



THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



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The Airborne Engineer



August 2001 Issue No. 4

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“Airborne Engineers Association” - Membership

Membership to our Association is available to all Sapper personnel, who have served with, or who are serving on the strength of a unit establishment, which has a parachuting role as part of its military duties, i.e. SAS, EOD or Commando units, and has passed an Army Parachute Course. We currently have Branches located in Aldershot, Birmingham, Chatham, Edinburgh, the Southwest, Yorkshire and Northern Ireland. For further details please contact our Membership Secretary Chris Chambers

Moving House? Don't forget to forward your address to us

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Association President

Brigadier G.A. Hewish MBE

Being your President is, for the most part, proving to be an enjoyable and, as I expected, often a humbling experience. I remain sensitive to the honour and aware of the pleasant burden of responsibility.

Happily, our Association bedrock remains the tried and tested warriors of the World War 2 era and they bless the Association with a vibrancy that belies their age! If I need reminding of the latent power of our overall membership - those hardy WW2 warriors and all those that have proudly followed in their footsteps - I only have to agree to sign a committee letter on a subject any subject it seems - and stand back and wait for the reaction. Great gentlemen - keep it up. We are all working for the good of the AEA. I like the 'noise' that the Association generates - much healthier than an eerie - are you there anybody? Silence.

Our most recent letter concerning the museum displays as detailed in the Appeal is an example of the above phenomenon. I am happy to report that the overall reaction has been most encouraging and already we have received donations to the sum of £2,015. My thanks to all who have responded. It would be less than honest if I didn't report that several members have voiced concerns which include doubts that we should be going for 2 locations when we may risk lessening the impact of each display. These concerns are understood but your committee remain confident that:

- * The locations at Chatham and York are well suited to house these displays which depict the part played by Royal Engineers in Airborne Forces and with that extra dedication to the memory of Lt Col John Rock being at Chatham.
- * We fully expect to have enough relevant WW2 Airborne memorabilia to produce two high quality displays.
- * We can raise the necessary money.

It all boils down to the need to take this opportunity to create good displays which will widen the general level of knowledge of the part Royal Engineers have played and will play in Airborne Forces. Something which we may take for granted but which future generations will not be aware of unless we leave them amongst other things - displays such as we will have at Elvington and Chatham. So please keep the good news coming and trust your Committee to produce the results that you would expect of them.

Looking forward to seeing you at the AGM/Reunion in Bristol on 6/7 October.

From the Chair

Bob Prosser – Association Chairman

The profile of the Association continues to rise. We have been honoured by the Airborne Forces Weekend Committee, chaired by Lt Gen. Sir Michael Gray KCB OBE. DL because they have invited us to ask one of our General Officers to take the salute at the weekend at Elvington. In discussion with your President, we have invited Brigadier Fergie Semple MBE, MC to take the salute. He has, of course, been 2IC and OC 9 Sqn and served in WW2 and other special units during his service. Plans are being prepared to accommodate approx. 10,000 people on the Sunday when the service and march past will take place

The AGM for the Association will be held on 6th October 2001 at the Hilton Hotel, Filton, Bristol, details are included in the journal. Please make an effort to attend if at all possible, we need your input, particularly in planning for the future. For those members who have never had an opportunity to attend either the Double Hills or Weston-Super-Mare ceremonies, this year is the best time to come, as it is being held in conjunction with our own AGM. Please try to get there, it is a most poignant ceremony .

We are delighted to have our Honourable Treasurer, Capt Dick Brown returned to the fold, having been posted back to 9 Sqn, just in time to process the Appeal for funds by our President, which has received a terrific response. Further details of this will be regularly published in our journal, as the appeal is open for some time to come or until we reach our requirements.

I look forward very much to seeing you all in the not too distant future.

Rogues Gallery



Ken Ramsden tickles the ivories, ably supported by Bill Holmes (standing) and Robinson (seated)



Borneo 1965 (2Tp)

L to R: Rear – Bob Fettes, Toots Ridgway, Ken Turk, Mac MacLellan
Front ?, Nobby Clarke, Jeff Jelley Taff Brice



L to R: Ginge Shipway, Geordie Gibson, Alec Guy, Louis Gallagher & Mick Fisher - Ballykelly 1970



Puckridge Compound Guard - Cpl Wally Clift, Trev Round & Aubrey Smith



Atu, Brendan Snoddy, Mick Phillips, John Barrie, Ian Cook, Bob Jenkins & Dave (Hands) Weaver - Radfan 1965 (1 Tp)



We're not lost, LCpl Jimmy Simpson's map reading! Newtonmore to Fort Augustus 1957

It Wasn't Me Sir!

John Dickson

I spent the bulk of my early military service with the Airborne Engineers. The Unit then formed a part of 16th Independent Parachute Brigade, which, with others, was the British Army's Rapid Reaction Force. The Brigade comprised three Battalions of the Parachute Regiment, an Airborne Artillery Regiment, a Logistic Regiment made up of the smaller support units like Workshops, Signals, Medical, Stores, Transport and Supply, not forgetting of course, my own unit - 9 Independent Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers.

After some years away from Airborne Forces, I was fortunate in being selected as Squadron Administrative Officer for my last tour of Military duty. Soon after my arrival the Ministry of Defence decided that a mobile Brigade of fully trained and highly motivated elite soldiers was a luxury, which the country could no longer afford. They proceeded to break-up a force, which had been the teeth of the British Army since shortly after the Second World War. Later it took a war in the South Atlantic to have this piece of irresponsible vandalism reversed. But that was in the future.

The break-up of the Brigade was thorough. Two Battalions of the Parachute Regiment were withdrawn - one to become part of the Berlin Garrison, the other to Tidworth to become part of the AMF (L) on the Northern Flank. The units within the Logistics Regiment ceased to exist and what was left of the Brigade had to rely on outside help. The Airborne Artillery Regiment was reduced to only a single Battery and all that was left was the 3rd Battalion, my own unit - 9 Independent Parachute Squadron - and the single Artillery Battery.

The two Parachute Battalions were then replaced by the 2nd King Edward VII Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles) and the Royal Regiment of Wales. The latter moved into the barracks vacated by the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment. This hotchpotch of contrasting units was called 6th Field Force. The only redeeming feature about the whole sorry mess was that it was to be commanded by an ex-Parachute Regiment officer. Brigadier Mike Gray was a typical airborne officer, full of enthusiasm, extremely fit and a great believer in leading from the front. I had known him from many years before, when he had been a young subaltern in command of a platoon in the 2nd Battalion. I and another Sapper had been attached to his platoon for a cordon and search operation in the Middle East during the early 1950s and I had met him often since, through serving in other airborne units.

Because of their diversity, the units of the new formation had little in common with each other and there seemed to be a distinct early reluctance to co-operate. The Gurkhas had British officers and they appeared intent on keeping their soldiers away from their British counterparts. The Royal Regiment of Wales was an amalgamation in 1969, of two Regiments. The South Wales Borderers (24th of Foot) and The Welsh Regiment (41st of Foot). The Regiment's recruiting area was in South Wales where most of the heavy industry and coal mining was concentrated. Welshmen from that particular area are boisterous individuals, they don't take to discipline tamely and they have an inclination to be noisy. A Battalion of some six hundred exuberant Welshmen now rudely disrupted the comparatively quiet but certainly purposeful atmosphere of what had been the Parachute Brigade's barracks complex. The old adage is correct: When more than two Welshmen are gathered together, they want to form a choir, and this was no exception; only there were hundreds in their choir. They would practise daily for an hour or more on the communal barracks square, under the direction of their Commanding Officer. To start with it was quite a pleasant diversion but the novelty soon wore off! In addition, they possessed a very fine Military Band, reinforced by a Corps of drums and flutes. They too were in the habit of practising at all hours of the day.

History related that soon after the Crimean War, The 41st Regiment of Foot (Welsh Regiment) adopted a mountain goat as a Regimental mascot. This tradition was carried on into the amalgamated Regiment and the mascot at that time was 'Taffy' the umpteenth. He was pure white, a majestic looking beast with a long flowing beard.

The Battalion had converted one of the ground floor barracks store into a stable for him and appointed a

Corporal, with the title of 'Goat Major to pamper him and look after his every need. On official occasions, Taffy, led by the 'Goat Major used to take pride of place leading the band and drummers, who in turn led the Battalion. At such events. Taffy would appear resplendently attired in his ceremonial finery, which consisted of a saddlecloth of shabraque in Regimental colours and ornately embroidered with gold lace, silver tips fitted over the end of his horns and a silver plate, embossed with the Regimental badge fastened to his brow. He looked very impressive when he was ready for parade and the men of the Battalion were justifiably proud.

One morning, after my Squadron's muster parade, and this was some months after the newly arrived Regiments had moved in, I climbed the steps to my office in the second floor, the window of which overlooked the main road. There was something different about this particular morning, but it took me a little time to realise what it was. Suddenly it struck me. It was quiet! The Welshmen were not singing and the band and drummers were not playing. In fact, apart from the usual working noises coming from the other offices further along the corridor, there was silence. I looked out of the window towards the entrance to the Royal Regiment of Wales barracks, but except for the Regimental Policeman standing there, the place looked deserted. Then suddenly the Drum Major and the Provost Sergeant appeared acting rather overwrought and walking rapidly up the road towards where the Officers' and Sergeants' messes were. They reappeared soon afterwards, this time walking just as rapidly back down the road, accompanied by their Commanding Officer, the Adjutant and the Regimental Sergeant Major. The Regimental policeman saluted his CO as he and his entourage swept past him and into the Barracks. I happened to glance out of the window about 10 minutes later. This time to see the RRW Commanding Officer with his Adjutant in tow, walking quickly towards the Force Headquarters building, no doubt to see the Brigadier.

By this time, I was not the only one who was curious about what was happening; windows in other buildings had curious faces looking out. We did not have long to wait. The CO and his Adjutant re-emerged from the Force HQ with the Force Commander, Brig. Mike Gray. The Colonel was clearly doing his best to explain something to the Commander; certainly his hands were moving rapidly.

The Royal Regiment of Wales barracks remained quiet as the trio entered. By now I and the other onlookers were bursting with curiosity. In a flash, my SSM appeared, "Heard the latest Sir? Someone has cut that bloody Welsh goat's beard off. That's what all the fuss is about." Someone had decided that a goat's beard makes an excellent trophy! I recalled that collecting trophies had been quite a competitive pastime in the Parachute Brigade, each unit having an 'unofficial' display within their own unit's lines, jealously guarded against being raided by rival collectors. Because of this custom it was obvious that suspicion would fall on those of us in the 6th Field Force who still wore the red beret.

