this increased to four crews of four smoke jumpers until the unit was disbanded in 1966), would grab his equipment and parachutes the 'hightail' it the fifty or so to the lake where the Norseman was waiting at the dock. The first standby team who were now the 'on call' crew, would assist their colleagues to get 'kitted up,' and from the time the fore siren sounded, until the floats of the Norseman left the water, with its pilot, jumpmaster and four smoke jumpers, the average time was normally 10 minutes.

The flight was always cramped and very uncomfortable, because of our bulky jump suits, parachutes, plus the additional equipment to be dropped to us by parachute after we reached the ground.

We approached the fire from downwind and we would often get the smell of burning timber drifting into the aircraft even at a height of a thousand feet. In those early days of aerial forest fire fighting, methods were somewhat crude, our method to check drift was to throw out the last twenty feet of so a toilet roll directly over the fire which would float lazily down to festoon the trees. The aircraft would then bank round to approach the fire on roughly the same approach and the jump master would assess where the wind had taken the toilet roll and a position worked out on where to drop us, generally two on each flank. We left the aircraft by swinging our legs into a chute in the belly of the Norseman, holding on to the chute as if standing to attention in mid-air! At a signal from the jumpmaster the pilot throttled back the big, single engine, a slap on our helmet from the J.M. followed, which was the signal to "go." We tucked in our arms and disappeared out of the aircraft between the pontoons. Two would jump on the first run and the remaining two on the next. Another pass and the radio and ration box would be dropped, the pilot would circle until we made radio contact to assess what equipment we



wanted dropped. We would then radio that we were all okay and he could now go home. He made one last low pass over our position and we took a compass bearing on the aircraft, as was flying directly towards the river or lake from where we would be picked up. After putting out the fire we would pack out with all our equipment, which could weigh in excess of 90 lbs, the average pack out being between five to ten miles, the longest any crew had to make was about twenty one miles! Luckily our crew missed that one!

Kitting up (the author is facing the camera)



Waiting to enplane for our next mission

Our equipment was fairly primitive, back in the 1950's the parachute was a 28' Derry chute, modelled on the American T5, it had two toggles which open and closed two gores giving some degree of steerage, and a forward speed of about two miles per hour, a reserve chute (a useless appendage), a sheath knife to cut ourselves free if we got 'hung up', a length of nylon rope, a

compass and our jumpsuits, which were made of tough canvas, but not, I might add, fire resistant!! We wore an American football helmet with a metal grill to protect our faces, and a pair of Leckie calf length boots, and very much like the "squadron" we were a close-knit outfit.

There is no doubt smoke jumpers were effective in reducing the amount of forest destroyed by fire as records show, between 1931 and 1941 an annual average of 250 fires consumed 1,800 square kilometres each year, from 1952 until 1962 this statistic dropped to 102 forest fires and 260 square kilometres annually.

The reunion was a marvellous four days, and a great experience to reminisce with old pals, but also tinged with sadness when told Jimmy Beaton who was in the same team as myself, took his pilot's licence and started flying for the Saskatchewan Government Airways and was killed when he crashed in the bush. Ironically he was flying CF-ECF, the aircraft from which we used to jump, In all, just over eighty five returned to La Ronge from all parts of Canada and the USA for the reunion, nine of whom were in at the same time as myself.

George Cox my crew leader, now 66 years old, still flies a Grumman Tracker water bomber!!

That was then!! ... Next issue modern methods of fighting forest fires, the computer, the aircraft, and the forest fire fighter.

131 Independent Commando Squadron RE (V)

By Capt. Paddy Denning 2IC

It has been some time since 131 has put an article in the newsletter, so with this short resume I hope to bring serving and ex serving members of the Association abreast and up to date of what has been happening within 131 Indep Cdo Sqn, and maybe interest some ex regulars who are looking for that bit extra from civilian life!

The squadron previously as 131 Indep Para Sqn RE (V) served as part of 44 Indep Para Bde. In the 70's the squadron re-rolled to the commando role and since then has been part of the orbat of 3 Cdo Bde RM - the only TA Engineer unit to be part of a regular brigade.

59 Indep Cdo Sqn RE provide 3 Cdo Bde RM with the regular Engineer close support forward with the Cdo's. 131 has a vital role in the Bde rear area, for example in the erection and maintenance of the Bde water point, ship to shore, bulk fuel installations and reinforcements to the close support squadron where necessary.

Although having changed to the commando role; the Squadron has maintained its parachuting capability. All ranks that have passed the commando course can apply for basic parachute training at No 1 PTS, RAF Brize Norton. We also have the requirement to have troops trained not only with the LLP but also the SSL parachute; we are one of only a couple of TA units to have this dual capability. At present there are 34 in-date parachute trained personnel based on a troop orbat in the Squadron. We are very lucky that as a minor unit we can still bid for our own Sky van and C130 aircraft for parachute training.

There is within the Squadron an established diving team that maintain themselves in date as required by the Corps and the Defence Diving School. They carry out regular training and assist in many varied tasks. Soldiers are able to apply for diver training and are required to meet the stringent medical and fitness standards; they attend and have to pass the regular diving course at the Defence Diving School.

As with all of the three Services and the Corps in particular, we waited with baited breath for the outcome of the SDR report. It was with some relief that the SDR and the Corps felt that 131 had, and still has, a vital role to play. Not only would we maintain our overall numbers, but also the troop locations in London, Plymouth, Hull and Birmingham.

With the ever increasing call on the services; and in particular the 'Sappers,' to meet the ever more demanding role in providing support for operations, humanitarian and peace support, 131 have found itself providing some form of support to 3 Cdo Bde, the Corps and other arms. Although the support is generally not of squadron strength, it has allowed and assisted other units to fulfil their own operational requirements and training.



Commando Training - River Crossing

In recent years a troop supported an infantry battle group on Ex Pond Jump West for six weeks in Canada. Again a troop (-) provided support to 40 Cdo Group during nine months amphibious deployment on Ex Ocean Wave. Other support has ranged from plant operators and machines working to improve range facilities, a section working with the SBS in Malawi, a detachment to the UN in Cyprus and support to the FI Fd Sqn. The Squadron has also supported exercises in Jordan, USA, Egypt, Oman and Brunei.

Over the past few years the Squadron has

held its annual training in Holland, Scotland, America and the SPTA. Last year we were in Romania, and this year, it's back to the USA training to work alongside the USMC. It is hoped to send some personnel with 3 Cdo Bde when they deploy on their 6 months tour to Kosovo later this year.

As with all the 3 services the TA is always on some form of recruiting drive and 131 is no exception. To take someone off the street, train him, and get him fit for his recruit course at Minley is difficult enough. Having passed his recruit course then to train him some more, hone his military skills and get him much more physically and mentally fitter for his commando course needs a special kind of soldier which of course is what there is in 9, 59 and 131 Sqns.

131 is always on the lookout for ex-regulars who have moved into civilian, but still have the urge to keep themselves physically and mentally active; and we would be very interested in making contact with them. If you are interested, and think you have still got something to offer, then we can give you that opportunity. If you are already commando or parachute trained so much the better.

You are of course paid for all of the training you do. You receive the rate of pay for your rank in the TA and the Annual Bounty payment of up to £1050, a tax-free lump sum when you meet all the training requirements.

The Squadron holds its training night every Tuesday, and contact can be made at the following locations;

SHQ/Sp Tp	London	Tel:	0181 204 1596/6456
299 Tp	Hull	Tel:	01482 352117
300 Tp	Plymouth	Tel:	01752 662470
301 Tp	Birmingham	Tel:	0121 743 2416

'Once a Sapper always a Sapper'

Pegasus

“The demise”

Pegasus will remain the emblem of Airborne Forces, but it will not be the insignia of the new 16 Air Assault Brigade. The new Brigade will wear a new insignia as its combat formation sign - a swooping eagle.

Pegasus will, however, remain as the Mascot of the Regiment, the title of the Journal and the bronze bust of Pegasus, gifted by the PRA, will remain as the Colonel in Chief's Trophy.