At about midday, my OC was told that all officers of 6th Field force were to assemble in the lecture theatre at 1400 hours to be addressed by the Force Commander. We duly gathered at the appointed time and it was quite clear that those of us from AB formations were being subjected to hostile looks from the officers of the RRW. We stood for the arrival of Brig Gray. Once we had settled down, he proceeded to give the biggest dressing down that I have ever experienced. Amongst other things, he said that he would not rest and neither would we, until the culprits of this piece of malicious vandalism were found and punished. He also made no secret of the fact that we AB 'types' were in the frame. Nothing was left to chance. A team from the Special Investigation Branch of the Royal Military Police arrived to conduct interviews with certain individuals who were known to be avid trophy hunters. But it was to no avail. I know suspicion rested heavily on the 3rd Para Bn, but the investigators made absolutely no headway against them. They had closed ranks. By 21 February 97, Taff's beard had eventually grown back, but he only made one public appearance. This was for the visit of the RRW Colonel in Chief. HRH The Prince of Wales, who, we gather, had a word with the Brigadier. The whole episode eventually died a natural death but the Welshmen, not surprisingly, were an unforgiving lot, there were, over the months, a number of angry little revenge incidents for what they saw as a gross insult to their Regiment.

About five years ago, some 20 years later, I was attending a Royal British Legion event in the grounds of Nostell Priory, Wakefield, where one of the senior guests was Lt Gen Sir Michael Gray, KCB, OBE, DL. He recognised my tie with the airborne forces motif, and came over to speak. He realised that we had served together. We began

to reminisce about old times and eventually the subject to the Welsh goat came up. The General asked if I remembered the occasion. I acknowledged that I did and he then went on to say that at the time he was convinced that 3 Para had something to do with it and the CO knew that, but he had always had his suspicions about 9 Sqn because of its reputation. The General then admitted that a long time afterwards he had discovered that it was in fact the Sappers! "Should I be surprised?" he asked me. I made commiserating noises to the General, I could not very well admit to him that I had known that right from the beginning - after all we had to keep up our reputation.

The Day the OC was on the Mat

Brigadier 'Fergie' Semple

Shortly after taking over command of 9 Sqn in January 1957, I arranged for all three troops to go up to Aviemore for two weeks in turn. My instructions to the three Troop commanders were quite brief, namely, "Get marching fit and brush up on your infantry tactics." All appeared to be going well until a retired General wrote to the CinC Scottish Command. His letter was quickly passed to CinC Southern Command and then to the GOC Aldershot District. The gist of the letter was, "I was CinC North West India 1934-37. Last Thursday I took my house guests out stalking on my estate. After a long and arduous approach we were just getting within range of the herd of deer when all hell was let loose in the glen below. Automatic and rifle fire coupled with frequent explosions echoed round the hills of Scotland and the deer quickly moved on to a safer area. In my days in the Army we had rifle ranges for this form of activity. I am getting rather old; so I sent my younger sister down to investigate. She reported back to me that it was a unit called 9 Para Sqn RE. She also said that she saw one soldier with a nasty wound on his leg being treated with what looked like a very dirty Field Dressing." (Note: The Troops had run out of thunder flashes and were using small chunks of plastic explosives).

As a result of this episode I was on the mat in front of the GOC Aldershot, incidentally, he belonged to a Scottish Regiment. Brigadier 'Tubby' Butler the Parachute Brigade Commander was in attendance. I was briefed or lectured on how to behave on training in the Highlands and that I as a Scotsman should have known better. I was also told that I must exercise more control over 9 Sqn in future.

As we left the Headquarters 'Tubby' Butler turned to me and said, "It sounded like a bloody good exercise Fergie," and that was the last I heard of it.

Incidentally, the Troop Commander was Mike Matthews and his Troop Officer; who set the ambush was Graham Owens.

Seeing Double

Brigadier 'Fergie' Semple

We were watching the final of the football match at Aldershot. Some of the officers; including Sid Rooth and myself were wearing British Warmers. The 9 Sqn supporters were getting quite boisterous and the GOC dispatched one of his Aides; who came straight across and spoke to Sid Rooth to tell him to get the Sqn under control. We were splitting our sides with laughter, asking him what he was going to do about it. It is useful to have a double!

Oh, And Another Thing About Being “Airborne”

A former troop commander

We had been married for nine years before my wife realised that not all soldiers wore red berets. Well after two tours in 9 Sqn, then a tour in 131 followed by two years in staff college in Canada and then a tour as BM of a Para Bde it was an understandable misconception. My first tour wearing a blue beret was as a squadron commander and at her first wives club meeting my wife was besieged by squadron wives complaining that their husbands were away far too long on exercises to which she replied, “I’ve never seen so much of my husband. He’s under my feet all the time and I can’t get the chores done” Join Airborne Forces and never see your wife was a fair assessment of life in those days. The block booking of the maternity wing of the military hospital in Aldershot for nine months after 16 Para Bde returned from a protracted exercise or operational absence was also routine.

Oh, and another thing was that when at last I was forced to wear a blue beret I found I had never seen my brother non-airborne Sapper officers before. I knew no one when arrived in the divisional engineers as a squadron commander. (My first posting in Germany incidentally, which was almost unheard of for one of my generation and seniority. That took some getting used to as well. See next paragraph) When I took over my regiment the only five officers I knew were all ex-9 Sqn SSM’s. You can imagine what a comfort that was. They all gave me a dog’s life! When I first arrived in the Squadron as a 2 Lt one had been SSM, another had been my first troop staff sergeant, another one of my troop corporals and even worse had played a lot of water polo with me. The other two were slightly less enthusiastic in their exuberant ragging of me as we had not actually served together in the Squadron. Mind you they soon caught on. The other officers were somewhat taken aback a seeing their CO fenced into a corner of the bar by thirsty airborne types demanding beer as the price of their silence. Fat chance: a pint of beer from a non-airborne type bought luridly enhanced versions of some youthful minor indiscretion on my part. In fact I suspect my so-called para mates never bought a beer thereafter, as my indiscretions were not numerically inconsiderable. Well, how was I to know that Sapper X when released from close arrest by me after the SSM had put him in the nick would immediately throw a ripe tomato at the said SSM. Not the best idea I ever had. Said SSM (now major) thought that worth a few beers. There were all too many similar or worse incidents, a fruitful field for blackmail.

Oh and another thing. The rest of the Army has no idea about what “Get a ***** move on” means. Having spent the first formative months in the Squadron with my feet in a blur several inches above the ground I expected no less of my troops and as long as they had red berets on I was never disappointed. My blue-beret squadron soldiers were an eye opener to me to say nothing of a disappointment. However help was at hand in the shape of my SSM, who, it appears, had been just waiting for the chance to sort a few things out. He had the uncanny ability to stand a yard way from a soldier but get his face within half an inch of the soldier’s nose while he addressed him in what the SSM felt were perfectly reasonable tones (i.e. possibly difficult to hear at ranges over two miles) The SSM must have had inch thick lead soles in his boots as any normal person would have fallen over leaning forward at such an impossible angle. There was also in the squadron a former corporal of mine in 9 who had by then risen to Staff Sergeant. He managed to ferry seventeen tanks across the Weser in 21 minutes a feat timed by the then Major Jock Brazier who was also ex-9 Sqn. Jock could not believe the rate at which the ferry was being operated so timed the next squadrons’ worth of tanks to arrive. With help like that the squadron learned to get a move on despite the beret colour.

Oh and another thing. That squadron sergeant major of mine saw the light and became an airborne soldier doing his para course after commissioning and joining 131 as QM. Would you believe I was rash enough to invite him to a regimental guest night with his then CO also ex 9 Sqn. Any shreds of decent reputation I might have had disappeared as even more indiscretions as an OC were given very generous airings. I must have been mad.

Oh and one last thing. I’ve had a marvellous life as a soldier, but the old red beret days were the best and what is more I can still enjoy the company of the best of good chums thanks to the AEA.

Behind the Wire

Maurice Weymouth

In November 1944 whilst taking a stroll through Stalag 1VA hoping to find some familiar faces, I was aware that something was taking place between 2 huts. POW's were sitting on the sloping roofs looking down into the centre where some sort of activity was taking place and they were cheering, stamping their feet and clapping. Thinking this was some sort of game going on I decided I'd like a bit of the action; so edged my way through to the centre. I was appalled by what I saw. There was a man stretched out on the ground, clearly unconscious. He was being picked up by his arms to a standing position; whereupon he was hit in the face, as he went down he was picked up and hit by another man. "For God's sake, what's going on?" I said. A voice said, "The Sod was caught pinching bread from under the pillow of another POW and not for the first time either." I said, "But this is a bit much isn't it" referring to the treatment given. My informant said, "Tell me mate, what would you do if he'd pinched your bread ration?" "I'd have killed the Bastard!" I muttered.

Some years later (1980s) during a visit to Arnhem I was discussing this incident with a member of 133 Para Field Ambulance who had also witnessed the event and he told me that the Germans convened a Court of Inquiry and returned a verdict of 'Accidental Death!'

I was pleased to hear the man was a 'Non Airborne type.'

Extract from 3 Para Sqn RE War Diary

Appendix J (4) dated 20th April 1945. Report on Recce of Area Molbath (0089) and Schliechau (0088) Germany

At approx. 1315 hrs 20 April 1945, 1878242 Cpl DAG Graham was ordered to take his section (No 2 section of 1 Troop) on a minefield recce of the above names villages and to recover a body within a suspected minefield. The section was followed at a distance of 300 yds by four other ranks on a Jeep from the Ox & Bucks Bn. 500 yds before the village of Molbath a burnt out Jeep and a dead rifleman of the Ox & Bucks were discovered. The Jeep party attended to the body of the rifleman after mine checking by 2 section and then returned to their own location.

The recce party then proceeded to the centre of the village. Whilst searching a house an English speaking civilian volunteered (?) the information; that a party of about five German soldiers were hiding in the nearby copse. Just before they left the village the leading scout, 1878255 Spr W. Dickson was fired on several times. The shots appeared to come from a factory building approx. 70yds away. Cpl Graham ordered Sprs Dickson, Ford and Butler to close on the building under covering fire from the sections Bren group and ascertain the strength of the enemy. At this moment, after brief firing, 12 German soldiers came out of the factory building with their hands in the air. They were immediately taken prisoner and searched. The recce party then continued down the road to Schliechau. About 500yds down this road the leading scout (Spr Dickson) observed in the distance figures moving about in a copse at GR 007887. Cpl Graham leaving 3 Sprs to take care of the prisoners took the remaining men of his section to a point overlooking the wood. Sending two Sprs forward to investigate (Sprs Dickson and Ford) the movement in the copse.

Following a series of shots 6 German soldiers came out of the wood followed by the two Sappers. Ford explained that on entering the wood he observed 2 German soldiers running along the bottom of a ditch. He fired several shots at them and saw one of them drop. After a pause he approached the body and while searching it a further 6 German soldiers leapt out of the gully and surrendered to him. At about this time Spr Dickson closed in and helped him search the prisoners. On their way out of the wood a second body of a German soldier was observed.

The recce party under command of Cpl Graham then continued through Schliechau and then back to Sqn HQ without further interference from the enemy.

Casualties

Own - Nil

Enemy - 2 killed

Captured - 1 Officer and 17 ORs



Members of 2 section composed mainly of very young ex-boy Sappers who at the ages of 18 and 19 had already experienced Airborne warfare when they were parachuted into Normandy on the night prior to D-Day to demolish bridges of the river Dives. The same section, almost to a man, went on to the chilly Christmas Ardennes counter offensive and later parachuted again into Europe in March 1945 when the Rhine Crossing Operation took place.