Thus, it is only the Pegasus flash, worn on the left arm by members of 5 AB Bde that will be dropped. It should be remembered that this practice was dropped some years after the war as an economy measure. Only in 1993 was it re-established within the Airborne Brigade. Thus, Pegasus itself will not be replaced - it continues in being, but not as the combat formation sign of the new Air Assault Brigade.

The Regiment is not despondent about leaving Aldershot or joining the new Brigade in Colchester. The Regiment will be part of a new formation, which includes three Army Aviation Regiments equipped with the Apache Helicopter. This means that the Regiment has a chance to forge a new chapter in the history of Airborne Forces. This decision to join the new Brigade has been thought out at the highest level within the Regiment, we now have an operational role that is not exclusively linked to parachuting. We need to widen our range of airborne skills and this move gives us just that opportunity. The parachute role will be retained within the new Brigade but it will be a part of our capability rather than our only capability. The recent deployment of 1 PARA in KOSOVO illustrates one way in which the new Brigade might operate. Parachuting on operations is not, ruled out and by retaining the capability we give our enemies something more to worry about. But the reality is that the deployment of a full-scale parachute assault tends to become more unlikely, given the increasing lethality of anti-air systems. Thus, we as a Regiment need to widen our portfolio if we are to survive in the 21st Century. We intend to be the front-runners in the new Brigade. For our young officers and soldiers it is a challenging and exciting time, they are moving into the unknown to develop and test an untried concept. In some ways this mirrors the way in which the Regiment was first formed. Thus, many see a new shoulder flash for a new formation as appropriate.

That said, Pegasus and all it stands for remains dear to our hearts and will remain, as outlined above, as part of our regimental tradition. Naturally, those who wore the Pegasus insignia on operations will be saddened to hear that it will no longer be worn. However, that does not mean that the ethos forged in those early days will be lost, far from it, we intend to carry it forward with vigour.

At stake is the future of the Regiment and its operational role; the move to the new Brigade presents the opportunity we seek. That transition is presently the Regiment's main effort.

16 Air Assault Brigade

(Extract from MOD Press Release)

The new Brigade will embody a unique warrior spirit, able to operate far in advance of the front line, deep into enemy territory in isolation from other friendly forces.

Combining cutting edge technology with groundbreaking doctrine and highly professional well-trained troops, this new brigade is a perfect example of the Strategic Defence Review in action.

The creation of 16 Air Assault Brigade gives the British Army a powerful and potent air manoeuvre force, which will be capable of meeting the challenges of the next century. The Brigade pulls together and capitalises on the combat capabilities of 24 Airmobile Brigade and 5 Airborne Brigade, including two parachute battalions with an increase in combat service support. The introduction of the Apache Attack Helicopter, due in March 2000, will provide a new generation of weapons systems bringing major improvements in military capability.

16 Air Assault Brigade will comprise:

Three Attack Helicopter Regiments, equipped with the Westland Attack Helicopter and Lynx Light Utility Helicopter;

Two Parachute Battalions;

Integral to the Brigade are combat support and combat service support units, all of which have an "airborne" (parachute trained) element.

An Air Assault Infantry Battalion;

An Artillery Regiment, equipped with light guns, with an Air Defence Battery attached and equipped with high velocity missiles;

A close support Engineer Regiment;

A Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Maintenance Battalion;

A Logistic Regiment;

A close support Medical Regiment;

A Signal Squadron; and

A Royal Military Police Company.

The MOD web site can be found at <http://www.mod.uk>

We are Survivors

(For those born before 1940) Submitted by Smokey Gibson

We were born before television, before penicillin, polio shots, frozen food, Rank Xerox, plastic-contact lenses, videos, Frisbees and the Pill.

We were before radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams, ballpoint pens, before dishwashers, tumble driers, electric blankets, air conditioners, and 'drip dry clothes' and before man walked on the moon.

We got married first, and then lived together (how quaint can you be?). We thought fast food was what we ate during Lent, a Big Mac' was an oversized raincoat and 'crumpet' was something we had for tea. We existed before 'househusbands,' computer dating, dual careers and when 'meaningful relationship' meant getting along with cousins, and sheltered accommodation' was where you waited for a bus.