At the end of WW2 the majority of the section, being regular Sappers, went on to serve in Java Indonesia and Palestine with either 3 Para Sqn or 1st Airborne Sqn

L to R: Dvr McMillan, Spr Dickson, Spr Crane, Spr Paterson, Spr Garbutt, Spr Lewis, Spr Butler, Spr Humphries, Cpl Graham & kneeling, Spr Ford

Electric Invalid Scooter

Ron Burgess, a member of the Aldershot Branch AEA, has kindly donated a battery powered invalid scooter for use by any member of the Association. In the event that it is not required by an AEA member, then a family member will be considered.

The scooter, which is valued in excess of £1800, is to remain the property of the Association and returned to them after the person using it has no further need for it. Insurance and maintenance will be the responsibility of the borrower. The Association will arrange for delivery. If more than one person makes a bid for the use of the scooter then the AEA committee will decide who is in most need. This is an aid for someone who can walk only short distances but not for a person who is paralysed as a degree of mobility is required to mount and dismount the machine.

Anyone who would like to make use of this excellent aid should contact Fred Gray (Phone 01252 668339)

Airborne Sappers in Java

One day in May, two lines in The Times said that the last British soldier had left Semarang, in Java, on relief by Dutch troops. This port had been the home of 5th Para. Bde for some months, and for this squadron (the Brigade Sappers) it had provided a varied and interesting engineering field. In January, Semarang was 'a dead city only the standby power station (organised by the Indian Sappers and Miners, and the engine room staff of H.M.S. Sussex) was in working order; but there were large stocks of engineering stores, and extensive workshops, deserted except for occasional scurrying looters.

The water supply was the first problem: the extremists held the source of supply for the mains. Some water points were closed, and others improved. Unit plumbers were also kept busy on rainwater showers for the first month or so.

There was not a plank in the place, so a diesel driven sawmill was started by unit fitters, and, once going, was handed over to the Dutch to work. In this way a few huts could be built by the unit for isolated detachments.

Naturally there were heavy demands on the unit's electricians to repair and alter internal wiring in military buildings. Power-linesmen were lent to the Dutch, to help with the power station. A small diesel generating set was set up for Brigade H.Q., and even the D.A.A. & Q.M.G.'s pet chandelier was finally rewired - instead of being removed!

When shops opened again, and such things as rice-mills, printing presses, a bakery, and doctors and dentists got going, the demand on the power station became too great; subsidiary power stations were therefore set up, and generators installed, repaired or altered by the Dutch with Sapper help.

Occasional looting was a great nuisance. Infantry and Sappers together wired off a large prohibited area containing the power stations, a marshalling yard, a rice mill, the saw mill, and other important installations.

The Indonesian Committee wanted to bring food trains into Semarang, so the ex L.M.S. men in the unit put two locos in working order: these were, of course, christened Bulford Kettles. The food trains never materialised, but the locos were handed over to a detachment of an Indian Railway Operating Coy. which had been sent for, and which used them to bring loaded wagons into the restricted area.

The engine fitters got a pumping station going, and pumped out a dry dock for the Navy. The electric crane driver got a 120 ton hoist working. Sheet metal workers made a fireproof portable projection room for the Pegasus Club. Bricklayers built innumerable Aldershot ovens. So nearly every trade was employed.

The unit formed a military Fire Brigade, and this complete with bell and white helmets was frequently called out. Drivers enjoyed this particular duty, as there was no speed limit on the way to the fire.

Detachments always accompanied the tanks into the country, to help clear the defended roadblocks which they sometimes met. One sub unit on the perimeter also had good practice in submitting shelreps, and scarcely ever had a dull moment. The enemy artillery fortunately for us never got within 200 yards of the troop billet, and seemed incapable of ranging on a target.

We must pay a tribute to the devoted service of many Dutch technicians, released from internment, who stayed in Semarang to help put the town to rights instead of going to Holland on leave. The Dutch looked after the road repair organisation, employing 2,000 coolies, and operated the power stations, the sawmills, the printing presses and so on. Without their expert aid very little could have been set in order.

Submitted by Jim Rogers ex 3 Sqn RE

We'll Never Forget Jim

Relatives of paratrooper Jim Ryder, killed nearly 60 years ago during the fighting at Arnhem, have been touched to discover his sacrifice is still remembered today.

Keith Ryder, who lives in Cam. was just five in 1944 when the family learned Jim had been killed in action fighting for control of vital river crossings on the Rhine. In an article in 'The Citizen' Keith was gratified to read that visitors to Oosterbeek cemetery, where Jim is buried, still pay their respects to him and his fallen comrades. "We were touched by the letter from the people who visited our brother's grave recently," said Mr Ryder. My sister Carol and I, together with our respective husband and wife, visited Jim's grave in April this year. We are very proud of the sacrifice made by our eldest brother.

A well-known Tredworth family, Jim's brothers Bert and Ivor, and father George, all joined the armed forces during WWII, leaving mother Emily to bring up three young children.

A fellow resident Mike Barnes, who has visited the cemetery several times said, "It's quite moving, six rows back from Jim there are two boys, 18 years old, killed on the same day; it takes your breath away."



Jim Ryder (back right) with brothers Bert (back left) and Ivor with their mum Emily.

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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held at the Norbeck Castle Hotel Blackpool on Saturday 14th October 2000

Meeting Opened at 1100 hours

Members Attending: 142

1. **Opening Address:** The Association Chairman, Bob Prosser BEM, welcomed those attending and stated how gratified he was to see so many members in attendance. He offered the apologies of our President, Brig G.A. Hewish MBE, who was unfortunately unavoidably detained in the USA on a business engagement.

2. **Silent Tributes:** the members stood for a one-minute silence in respect to the following colleagues who had passed away during the past year:

Brig Mike Addison, Horace Barratt, Eric Brown, Louis Downey, Reginald Farrell, Mike Farrow, Joseph Galea, Tom Gillett, Frank Grogan, Tom Purves, Gordon Royall, Stanley Sutherland, Ronald Walkden, Henry Warren and William Wilson.

3. **Apologies:** There were 17 notifications of apology.

4. **Previous Minutes (AGM 1999):** Proposed by Bob Jones, Seconded by Brian Jones that the minutes of the AGM held in Birmingham in October 1999 were a true record of the proceedings. Agreed: Unanimously.

5. **Chairman's Report:** Bob stated that it had a busy year with the usual ups and downs, but that the priority had always been for the wellbeing of the Association. He went on to assure the members that the Association had remained strong and vibrant over the past 12 months, and to emphasise this point singled out some of those members who had worked tirelessly throughout the year:

Ray Coleman - Hon Secretary: Effectively undertakes a considerable proportion of the administration of our Association. Ably assisted by his wife Eve has raised well over £5,000 in the past 4 years for our funds.

Capt Dick Brown-Hon Treasurer: As a serving member, still found time to arrange a meeting with the Corps Treasurer in Chatham to receive guidance on 'Gift Aid' under the new tax laws.

Dave Flutter- Journal Editor: Who has worked resolutely to produce our publication in its new format.

Jan & Chris Chambers: Who efficiently deputise for each other - Chris as our Membership Secretary and when time permits, undertakes Standard Bearer duties. Jan operates the Association Shop and together with Chris actively supports the Double Hills Commemorative Committee.

Betty & Fred Gray. Betty is now the Secretary of the Aldershot branch, which leaves Fred more valuable time to forage for information, photographs and memorabilia to enhance our displays at Chatham and Elvington.

Bill Budd: A tower of strength as our Vice President and Chairman of the Yorkshire branch.

Derek Taylor. As chairman of the Aldershot branch (he seems to go on for ever)

Bob & Violet Jones ably assisted by Tom Carpenter. Who over the years have organised the trips to Arnhem.

Bunny Brown & George Barrett: Who are always ready and willing to assist when required.

Mike Holdsworth: Who did so much to make the Cromwell Lock Memorial Service such a momentous occasion.

Ron & Nick Gibson (Chatham branch): As a father and son team have worked extremely hard on our behalf, in the organisation of the Association Standard Dedication Service and in particular to Nick who organised the opening of the "Pegasus" bar in the King Charles hotel.

Ronnie Drummond: Who together with his colleagues from Edinburgh have established a thriving branch north of the border. They run their meetings in conjunction with the Edinburgh PRA, thereby creating a marvellous alliance.

Phil Chatterley & Chris ODonovan: Despite a lack of numbers have kept alive the Northern Ireland branch, and have organised enjoyable functions and in particular the Snowdonia Adventure weekends.

Tom Brinkman: Ably assisted by his wife Yvonne laid the foundations for the Memorial seat in the Weston-Super-Mare cemetery. Tom is one of our proud Standard Bearers, and is also assisting with the organisation of the 2001 AGM/Reunion at Bristol.

Tom Thornton, John Waite, Roy King, & Bill Budd: Who have put in tremendous work at the Yorkshire Air Museum to ensure that our Airborne display is such an outstanding success. Tom Thornton received special praise as Bob's mentor and sincere thanks for his sterling work to ensure that the Gala 2000 weekend was a memorable occasion.

Brian Jones, Ian Strettle & Ken Coles: The committee of the Northwest branch were praised by the chairman for their efforts to keep the branch in existence, but regrettably circumstances were against them and the curtain has sadly been brought down. (Temporarily, it is hoped)

Vote of Thanks: The chairman extended a vote of thanks to the following:

Major Rob Rider, OC 9 Para Sqn RE and to all personnel of 9 Sqn that had attended the Arnhem and Double Hills ceremonies.

Bob Ferguson, Maurice Metcalfe, Sid Warrilow & Mick Leather. For their generous donations to the Association, with particular reference to the fact that Bob Ferguson and Maurice were founder members and had demonstrated their commitment to the Association by still leading from the front.

6. Treasures Report: Capt Dick Brown RE gave an 'Audited' report of the Association accounts as at 9th October 2000.

Assets		Liabilities	
Current Account	██████████	Newsletter/Journal	██████████
Deposit Account	██████████	Museum/Projects	██████████
Shop Stock (at cost)	██████████		
Property	██████████		
Total Assets	██████████	Total Liabilities	██████████
Net working capital (Assets less liabilities)	██████████		

Proposed by Roy Gambrell, seconded by Dave Mellor that the accounts as presented be accepted:

Agreed: Unanimously

It was agreed that the funds of the Northwest branch, once finalised by Brian Jones (chairman) and Ken Cole (treasurer) would be transferred into the main Association account, and would be "ring fenced" until such time that the Northwest branch re-emerges.

7. **Membership Report:** Chris Chambers gave a full report concerning the membership of the Association stating that he had recently issued enrolment number 1,050. He challenged each member to recruit an old friend or colleague and encouraged those who are members of Branches, but not members of the Association, to become full members.

8. **Election of Officers** The following officers were elected unanimously:

President:	Brig G.A. Hewish MBE	Hon Secretary:	Ray Coleman
Vice Presidents:	Col C.M. Davies MBE	Hon Asst Secretary:	Charlie Dunk
	Bill Rudd MBE Bob	Hon Treasurer:	Capt R. Brown RE
Chairman:	Prosser BEM	Membership Secretary:	Chris Chambers

9. **Election of Life Vice President:** The following member was unanimously elected to assume the appointment as Life Vice President: - Bob Jones – 1st Parachute Squadron RE and Birmingham Branch

10. **Election of Representatives:** The following personnel were unanimously accepted:

1 Sqn	Bob Jones	Aldershot Branch	Maurice Metcalfe
3 Sqn	Bob Sullivan MBE	Birmingham Branch	George Barrett
4 Sqn	Eric Richards	Chatham Branch	Ron Gibson
9 Fd Coy (AB)	Tom Carpenter	Edinburgh Branch	Ronnie Drummond
131 Sqn	Bunny Brown	Northern Ireland	Phil Chatterley
591 Sqn	Tony Jackson	Southwest Branch	Tom Brinkman
9 Sqn	OC, SSM, Cpl's Mess	Yorkshire Branch	Bill Rudd MBE

11. **Confirmation of Trustees:** The following officers were elected as trustees for the Association: Col Chris Davies MBE, Bob Prosser BEM and Bill Rudd MBE

12. **The Constitution:** After a protracted discussion it was agreed there would be no amendments this year.

13. **Museums & Memorials:** Guest speakers, Ian Reed (Elvington Air Museum) and Nick Gibson (representing Friends of the Royal Engineers Museum Chatham) gave graphic appraisals into what 'Airborne Engineer' displays we have at present and what was planned (with our help) for the future.

14. **Cromwell Lock Memorial:** At the invitation of the chairman, Mike Holdsworth gave a detailed report on the Cromwell Lock Memorial and expressed his gratitude to the Association for the £1,500 donation to cover the cost of the wrought iron fence, which now encompasses the Memorial Stone.

15. **Association Journal:** Our editor, Dave Rutter, stated that although the new format Journal had been well received, it would only be as good as the material it contained. He emphasised the need for a continued source of supply of text and photographs. Payment for the Journal continued to be a source of concern, and he requested that members pay their subscription on time, either cheque payment or by the recently introduced 'Standing Order' arrangement.

16. **Correspondence:** The chairman read a letter from Eric Booth, 1st Parachute Squadron RE, in which Eric expressed sincere thanks for the financial assistance towards the memorial at Donington.

Date and Venue of AGM/Reunion 2001: Bristol Hilton hotel on weekend 5-7 October 2001

The Battle of Arnhem

The German Version

On 17th September 1944, Bittrich was enjoying his first really carefree Sunday in a long time. Outside the 2nd SS Panzer HQ at the small Dutch town of Doctinchem the sun was shining and the burghers were strolling home from the *Kerk* in their best clothes. His two divisions were safely tucked away sixty miles behind the front line, and Field-Marshal Model had successfully pleaded with Himmler to allow him to retain his Corps. All seemed well with the world and, as Bittrich prepared to enter the senior officers mess, he told himself that he had handled matters correctly in allowing General Harmel, the commander of his 10th SS, to go to Berlin illegally, and Colonel Harzer, the commander of his 9th SS, to absent himself to present medals to his men. There would be no need of their services this Sunday.

Lunch started promptly at twelve. From the direction of Arnhem to the south, there came the sound of heavy aerial activity. The noise didn't worry Bittrich particularly, although he knew it had to come from enemy planes. Since Normandy he had got used to the fact that the Allies dominated the air over Europe. He concentrated on his soup. The meal passed pleasantly and Bittrich had just finished his cigar in the ante-room when the first reports began to come in, via the Luftwaffe's communication network, that the noises coming from Arnhem were not those of another Allied air-raid; they were something more serious. The British were dropping paratroops to the west of Arnhem in large numbers. A full-scale Para drop was taking place.

Unlike everybody else in the area of Arnhem, including his Army Commander, Field Marshal Model, Bittrich did not panic.

"My first thought" he recalled later, 'was that this airborne attack designed to contain Von Zangen's army' and prevent it from joining with the remainder of our forces. Then probably the objective would be a drive by the British Army across the Rhine and into Germany.

If his guess was correct, Bittrich knew it would be vital for the SS Panzer Corps to hold the bridges at Arnhem and further south at Nijmegen-the two bridges the Allies would have to cross if they wanted to drive into Germany. General Bittrich had guessed right for the wrong reasons. The British 'Market Garden' Operation had not been designed by Field Marshal Montgomery to cut off Von Zangen's army. The concept was much bolder than that. The great airborne attack envisaged the dropping of three airborne divisions, the US 82nd and the 101st, and the 1st British Airborne, to take the key bridges on the 60 mile stretch of road which led up to the one across the Lower Rhine at Arnhem. Once those bridges had been taken, the British ground forces under the command of General Horrocks would push forward along the single main road north to Arnhem to link up with the paratroopers. When Arnhem was firmly in British hands, the Second British Army would turn east into Germany and dash for the Ruhr. Once that was in Allied possession, Montgomery reasoned, Germany would collapse and the war would be over.

It was an incredibly bold plan. As General Bradley remarked when he first learned of "Market Garden." "Had the pious teetotaller Montgomery wobbled into SHAEF with a hangover, I could not have been more astonished than I was by the daring adventure he proposed!"

But now, on the first afternoon of this 'daring adventure,' Montgomery's plan ran into trouble. He had discounted the warnings, forwarded to him by Winterbotham of Ultra and General Strong, Eisenhower's Intelligence Officer, that the 2nd SS Panzer Corps was in the Arnhem area. Soon he would pay for that failing.

Like a spider spinning a web for its intended victim, Bittrich started to rap out orders to his units. Using the civilian telephone network, he called Harzer, commanding the *Hohenstaufen*. He told him that he had already alerted the 9th SS. Harzer was to return to his HQ and destroy the British paras west of Arnhem near Oosterbeek. As an afterthought he said, "Occupy and hold firmly the bridge at Arnhem!"

On the morning of 18th September, Major General Harmel, the commander of the 10th SS Panzer Division, arrived back at his HQ at Velp near Arnhem. Tired and apprehensive, his eyes taking in the thick smoke over the city, he was met by his exhausted deputy, Colonel Paetsch. The Colonel's first words were, "Thank God you are back." Paetsch told him what he knew of the confused situation in and around Arnhem. The information did not satisfy Harmel. Tired as he was after his long drive from his illegal leave he got back into his car and sped to Bittrich's HQ. Bittrich was exhausted too - he hadn't slept all night - and angry. He explained the situation and then snapped, 'The Nijmegen Bridge must be held at all costs. Additionally the Arnhem Bridge and the area all the way south of Nijmegen are your responsibility. Bittrich looked up from the map over which the two of them leaned.

"Your problems has been made more difficult because Harzer failed to leave armoured units at the north end of the Arnhem bridge. The British are there now!"

As Harmel drove back to his HQ, he realised that the fact that the British held the Arnhem bridge put his division in an impossible position. He would have to ferry all his armour across the river at Pannerden so that it could move south to Nijmegen. There was only one solution to his problem. He would have to retake the Arnhem bridge and open the highway south for his division.

The first attack by the SS was carried out under Captain Graebner. Twenty-four hours earlier Colonel Harzer had awarded him the Knight's Cross for his bravery in France. Now he obviously hoped to win the coveted Laurel Leaves for, without orders, he commanded his men to charge the southern end of the Arnhem bridge. The sixteen half-tracks, laden with SS panzer grenadiers, came barrelling up the road from Elst, through the British minefield without casualties, around the wrecked vehicles, which lay everywhere, and onto the bridge itself.

Lt-Colonel Frost's Red Berets of the 2nd Parachute Battalion, defending the bridge, were waiting for them. But they held their fire, letting the Germans get closer and closer. Now all the German half-tracks were on the bridge. A young Grenadier suddenly spotted the paratroopers crouched in the brick rubble at the far end of the bridge. Cheekily he waved at them, as the half-tracks sped forward to their doom.

Next moment the shooting started. There was the thick crack of the Piat. The first bomb struck the leading half-track. It slewed across the road. Another was hit. It crashed into the side of the bridge, spilling dying and wounded panzer grenadiers everywhere. A third overturned with a great crash. The battle for the bridge was on.

Viktor Graebner died on the littered cobbles of the road. All around him were strewn the dead and dying men of his command. Wrecked half-tracks were everywhere. But still the panzer grenadiers attempted to break through. Captain McKay of the Royal Engineers, defending one of the houses on the northern end of the bridge, looked out of a window. Five yards away there was a German, standing upright in a vehicle. McKay grabbed his pistol. The SS man was quicker. He loosed off three shots. McKay felt his binoculars splinter as he ducked. But his men reacted quicker than he. They poured a hail of fire into the German and his companions. The SS half-track slammed into the wall, its open deck littered with dead and dying panzer grenadiers. Five minutes later what was left of them withdrew under the cover of a mortar bombardment.

That afternoon Harmel himself turned up on the bridge to assess the situation. "I was beginning to feel damn foolish," he recalled. Parts of two divisions were being held up by a handful of British paratroopers armed with light infantry weapons; and Bittrich had been calling him all morning, demanding to know whether the bridge was back in German hands.

Now he had just been informed that he was to receive three Tiger tanks from the *Wehrmacht's* 502nd Tank Detachment, plus a battery of infantry howitzers. Swiftly he made his dispositions. He would bring artillery fire on every building held by Frost's men on the other side of the bridge and then launch an infantry attack, covered by the Tigers. "But in view of the fight they were putting up, I felt I should ask for their surrender first."

He sent across a captured Engineer sergeant under a flag of truce. But when Colonel Frost heard from the sergeant that the Germans were depressed by their own losses, he, reckoned that, "If more ammunition would arrive, we would soon have our SS opponents in the bag."

Harmel tried again when the sergeant did not return. A handful of SS men came across the bridge; waving white and crying, "Surrender." Captain McKay thought the SS wanted to surrender.

"Get the hell out of here. We're taking no prisoners". "Bugger off," McKay's Engineers called from their positions. "Go back and fight!"

The SS went back the way they had come and Harmel knew he would have to winkle each separate paratrooper from the ruins on the other side of the bridge. The slaughter of Frost's paras could commence.

All that long 19 September, while Colonel Harzer broke through at Oosterbeek and sever Frost's tenuous links with the 1st Airborne Division and Harmer's 10th SS Panzer Division held back the advancing 2nd Army at Nijmegen, the battle of the Arnhem bridge raged.

From the south, Captain Brinkmann's men of the 10th SS attacked across the bridge and from the north, one-legged Major Knaust's invalids' (new recruits or men who had been severely wounded in battle) pressed into the city near the bridge. The pressure on Colonel Frost's men was immense. Every second one had been killed or severely wounded. Frost himself was badly wounded, as was his second-in-command. But still the paras, who had been told they would have to hold the bridge at the most for 24 hours without help, were holding on after 72 hours, against all Harmer could throw at them. And they were giving as good as they were taking. The ruins of the shattered position were filled with dead SS men.