We were before day-care centres, group homes and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM radio, tape desks, electric typewriters, artificial hearts, word processors, yoghurt and young men wearing earrings. For us 'time sharing' meant togetherness, a 'chip' was a piece of wood or dried potato, 'hardware' meant nuts and bolts and 'software' wasn't a word.

Before 1940 "Made in Japan' meant junk, the term "making out' referred to how you did in your exams. A 'Stud' was something you fastened your collar to a shirt with, and 'going all the way' meant staying on a double decker bus to the bus depot.

Pizzas, McDonalds and instant coffee were unheard of. In our day, cigarette smoking was fashionable 'grass' was mown. 'Coke' was kept in the coalhouse, a 'joint' was a piece of meat you had on Sundays, and 'pot' was something you cooked in. 'Rock music' was grandmother's lullaby. 'Eldorado' was an ice cream and a 'gay person' was the life and soul of the party and nothing more! 'Aids' just meant beauty treatment, or help for someone in trouble.

We who were born before 1940 must be a fairly hard bunch when you think of the ways in which the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make. No wonder we are confused and there is a generation gap today ... but by the grace of God we have survived!

Alleluia.

Recent additions to the AEA Property

Recent additions to the Association property include the following:

A framed collection of airborne insignia. These include two different types of Pegasus arm flashes, one Pegasus flash with "India," APJI wings and ordinary wings, a glider Hash, a pair of Royal Engineer shoulder flashes, The word AIRBORNE in sky blue on a maroon background. (Only worn during the war), a DZ flash and an RE cap badge with George 6th cypher.

A folder with twelve files relating to 9 Fd Coy (Airborne) RE including a copy of the dairies of Major Winchester and Capt Eric O'Callaghan written at the time of the Battle of Arnhem.

Sid Davies BEM donated the above items

An autobiography by former WO2 (SSM) Don Newman entitled "Life of a Post War Career Soldier" 1929—1999
Donated by Don Newman (now residing in Perth -Australia)

(Don's book can be borrowed by any member of the Association - please contact Fred Gray for details).
Three group photographs of 9 Para Sqn personnel - (All named)

Donated by 9 Para Sqn

Chris Chambers - Membership Secretary

Since the December newsletter, a further 6 new members have joined the Association

Name	Unit	Date
Douglas Phillips	131 Para Sqn RE	1962/69 1971/73
Leo Lennon	9 Airborne Sqn RE/131 Para Sqn	1951/56 1958/63
Bernard Somerset	9 Para Sqn RE	1944. 1948
Stuart Wiltshire	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1957- 1964
Walter Chambers	9 Indep Airborne Sqn RE	1953 – 1955
Raymond Checkley	131 Indep Para Sqn RE	1964- 1976

“Welcome to the Association”

Greetings

John (Bwana) Lennox sends his regards to those members of the Association that remember him. John served with 3 Troop and Pant Troop during the period 1962-1966. He currently resides in Zimbabwe. Any member wishing to contact John can obtain his address from the Membership Secretary.

Congratulations

In recognition for his sterling work in Kosovo, Capt Chris Gosling has been awarded the MBE. Chris was recalled to 9 Para Sqn RE for their operational duties in the region.

Sincere Thanks

Sincere thanks are extended to Ron Burgess for his generous donation of videos and books to the Aldershot Branch. Ron has recently been discharged from hospital, and I'm pleased to announce that I found him coping well and in good spirits during my recent visit. He is always delighted to receive visitors or the odd phone call. Ron's number is as follows: [REDACTED]

Closure

The Royal Military pub (Aldershot) better known to many of you as the “Rat Pit,” has finally closed its doors for the last time. The building is to be converted into self-contained flats. Sadly yet another of Aldershot's landmarks bites the dust! The departure of the Airborne from Aldershot is playing a large part in the demise of other pubs, and I suspect the Trafalgar and the Royal Exchange will be next! The Pegasus, I'm pleased to say, is still going strong. Long may it continue to do so - or the likes of Bill Rudd and Baz Henderson will be rather unhappy! Perhaps things in Aldershot will pick up again on the arrival of the Staffordshire and Welsh Regiment?