Harmer urged his two commanders, Knaust and Brinkmann, to ever-greater efforts. The Arnhem bridge must be secured soon; for hourly he expected the Allied breakthrough which would link up with the men on the bridge; and that would mean the end. For as he recalled after the war, "I had no intention of being arrested and shot by Berlin for letting the bridges fall into enemy hands!" On the morning of 20th September the end was near for the men holding the bridge. Seventy yards away from McKay's HQ, one of Knaust's tanks was blasting away at him at regular intervals. The cellars were full of his wounded and he was down to thirteen men, armed with a clip of ammunition each. He, too, was wounded in the foot. Frost was no better off. Drugged with morphine and badly wounded, he was out of the battle himself. But the eighty odd men of the 2nd Battalion who were under his command, survivors of 400 or more who had reached the bridge on the first day, were still fighting amongst the ruins. The 10th SS attacked just after dawn. The positions of the defenders were on fire again. But they were waiting for the Germans with their Piats and antitank grenades they fought all out, nerves tingling with excitement and Bensedrine tablets, against the Panzer Grenadiers and their covering tanks. In the end the Germans withdrew, leaving the dead in their camouflaged tunics behind in the grey drizzle, while a weary McKay took stock of his battered survivors.

As he wrote after the war: "Splattered everywhere there was blood. It lay in pools in the rooms; it covered the smocks of the defenders and ran in small rivulets down the stairs. The men themselves were the grimmest sight of all: Eyes red rimmed for want of sleep, their faces, blackened by fire-fighting, with three day's growth of beard. Many of them had minor wounds and their clothes were cut away to expose roughly fixed, blood-soaked field dressings. They were huddled in twos and threes, each little group manning positions that required twice their number. The only clean things in the school were the weapons". All the same McKay knew he would never have to give that melodramatic last order: "To the last round and the last man." These men would fight to the end as it was.

That afternoon Major Gough, commander of the Airborne Reconnaissance Company attached to the 2nd Battalion, who now commanded the defence of the bridge, asked Harmel for a truce so that the severely wounded could be evacuated. The Germans agreed. Frost, his badges-of rank torn off, disappeared with the rest of the non-walking wounded into German captivity. Now there were perhaps one hundred and fifty men, Engineers, 2nd Battalion paratroopers and Gough's airborne recce, left holding a handful of houses on the bridge.

But although during the truce the German SS had been extraordinarily kind, handing out chocolate and cigarettes to the wounded paras in the cellars, they had used the cease-fire to infiltrate into the buildings in which they were holding out.

"It was a terrible moment" one of them, Private Tucker, remembered afterwards. "We knew now that there was no hope. But there was no panic. As the order came "Move back to the school," The lads fell back in single file against the background of the burning houses everywhere.

Dodging from house to house, running the gauntlet of the bullet swept lanes; they reached the big stone house to be told by an officer that they were going to break out in small parties that night. Meanwhile the defence, which would deny the Germans the use of the bridge, must be kept up. "It was a nightmare," Major Gough said. "Everywhere there were Germans - in front, in back and on the sides. They had managed to infiltrate a large force into the area during the truce. They now held practically every house. We were literally overrun."

Still in little groups, hidden in the rubble, the Paras held out against 10th SS. One group of advancing Panzer Grenadiers, combing the ruins for the Red Devils, were surprised by the attack of two, dirty, ragged Paras. The two British soldiers suddenly emerged from a cellar, armed only with their trench knives. Both were felled with a rapid burst of schmiesser fire and taken prisoner. But the attempt to attack impressed the 'battle hardened German troops,' as one SS officer put it, "Because it was not spontaneous, but obviously thought out."

Darkness fell at last and the survivors broke out. Major Gough was wounded and captured. He was taken in front of Brinkmann. Brinkmann saluted him and said. "I wish to congratulate you and your men. I fought at Stalingrad and it is obvious that you British have had a great deal of experience in street fighting. Gough, who, like a great part of what the Germans considered to be an 'elite division' had never been in action before, replied in his usual cheery fashion, "This was our first effort. We'll do much better next time."

Now, one by one, the survivors were rounded up and Major Knaust's Tigers and Panthers, shoving the wreckage of the battle in front of them, started to move across the bridge southwards to Nijmegen.

Not far away Colonel Harzer's HQ staff, busy planning the final attack on the mass of the 1st Airborne in Oosterbeek, picked up one last message from the men trapped men on the bridge.

Years later Colonel Harzer could not remember it in any detail. But its last two sentences stuck in his mind. They were, "Out of ammunition. God save the King!"

Two days later it was all over and what was left of the 1st Airborne Division had been withdrawn over the Rhine, bloody and beaten in defeat. Montgomery's great plan had failed to come off. The war would not end in 1944 now, and as Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands said of Montgomery's claim that the operation had been a 'ninety per cent success', "My country can never again afford the luxury of another Montgomery success".

According to Bittrich's figures, out of the 10,000 of the 1st Airborne Division who had landed at Arnhem, 1,500 were killed and 2,200 wounded (in German hands), 2,100 were back across the Rhine, leaving about 3,000 as German POW's. The German losses were 3,300 men.

For Bittrich's Corps it was a great victory. They had stopped Montgomery's push into Germany, and given Hitler the breathing space along the German frontier that he needed. For far away at his Eastern Prussian HQ he was already planning a great counterstroke, which would change the whole course of the war in the West.

As the battle in Holland started to die down and, one by one, Bittrich could withdraw his battered units for refitting and replenishment in the Reich, the preparations for the new offensive started to get underway. The Ardennes Offensive opened exactly eight weeks later.

The Airborne Engineer Ubique and Unique

Eric Blenkinsop

Ubique

Hardwick Hall, Ringway, Tatton Park, all etched deeply in the history of those early wartime basic training days of the Airborne Engineer. Bulford camp, Larkhill, Salisbury Plain, not so deeply etched perhaps, but never the less the location for that most prominent phase of development, the formation and refinement for battle of both the 1st and 6th Airborne Divisions, speak to any of the early bold and brave Airborne Engineers and they will recall, perhaps with mixed feelings, Beacon Barracks, Beacon Hill and those seemingly endless runs up and down the hill with 'para barrows'. The HQ of both divisions was at Syrencot House, a red brick Georgian house just a mile south of Figheldean. Does it have a commemorative plate? I wonder!

Then off to war, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Normandy, Arnhem, Rhine crossing and all of the many others. It would be difficult to name one Airborne campaign or raid of any significance in which the Airborne Engineer played no part. They were Ubique then and continue to be so today.

Lt Col John Rock is buried in the military cemetery at Tidworth. How very appropriate that he should have been laid to rest so close to the location where his creation, "Airborne Forces" were destined to be formed up and prepared for combat. This surely merits an annual pilgrimage to his grave by a small band of nearby members

Unique

The military element of airborne Forces was formed by an Airborne Engineer - Lt Col John Rock. The first CO of the Glider Pilots Regiment was an Airborne Engineer - Lt Col John Rock.

1948 9 Independent Airborne Squadron RE became the sole Airborne Engineer unit and surely the first post war all regular army unit.

1949 9 Sqn became the first minor unit to play in the BAOR soccer cup final fully supported by the Sqn band and mascot (Ogilvey's pig)



BAOR Soccer Team

Rear: Ginger McLaren, Ginger Narraway, Ted Laye, Jock Docherty
Wimp Martin, Paddy Padfield
Front: Phil Liskirk, ? , Harold Partridge, Bobby Gore & Ted Lewis



The Sqn Band at Hannover Sports Stadium

Broom Major: Ogilvey, Trombonist: Jock Rennie, 2nd Mouth Organist Mick Downey, Time Keeper Horace Stokes, Tail Gunner: Ginger Andrews



1949 9 Sqn became the first minor unit to play in the Army Rugby Union Cup final.

Rear: Paddy Padfield, Eric Blenkinsop, Lofty Game, Lt Allison, Jim Allingham, Capt Wab Chappell, Maj DA Smith, Ray Britton, Lt Jeffries, Ted Laye.
Front: Biff Evans, Pete Wood, Wally Linham, Jim Masters & Pop Cadman

1950 The first and only minor unit to be converted en-masse from combat soldiers to Thespians in order to take part in the Royal Engineer Rally (History of the Corps) at the Albert Hall. (Probably the inspiration of "It Aint Half Hot Mum")

1951 Despite being Ubique 9 Sqn received a battle honour on the behalf of 9 Field Company (Airborne) RE for the part that they played in the success of the glider borne 'Operation Husky' in Sicily during 1943. The honour in the form of an illuminated scroll, was presented by Lt Gen Sir FAM Browning CBE, CB, DSO.

1951 The first army unit to shun the NAAFI and form its own Sqn canteen at Fayid in the Canal Zone. First named the Biffery after the canteen manager at that time, it soon became known as the Rat Pit rather than the Smithery or the Prossery.

1979 A memorial was created at Double Hills, Paulton in Somerset by Peter Yeates supported by the villagers, the Bristol REA, the Glider Pilot Regimental Association and many others. The Memorial commemorates the crash on this site of Horsa Glider RJ113 on Sunday 17th September 1944. All of those on board died that day, 21 members of 9 Field Company (Airborne) and 2 members of the Glider Pilot Regiment. A detachment from 9 Para Sqn has been in attendance at the memorial each year. It must surely be unique that the sole Airborne Engineer unit has an officially recognised memorial to attend in the United Kingdom at which it can honour those Airborne Engineers who gave their lives in World War II?

We are now in 2001 and there must be many more significant Unique events/occurrences concerning 9 Parachute Squadron RE since 1979. Perhaps we can hear something of them in future?

Airborne Engineers

The story of the 9th Field Company (Airborne) RE written by Patrick Pronk - Price £10

"Airborne Engineers" is an illustrated history of the actions of the 9th Field Company Royal Engineers during the Second World War. It deals with their role in the early part of the War including the Phoney War and Dunkirk. This unit was selected to be one of the first new airborne units in 1941 and the story deals with their training for this new role, its role in Operation Freshman in Norway and then other areas of action for the 1st Airborne Division. The main strength of the book deals with their actions during Operation Market Garden at Arnhem. Over 30 veterans from the unit have been traced and their personal stories told several for the first time.

The author, a member of the Society of Friends of the Airborne Museum Oosterbeek, has unearthed information from Holland, Norway and the UK and this book is recommended to everybody with an interest in the Battle of Arnhem and Airborne Forces.

Available in the UK from: N Cherry 3, Church Road, Warton, Lancs PR4 1BD and in Holland from R. Sigmond Utrechtseweg 126A 6871 DV Renkum and the Airborne Museum Hartenstein at Oosterbeek.

Published by R N Sigmond Publishing Renkum Holland. Previous publications include 'Off at Last' and 'Red Berets and Red Crosses'

If you can't take a joke, you shouldn't join up

Alex (Froth) Beer

Editor: Alec was a member of 1 Troop, who during his fourth tour in Northern Ireland, was tasked as a member of a booby trap search team.