Farewell

We bid farewell in his capacity as Admin Officer 9 Para Sqn RE, to Capt Dick Brown. Dick has been a stalwart in the support he gave to the Association, and his presence will be sadly missed. He has to his credit offered to remain as the Association Treasurer for which we extend hearty thanks. Dick is now settling in as QM 11 Fd Sqn (Mech), 38 Engr Regt in Ripon.

We offer our sincere congratulations to Dick and Mary who have recently ‘tied the knot’ and can now be more commonly referred to as “married pads”! Having recently moved house to the outskirts of Aldershot, Dick can be found racing up and down the M1 each Friday afternoon and Monday morning.

Sincere thanks to those of you that have sent me the names of potential new AEA members, thanks to for keeping me up to date with changes of addresses etc.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the various functions that I shall be visiting throughout the year, but in the meantime - take care and be happy.

Happy Landings

Chris

Memoirs

Brigadier C. A. Landale

28th September 1924 - 29th January 1999 aged 74.

Tony Landale was the only child of a colonel in the Indian Army. Because his parents spent most of their time in India, young Landale was sent away to boarding school at the ridiculously young age of six. Perhaps this is why as an adult he used to think of himself as shy and retiring; and certainly any problems he may have had throughout his life he kept very much to himself, solving them all without anyone else's help. Having said this he was a wonderful communicator, especially with soldiers, who would have followed him anywhere; and similarly with children, who one and all, whether his own or any he met for an hour or two, adored him; romping with him and climbing all over him the moment they met.

CAL was commissioned in December 1943, commanding his "platoon" of 69 sappers, ten vehicles and four motorcycles (at the age of 19), engaged on mine-clearance, assault bridging and other normal divisional Engineer tasks, from Normandy to the Baltic; during which he was Mentioned in Despatches. He never talked about his exploits, except to say that he enjoyed himself hugely despite being scared out of his skin from time to time.

In fact he was a man who knew no fear. On one occasion all the snorkelers swimming at a place over the reef on Christmas Island, on hearing one of their number say that a large shark was lurking deep below, left the water in indecent haste. CAL who was fishing nearby promptly dropped his rod, took a deep breath and dived in to investigate. He surfaced after what seemed minutes to declare, "Yes, it was a shark, and at least ten feet long, but not to worry it was only a harmless variety." CAL knew his fish and never exaggerated - he never had need to. He was a superb fisherman having inherited his talent, and his love of the sport as well as shooting, from his father. During his time on Christmas Island he became the acknowledged master of fishing with rod and reel in the lagoon, matching his tackle to the weight of the fish he was after, be it a two-pound red snapper or a 75-pound jack-fish.

He was very well set up physically; representing his school, Marlborough, at athletics when the rest of the team were months older than he. Academic work held no terrors for him and he earned an upper-second degree in Mechanical Sciences at Cambridge on his supplementary course there.