Task: Booby Trap Clearance - Unoccupied house. **Location:** Lurgan, Northern Ireland.

Date: 4 November 1974.

We had already searched the overgrown back gardens of the 100 or so terraced houses. Someone had found a gas mask circa 1939; and, more interestingly, Ginge Cole had unearthed a length of steel tube, buried upright in the ground and possibly used as a rifle hide. Each Team had been allocated a house to search, we had to clear any booby traps first, then rip the interior apart in the hunt for weapons. It was my turn for the initial entry; it was my choice how to get in. Through the roof perhaps, with a lump hammer? Then I could bounce debris down the stairs, which were always tricky to clear. Halfway up the ladder a man appeared and asked what was I doing. I tell him. He explains that he has the key to this particular house, . His friend is doing it up. I ask if he would mind opening the front door and taking a look through with me. He unlocked the door, we go in. Building materials are stacked on the floor. I ask him to climb the stairs: he does. I watch him very carefully as he reaches the top and comes down. I see neither fear nor hatred in his eyes.

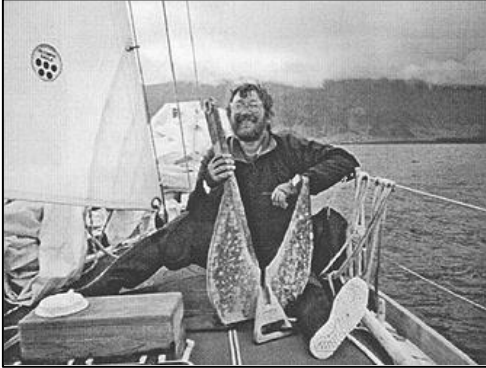
He leaves and I take another look around the room. The back door is open an inch: alarm bells ring a warning in my mind. Dave Garrad, my No. 2, is standing in the front doorway watching my every move. I start a more methodical search and have the front room cleared but for a small cabinet. It is so placed that I can examine every side of it, even underneath, for a means to arm a trap inside. I lead a piece of string from the street to the bronze knob of the cabinet door. I will turn the knob, then go outside, pull the string and open the door. I can hear children playing in the street as I squat in front of the cabinet and reach for the knob.

A blinding blue white flash with a punch in the face by a brick fist were the first sensations, then darkness, silence. "Christ you've set a trap off" said the voice in my head adding urgently, "Don't sleep, don't sleep, you'll die if you sleep." Screaming is out of the question, too shocked. I try to assess damage. Both feet move in my boots but I think I've lost my left hand and am probably blinded as I had lifted the visor for a better look leaving my eyes unprotected. I think I might survive these injuries but if it's a come on and I'm hit again when the Boys come for me; I've had it. Movement, shoulders being tugged, eyes letting in a yellowish light, sound of rubble being cast aside. Lying on my back, must be the pavement. Looking up at a yellow sky, someone puking. Being lifted into a Saracen - the doors slamming shut. "You might survive" said the voice . The locals have erected a barrier across the road to prevent the Saracen's escape. "Onto the pavement" shouts a voice. "Where's your rifle?" whispers the voice , the notion of me defending myself almost amuses. Lamp posts being knocked down, rocks hitting the sarry and vicious pain now in my left thigh. Suddenly I'm lifted out, trolley rushed down a corridor, eyes visible from white masked faces against a white ceiling, body armour lifted from me. Much, much pain. "Someone hit me with a buffalo dart" I wordlessly beg, somebody does; I don't feel it, but sink gratefully into oblivion.

And that is how my days in 9 Sqn came to an end. Not with a whimper but with a bang and a whimper. There followed eighteen months in dock; and in June 1976 I stumped out of the Army on one leg with two hands and sight almost intact. I had joined as a boy of fifteen eleven years earlier so this was my first brush with civvy street. There are many people to whom I owe a great deal and I would like to thank here Brigadier Ian McGill, then Captain and 2IC who gave me much time and two very valuable pieces of advice the first was "Buy a big house Froth" and if you wish to know the second it will cost a pint when we meet. I then worked for I.C.I. Paints Division at Slough for five years during which I learnt the ways of the big outside and sailed and canoed to my heart's content. The sailing took over.

It is seven years now since we sailed from Inverkip on the Clyde. The we includes Lindsey my crew/partner. Crossing the Atlantic through Panama, stopping in Fiji to meet Atu ex 9 Sqn. and Kelly ex 63 R.T.C. where I learnt of the death of Mick Quarikau. On to Australia around to Darwin across the Indian Ocean to Madagascar then to

Durban and around Agulhas to Cape Town up to St. Helena to Brazil and back to South Africa with a short stop in Tristan de Cunha on the way. Which just about brings us up to date. The boat [Gladys May] is tied up in Simonstown having a much needed refit, and once again I've found my true vocation, up to my ears in filth, but happy with it.



Skipper Froth rigging his anchor on the approach to Tristan da Cunha

O.K. enough of the life story already. What joy it is to read the Journal, I especially enjoyed Paul Dunkley's ripping yarn of skulduggery in the good old days not just because I figured in it but also because it brought back so many not quite forgotten memories. But for the life of me I can't remember the nonsense in the NAAFI Club. However, I do remember the Church Parade mentioned; because during the trip back to Crookham, Harry [Hug the Thug] Huggins commented "Who the blinking heck wants a Jerusalem in Blighty." Which set off a rather interesting theological discussion. It was, I think, either Henry Morgan or Super Sapper Saunderson who took it upon themselves to explain the use of imagery in Blakes poetry. Harry however, thought differently. In an age where most Bishops, it seems, have doubts, I often think that Harry could have parlayed his rigid grasp of a text into a career in the Church bolstering up flagging belief. I almost see him now, thirty years on, explaining the immaculate conception and virgin Birth to backsliders, perhaps that's where he is. Paul Dunkley was taking no part in the conversation, which for those who know him would agree was somewhat unusual, but I put that down to him being at number 6 in Keith Frost's Squadron ugly list for the fourth week running!

No cause for upset as I'd been in the middle ratings myself for months. Things became no clearer when Paul performed a beautiful side right over the tailgate as the truck slowed for the cross-roads at the North Horns. The rest is as Paul describes. There is one more memory prompted by the tale and that is the song which roared from a thousand [all right poetic licence] throats that evening in the NAAFI club, which went, "Hail Hail Dunkley's' in jail. What on earth do we care etc."

Red Devils, Windsor Castle & Reg Orton

John G Elliott

May I add to the correspondence from Bob Seaman and Peter Stainforth concerning the naming of 1st Parachute Brigade as the Red Devils.

I had taken Reg Orton to a reunion for holders of the DCM at Windsor Castle. Parking near the Castle was difficult. However Reg spotted a space outside a Pub and we parked on the double yellow lines with his disabled badge clearly displayed. Inside the Pub were several other members of the DCM League and, needless to say, we consumed several pints before we made our way to the Parade ground and Reg slipped in just as the parade Commander called the Parade to Attention. Unfortunately, half an hour later and with HRH The Duke of Kent still only half way through the inspection, Reg, who was in the rear rank, signalled to me that he was in urgent need of a visit to the nearest Desert Rose.

I skilfully guided him from the Parade. Luckily all the hierarchy had their backs to him, and we were shown to a loo by a friendly official. Again, luckily, Reg returned to the Parade without being spotted.

That evening at a Reception, the subject of the sobriquet "Red Devils" was discussed. A rather pompous person informed us that, as he and everyone knew, it was because of the Red Beret worn by 1st Para Bde "wasn't it", he said to Reg, who had kept remarkably quiet and had not joined in the conversation.

A few minutes later an announcement was made that a member of 1st Parachute Brigade, North Africa, would like to meet any old mates who had fought there. We made our way to the edge of the stage to be greeted by a real Vet from 1st Brigade. After a short series of reminiscences Reg asked him if he remembered how we got the name "Red Devils." Of course, said the Vet, it was during the battle of (Here I must apologise to all the 1st Brigade vets, as I cannot remember the name of the engagement). We attacked across a plain whose red soil had turned to dust, there was a stiff breeze blowing, also a few dust devils, and the sun was behind us. We appeared from this dust and smoke, covered in the red dust and the nickname "Red Devils" stuck to us! "There you are," said Reg that's the correct answer.

Several drinks later we were shepherded out of the reception, as we were the last there. Unfortunately Reg slipped on the staircase and his artificial leg became detached. "Help, I've lost my leg," he cried. At this point an incredibly ugly Australian WRAC, who Reg had been chatting up, asked if she could help. On Reg's behalf I declined her kind offer, dragged Reg to the toilets where he refitted the offending limb. Somehow I got him home. I've never forgotten Windsor Castle.

Struggling Families

82nd Airborne Division

The following article was recently published in the American Airborne newspaper "Static Line." Perhaps some of the married serving members of the Squadron will find this 'food' for thought:

High above the choir and the parishioners, in the dark belfry at Fort Bragg's Division Memorial Chapel, donated cans of corn and green beans and jars of baby food are stacked neatly in Army wall lockers.

Hundreds of struggling Army families trying to make ends meet depend on the belfry fare.

"It's a safety net," said Chaplain Lawrence Krause, the head chaplain for the 14,000 member 82nd Airborne Division.

"This is not to take care of everything," said Chaplain Terry Austin, who oversees operations at the 82nd Airborne division Memorial Chapel on Ardennes Street, "It's to hold them over."

The Chapel's food locker, as it is called, is one of several located at churches on post and run by chaplains. To keep the food lockers in stock, chaplains count on donations of money and canned goods throughout the year.

Despite a military pay raise, some lower enlisted soldiers with families have trouble making ends meet. To help feed soldiers' families, send cheques to Fort Bragg Consolidated Chaplains Fund (OHH). To donate canned goods call Chaplain Terry Austin at (910) 432-4200.

Static Line editor suggests that if each Airborne Chapter in the country will send the fund \$10, that there will be more than enough money in the fund to keep the locker full, along with a few benevolent Airborne people who will also throw in an extra "tenner".

Admin Officer take note. And you thought you had welfare problems

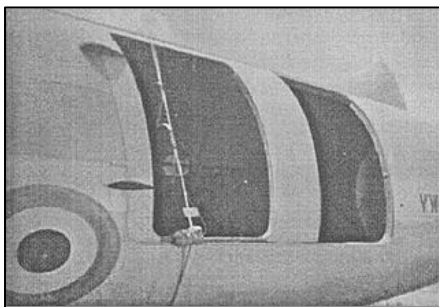
Cyprus Experiences

Ron Day

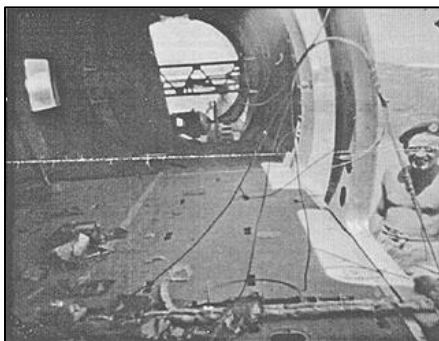
By 1952, 9 Squadron, as part of 16 Parachute Brigade, had made the move urgently from Cyprus to the Canal Zone. Initially, the year before, the Bde was concentrated around Fayid and the Great Bitter Lake area, while the situation was sensitive. At one point the Bde sat in the desert for some two weeks, at which time it seemed "odds on" that we would be heading towards Cairo to straighten out matters with the Egyptians. However, there was some momentary "cooling off" it seemed and the Bde re-located in and around Moascar in 1952. Very shortly it was rumoured that we might be used to snatch Egyptian airfields, which then led to the appreciation of possible airborne engineer tasks, which would arise. Among these was the safe clearance or airstrips for use by the RAF.

It was believed the Egyptian forces would attempt to deny the use of these airfields for some significant period by effectively "scuttling" large aircraft on the runways. This would possibly be achieved by the expedient of "raising" the undercarriage so that the aircraft was "bellied down" on the strip. Large aircraft with heavy fuel loads would then provide a significant problem for airborne sappers (being 'first in') to clear safely and quickly. The problem of the lack of heavy lift capability could be foreseen (even if 'Ginger' Narroway and his D4 Tractor were available).

So it was that 1 troop, by now commanded by Capt John Chapple, were tasked with experimenting the Bde. He, with Sgt Wallace 'Curley' Chapman and Cpls Lazenby and Day enplaned for Fayid for the flight to Nicosia, Cyprus. Here, apparently, the RAF had a Valetta fuselage they would offer for our attentions. The flight in the RAF Anson was uneventful, apart from a delayed departure due to a flat tyre, and, as Curly remembers, the pilot tasked him with winding up the undercarriage! However, we duly landed at RAF Nicosia and were shortly whisked around the airfield where a wingless fuselage awaited.



We had brought with us several cases of plastic explosive 808, cordtex and the usual trimmings. Capt Chapple's idea was that we should first attempt to cut off the tail section. It had already been decided that in a real situation we should have initially severed the wings, with their fuel tanks, without the use of explosive charges. Taking off the tail meant cutting through the floor of the fuselage, the most substantial part structurally. We were to rely on the properties of cordtex to cut the fuselage over and under the rear door opening. The photograph (1) shows the cordtex layout externally, and another double row of '808' sticks laid internally across the aircraft floor. We elected to have two runs of cordtex to cut the outer skin and the aircraft framework.



Many of us will recall the problems working with PE '808'. Although very easy to mould to shape for explosive cutting charges, its moisture was very quickly absorbed through the hands which very quickly created a very bad headache, and sometimes nausea, in prolonged situations. Invariably at such times, it was usual to ponder why we never seemed to have PE3, or similar, for such work.

With the donkeywork done and the initiation sets prepared, we retired to a safe distance leaving Capt Chapple and Sgt Chapman to proceed. The result of our ministrations moved the tail section some 100 feet to the rear while at the same time the main fuselage was almost completely stripped of its metal covering (rather too much '808' it seems). Anyway it left a rather untidy heap for removal; something that RAF Nicosia wouldn't have really appreciated.



I have always believed that Capt Chapple expected us to have more than one attempt at cutting up the fuselage. There was some conversation at the time, which led to the opinion that a much-reduced reliance on plastic explosive, and greater use of the properties of cordtex to cut neatly, would produce a more satisfactory result. We were not offered another fuselage to experiment with!

However, as I recall, the speed of our actions meant an early bath and more time to relax that evening in Nicosia. Not an unpleasant excursion!

Cpl Ron Day with the shattered debris of the aircraft

John Everitt's Guard of Honour

Eric Richards

Having read the article titled "An Incredible Sequence of Event," in the April issue of the Airborne Engineers Journal, I would like to add my knowledge of Sapper John Everitt of 9 (Airborne) Field Coy Royal Engineers.

Whilst on the personal invitation from Adolf Hitler to spend a few months in one of his health camps in Germany from early October 1944 until our leaving on the 16th April 1945, in Stalag X1 b at Fallingbostal near Celle. Our very charming camp leader, known as RSM JC Lord 3 Para, informed us of Sapper Everitt's death in the camp hospital, Lazerette. He informed us that a guard of honour would be required for the funeral. Being a member of the 4th Parachute Squadron RE, I offered to represent the Squadron at the funeral.

RSM Lord made us whiten our belts and gaiters with chloride of lime that he had acquired. We ironed the creases from our Para BD trousers by placing them between our bed boards.

On the day of the funeral; RSM Lord organised the Guard of Honour. The coffin of John Everitt was carried on a German cart draped with the Union flag which had been borrowed from the German Camp Office. A French army cavalry bugle was also 'borrowed' for the occasion.

The funeral cart was pulled out of the rear of the camp to the Stalag cemetery. Our Guard of Honour was complimented with a Guard of Honour formed by the Germans. Our padre conducted the service which was concluded with the 'Last Post.' I was one of those detailed by the Germans to fill in the grave. Throughout the proceedings, a German photographer took several pictures - perhaps for Red Cross purposes?

We heard later that our turn out in dress, marching and bearing was much smarter than that of the German Guard of Honour. This was confirmed in the photos the Germans took during the funeral proceedings.

Thanks again must go to the late RSM JC Lord MBE, for the discipline he installed in us and his organisation within the camp. He gave many of us back our pride and above all the respect of the German Camp Military staff during those terrible months in Stalag X1 b. Many objected to his discipline etc., and some even accused him of collaborating with the enemy. He organised us into Companies, we had Orderly Sergeants and Orderly Corporals, who were summoned for duty by our French cavalry bugle.

RSM Lord gave many back their Pride, Respect and Dignity.

To conclude on the passing of Sapper John Everitt, I can confirm that he was buried with Full Military Honours by both us and our German guards.



The "Sequence of Events" relating to Sapper John (Jack) Everitt, were brought to the attention of the editor by WO1 (GSM) John and Sandra Ferry. It seems fitting therefore that they conclude this rather emotional episode.

Doreen, John's widow, was a member of pilgrimage to Germany in May of this year. The annual event had been organised by the Royal British Legion. On her arrival at the Beckingen cemetery, John's final resting place, Doreen was emotionally surprised and delighted to find that John's headstone had been adorned with a 'Red Beret' and a Parachutist helmet. A greeting of, "Hello Doreen," was heard from behind. Turning round Doreen was to meet for the first time with John Ferry. I leave the imagination of the readers to picture this emotional occasion.

WO1 (GSM) John Ferry and Doreen Hughes (formerly Doreen Everitt)

John and his wife Sandra are due to be posted back to the UK. Geordie Borthwick, also a former 9 Para Sqn member, will take over the duties as GSM Hohne Garrison and will ensure that Spr John Everitt is properly tended to.

Closing date for the December Journal

Dave Rutter – Editor

The closing date for the receipt of articles for publication in the December 2001 edition of the “ **Airborne Engineer**” will be **30th October**. A holiday to South Africa for the major part of November dictates the need for me to have the finished draft ready for the printers, IPSO Print Ltd, prior to my departure.

Kindly ensure that all materials are forwarded to me in ample time to enable their collation and subsequent inclusion in our next publication. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated

My full postal and e-mail address is published on page 1

Elvington- Airborne Forces Weekend

Ian Reed (Museum Director)

As the dust settles after another successful Airborne Forces Day at Elvington, may I take this opportunity to thank you and your Airborne Engineer colleagues for the wonderful support you have given, and continue to give to the memorial Museum.

As the only museum of its kind in Europe, devoted to all allied air forces, and as the son of a WWII 6th Airborne veteran, I am delighted that we have expanded the scope of the Museum to include Airborne Forces. As you know there are now plans afoot to make it even bigger in the next year or so.

You know that we are a registered national museum under the Council for Museums, Archives & Libraries (formerly the Museums & Galleries Commission). This means that all artefacts are ostensibly part of the “National Collection” and by law are preserved, in perpetuity, for the nation.

No-one should have any doubts about the security of the collection which now includes the entire Air Crew Association Archive, the National Barnes Wallis Collection and the National Air Gunners Collection to name but a few. The Museum is supported by the Science Museum and we share joint Company Secretaries and Curatorial Adviser with the Imperial War Museum at Duxford. Our plans are already well advanced to construct another 7,500 sq. ft., 1941 T2 bomber hanger for our increasing collection of aircraft, which now totals 41. Over 20 are now rated “National Benchmark” by the B.A. P. C. This extra space, plus erection of two more wartime buildings, will release desperately needed room so that we can realise our dream and expand the Airborne Exhibition to tell the full story of its achievements.

We are in an ideal position to tell this story to the vast numbers of UK tourists who visit the York region, and particularly those from Germany, Belgium, Holland and northern France, who don't necessarily go south. We are pleased to be able to complement our colleagues at Chatham particularly so that the story of Airborne Engineers receives maximum coverage throughout the UK.

Thanks to you all.

AGM/Reunion 2001

Forgotten to book in for the Bristol AGM/Reunion? Time is fast running out! If you wish to attend, please contact Bunny Brown (function organiser) without further delay:

0121 770 1880 ore-mail bjbrown04@hotmail.com

A Date for your Diary

Chutes & Daggers - The Airborne & Special Forces Show

Station X Bletchley Park, 18th 19th August 2001

60th Anniversary of the Reconnaissance Corps 2001

The Bletchley Park Trust & The BP Volunteer Groups Norman D. Landing Militaria * Sherwood Armouries

Special display of the men and vehicles of the 43rd Recce Supported by displays from:

21st Independent Parachute Company (Pathfinders, AB Recce Sqn), Special Airforce Regiment, D Coy 2nd BN (Airborne), 52nd Ox and Bucks LI, 1st British Airborne, 5th Parachute Brigade Signals Pin, RAF Regiment, 1st Airlanding Light Regiment Royal Artillery, Glider Pilot Regiment, 17th, 82nd, 101st US Army Airborne, First Special Service Force, 2nd Ranger Bn Russian "Razvedchic" WWII Special Forces, 6 Falischirmjager Regt, Signals Company, 25th Luftlanding Regiment, 9th Coy 187 Regt "Folgore" Italian Paratroopers, Vietnam Airborne, Modified Jeeps, Land Rovers and SF Patrol Vehicles, Kirby Kite WWII Training Glider, WWII Battlefield Archaeology, The Men and Vehicles of 43rd Recce

Airborne and Commando Gunners Parachute Jump Tower

VJ-Day "Prop blast" Victory Dance

Book signing of "THE SHINY NINTH" 9 AB Sqn RE by Patrick Pronk from the Airborne Forces Museum Holland

Sunday

Service of Remembrance in the Mansion House 1000hrs Airborne, Commando, RAF Regiment and Recce Corps and Standards March Past

General Enquiries/Group Bookings: Bletchley Park - 01908 640404

Subscription Renewal for the Journal

(No don't skip this, it's important that you all read the following message)

Once again, it's that time of the year for the renewal of the Journal subscriptions. Many of you have opted to pay by Standing Order (great), and many others have paid several years subscription in advance. Both of these options save me a tremendous amount of time and effort. To each member whose subscription is actually due, I have enclosed a reminder in this current issue of our publication. If you haven't got a reminder - then you're in credit or you have already signed a Standing Order agreement.