He was an ideal leader of "airborne soldiers," proving to be an excellent troop leader in 9 Airborne Squadron. He had a warm heart and a good sense of humour and was popular and widely respected by all ranks. Although on the surface a modest and quiet personality, he had a very positive outlook and was a man of action. Intelligent, quick-witted and decisive, and with a wholesome contempt for regulations, he was at his best in an emergency. Blest with boundless energy and enthusiasm, his obvious position on the rugby field was wing-forward; being a star performer in the 9 Squadron team which won the major unit Rugby Cup in the Canal Zone, beating 3 Parachute Regiment in the final. He was also a regular member of the Corps' Rugby CAL attended the Staff College, Camberley, in 1955 from where he was posted as DAQMG Northern District. He next spent two years as Brigade Major HQ SME, after which he was a student at the JSSC. During his three years as Company Commander of Waterloo Company RMA Sandhurst, the company won the Sovereign's Company Competition. Of particular importance is what he achieved as military chairman of a committee appointed to study leadership training at Sandhurst. The prime mover in this work was Dr John Adair who went on to make leadership and management his life's work, becoming an acknowledged expert, writing more than 20 books on the subject. When first mooted at Sandhurst, Adair's theories were received with deep suspicion by almost everyone from top to bottom of the hierarchy. CAL, however, recognized the value and importance of Adair's ideas and with tact and wisdom was instrumental in changing everyone's approach to the subject. Without his efforts, cadets at the RMA might still believe that if they possessed or could demonstrate the correct characteristics of courage, integrity, etc, to their men they would make good leaders. Before Adair, supported by Landale, no one at the RMA had thought that it was equally (perhaps more) important for a leader to ensure that men understood why they were fighting, and to see that they were properly trained and provided with the best equipment for the job in hand. In 1966 CAL was appointed CRE 3rd Division. A new adjutant recalls being ushered into the CD's office. While awaiting the great man's arrival he admired what was clearly the operations map of the local area, which was festooned with a number of strategically placed coloured pins. Enquiring shortly afterwards what the pins were for, the CO explained: "They are the beats for the shoot. I shoot Mondays, you shoot Tuesdays, we both shoot Saturdays."

During his time on Christmas Island, he and his squadron had done much demanding and complicated building and construction work to the highest standards, to meet the requirements of the Atomic Authority scientists in charge of the tests. This was to stand him in good stead when, on retirement from the Army, he became the ROI responsible for the design and construction of military buildings in the south of England. His final home was in Coombe Bisset where he was much respected as a man who never pushed himself forward but was always ready and willing to help, whether in support of individuals or, more generally; such as officiating in charity auctions or simply mowing the grass in the churchyard.

He married first Alison McNaughton who died in 1967. They had two sons and a daughter. He married his second wife, Tessa Hale who, with her son and daughter, survives him.

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Obituary

Gordon Royall

Gordon Royall passed away suddenly on 29th January, aged 66 years. Gordon served in 9 Squadron from 1953 to 1956. He served with the Squadron in the Suez Canal Zone, and later in Cyprus during an emergency tour.

After discharge he spent the next thirty years of his life working for the Norwich County Council. He then decided to go into business with his brother and they ran a very successful Garden Services centre specialising in patios, paths and fencing. He was very active as Chairman of the Norwich Branch of the REA and of the local bowling club. He was also on the committee of the Norwich Branch of the Parachute Regiment Association.

He was buried in Norwich with members of both Associations in attendance. To his wife Barbara, son Michael, daughters Melanic and Marlene we offer our deepest sympathies.

Association Shop

Description	Price	Post & Packing (UK Post Rate)
Association Ties (Pegasus logo)	£12.50	75p
Association Blazer Badges	£12.50	60p
Association Jumpers (sizes 38-48) Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo Embroidered 'Airborne Engineers'	£24.00	£2.60*
Association Sweatshirts Maroon or blue logo as above Medium - large - extra large	£16.00	£2.60*
Association Polo Shirts Fred Perry Style - Maroon or blue logo as above Medium - large - extra large	£15.00	£2.50*
Association Tee Shirts Maroon only - Large or Extra Large only	£8.50	£1.00
Association Shields	£16.00	£2.60*
Book 'The 9th by Tom Purves - former 9 Indep Para Sqn	£14.00 (Special price)	£3.50*
A Memoir of 9 Para Sqn RE in the Falklands Campaign 1982 by Maj. C.M. Davies MBE RE	£12.00	£1.50
Stick Pins (Para Wings)	£2.60	60p
Anniversary Ties (silk)	£15.00	75p
Christmas Cards (pack of 6) Association badge on cover	£3.25	60p
Association Cuff Links (Slightly smaller than lapel badge)	£8.50	£1.50

* Recorded delivery.

Would overseas members please send cheques in £ pounds sterling, with a little extra to cover postage, from your local bank or an International money order from Post Office. Cheques should be made payable to:

"Airborne Engineers Association"

Please note my address when submitting your orders:

Jan Chambers

My thanks for your continued support,

Yours aye,

Jan