ALL renewals must be paid by 1st November 2001. Details of payment and where/who to send them to are clearly printed on the subscription reminder.

No payment - No December Journal

9 Parachute Squadron RE

EXERCISE TURTLE HERITAGE - Engineer Diving Support to RAF Ascension Island Cpl D.S. Mitchell

14 members of the 9 Para Sqn RE Diving Team had to acclimatise to a water temperature of 27°C and air temperature of 30°C on arrival on Ascension Island for Exercise TURTLE HERITAGE. All very taxing after a luxury flight of 8½ hours on an RAF Tri-Star with your own personal video player and a selection of the latest films.

Having landed at the Wideawake Airfield, the team were picked up by the SQMS, SSgt Blacow (the man with the weighty responsibility of Admin SNCO). There followed a short 4 mile drive to the accommodation, situated in a small RAF transit camp called Travellers Hill, which lies on the slopes of Green Mountain, the largest of several hills on the island. This drive gave us our first view of the Ascension Island landscape. The island is covered with over 45 volcano craters and associated lava flows. Green Mountain is a similar height to Pen Y Fan in the Brecon Beacons and soon became a favourite for post-diving PT.

Once at Travellers Hill, the team took over transport, which consisted of two long wheelbase Land Rovers and DAF 4T truck and rather fetching Sherpa-style van, and prepared the diving equipment for the forthcoming tasks. For the majority of tasks, the team was split into two smaller teams, each under the direction of one of the Sqn ADS, SSgt Pick and SSgt Baugh, with Admin support being provided by the SQMS and his Admin section. The teams undertook a number of different construction and survey tasks. SSgt Baugh's team concentrated on the survey tasks, whilst SSgt Pick's team concentrated on the construction tasks.

The two survey tasks were the primary reason for the team's deployment to Ascension Island. The majority of stores are transported to Ascension Island by ship and then offloaded at the only pier head on the island, in Georgetown. The condition of the pier head is therefore a constant concern for all organisations operating on the island.

Consequently, the diving team under the direction of SSgt Baugh, with LCpl Frost as the team surveyor conducted an underwater inspection of the Georgetown pier head, looking for cavities in and erosion of the pier foundations. Having completed this task, the team moved to English Bay and carried out underwater surveys of three small inlets, to assess their feasibility as slipway sites.

Meanwhile the diving team under the direction of SSgt Pick marked safe swimming areas off Comfortless Cove and English Bay. There have been a number of drowning in the waters around Ascension Island in recent years and it was decided to mark safe swimming areas as a measure to enhance safety for swimmers. The safe swimming areas were marked with buoyed lines, which in an emergency could also be used by swimmers to pull themselves ashore.

During the course of the construction and survey tasks, the Diving Inspectorate visited the team and conducted 9 Para Sqn RE's APA for 2001/2, which appeared to go very well.

Evening entertainment is limited on Ascension Island, but as usual the Sqn improvised and generated much of their own. This included evening barbecues on the beaches overseen by SSgt Blacow, the SQMS/Admin SNCO, trips down to the Volcano Club in the American Camp along with trips to the NAAFI bar.

The project concluded with two days of R&R, which provided a welcome break to both diving teams. This provided an opportunity to snorkel and explore the underwater marine life, before trying to catch the same marine life whilst fishing from one of the sandy beaches - obviously whilst working on your Aldershot tans.

In conclusion, the heat and long days provided some hard, tiring working conditions, but at the same time, it was very enjoyable to be able to see what you were diving in for a change.



L to R (Standing):

SSgt Kev Blacow, Cpl Dan Mitchell, LCpl Mick Willis, Spr Tony Cross, LCpl Murray Walker, Sgt Dave Richards, SSgt Tony Pick, Spr Ginge Jalk
(Sitting:)

LCpl Ian Adams, LCpl Stu Frost, Capt Matt Wilkinson, SSgt Billy Baugh & Spr SI Muldrigg

9 Para Sqn- Update

To enlighten the readers of what the Sqn have been up to since their return from Northern Ireland last year, the following will demonstrate that they are still very much here, there and everywhere.

November 2000 - Small deployment to Malaysia, taking part in a joint Exercise with the Australian, New Zealand, Singaporean and Malaysian army.

December 2000 - 6 men carrying out Nordic Skiing in Sweden

10 men competing in the novice snowboarding championships in Austria

March 2001 - 4 men on a jungle training exercise in Brunei with the Gurkha Rifles

April/May 2001- Diving team to Ascension Island (article in the edition)

8 men on Recce patrol training in Belize

16 men deployed on a six-month tour as part of the UN detachment in Cyprus

June 2001- 8 men on adventure training in Bolivia

16 men on freefall parachuting in California

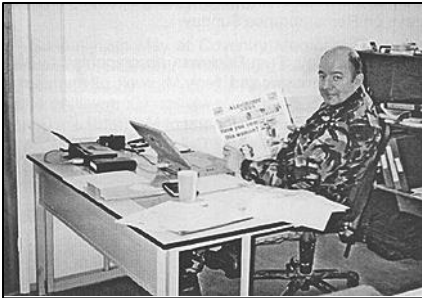
July 2001 - 5 men on German jumps course

August 2001 - 2 troop to deploy with Welsh Guards to Canada on a training exercise

September 2001 - 12 men to deploy to Sierra Leone October 2001 - 1 troop to deploy with 1 Para to Kenya on a training exercise

News from the Treasurer

Capt (QM) Dick Brown 9 Para Sqn RE



Getting his weekly fix from the Aldershot News while serving in Kosovo
What may you ask has happened to our treasurer over the past year, apart from looking after the Association finances.

As many of you are aware, I was posted to 38 Engineer Regiment as QM 11 Sqn. An excellent choice I hear you say. NOT if you live in Aldershot! Anyway after 6 months of weekly commuting to Ripon, I decided to phone my posting officer; and begged him to consider me for the job of QM 9 Sqn. Not a pretty sight, a grown man pleading - but when you are desperate, pride goes out of the window! Silence ensued, and then a grumbled, "Yes," was heard from the other end of the phone, to cut a long story short, it was while on tour in Kosovo this year that I received a call from Mary informing me that I was posted back to the Sqn, and that I was to report for duty on 14th May. I'm still not sure how Mary managed to get my posting brought forward, when my posting officer had stated that I wouldn't move until February 2002.



So after only 15 months away I am back to being an Airborne warrior again - and a very happy AIRBORNE Warrior at that.

OP position in Pristina, 16 floors up and no lift!

News from the Branches

Aldershot

Betty Gray - Branch Secretary

The main event that occurred within the branch during the last quarter was the Annual General Meeting held in May. With twenty- seven members attending and a further fifteen sending in their apologies for their absence this was one of the best-attended meetings in recent years. All Committee Members volunteered to carry on in their respective posts for a further term much to the relief of the other members who might have been nominated to take over. As has now become a regular feature of our meetings Tony Manley laid on an excellent lunch up to his very high standard.

During the meeting we were able to welcome two new members to the branch. Tony Gilbert formally with 302 Field Park Squadron, (Tony's father commanded the Squadron 1955 - 57) and Harry Evans, who served with 9 Squadron from 1954 - 58 mostly with 2 Troop. We have also been able to welcome the new Squadron Sergeant Major to our branch, Neil Fitzsimonds. Neil, who recently took over from Adam Frame, joined our ranks and is a most welcome addition. Billy Morris returned to the branch after an absence of a few years and Mick Humphries was our 6th new member of the last quarter. Welcome to them all and their wives and partners. We look forward to seeing them at our future events.

Congratulations to Ron Day on celebrating his seventy- second birthday by taking a flight in a glider, this was by way of a slightly unusual birthday present from Daphne. He had expected a new pair of carpet slippers and a pipe, but Daphne told him it was a parachute jump or the glider. He took the less hazardous option.

We were all very pleased to see Captain Dick Brown back from Kosovo and would like to congratulate him on his appointment as QM of the Squadron. The Aldershot Branch can now boast that we are the only branch in the association with our own Quartermaster and Sergeant Major. We shall now have to wait and see how Dick copes with the increased demand for Zimmer Frames.

The next quarter is going to be very busy with our annual summer BBQ and the AGM and Double Hills remembrance in October. Branch members will also be attending the 1st Parachute Squadron reunion at Donington in September.

New members are always welcome to the branch and we would be very pleased to see you. For details of meetings etc please contact me on 01252 668339 or 681668 or e-mail b.gee22@ntlworld.com



Ron awaits lift off for his glider trip

Edinburgh

Mick Walker

Our bi monthly meetings continue to be well attended with over half the membership who live within travelling distance of Edinburgh managing to come along. We were all particularly pleased to see Jimmy Lowder at our May meeting after a spell of illness and looking in the pink.

Gibby Earle is a member of the Association but not of the Branch (but I'll eventually catch him even although he is in Canada and get a fiver from him!) and we were pleased to hear that he is making a good recovery from a recent cancer operation.

Gibby shares with Euan McLaughlin the dubious distinction of having been wounded in one of the defining moments in the history of 131 Indep Para Sqdn RE (TA) - i.e. when we were the first TA unit to be in action since the Second World War in Aden in 1965. Euan lives in the Outer Hebrides and we seldom see him. Family business brought him to Edinburgh in the spring and half a dozen of us were pleased to meet up with him to share memories and a modicum of drink. He is a proud Gael and next time we meet he will no doubt attempt to kick my backside for not giving his name the Gaelic spelling.

Another visitor was Les Dunsford from Australia and he was promptly signed up for the Association. Les had a month or so over here and fitted in a few nights on the beer in Edinburgh with the boys. He is our third member resident in Aussie - we are thinking of setting up a sub-Branch there.

Jimmy Wilson MM, our senior member, has had a spell in hospital but we are glad to report that he is now recovering at home.

Dougie Archibald arranged a visit to Bellhaven Brewery about 30 miles or so from Edinburgh and we were pleased for once to be 'Big Brother' and invite along some of our friends from the PRA. Dougie's arrangements were perfect - people had to meet for a pint before setting out, the bus was early so a visit to a pub en route had to be made to fill in time and the tour of the brewery was curtailed because it was Friday but that left more time to be spent in the hospitality suite. Your author could not attend this event but is assured that the early evening in Edinburgh was along similar lines. An AEA plaque is to be presented to Bellhaven in recognition of them putting up with our lot!

Charlie Imrie is arranging another brewery visit, and he will have to go some to match Dougie.

Southwest

Tom Brinkman

On their demob following the return with 1st Sqn from Palestine in the late 40's, Ken Trego and George Dickason, decided that they would tend the graves at Weston Super Mare of the those that tragically met their fate in the glider crash at Paulton. This they have done for many years until George was promoted in his civilian job which took up much more of his time, however, Ken has to this day continued to tend each of the graves, cleaning each of the head stones and placing a 'poppy' on each grave on Remembrance Sunday.

On the 31st May, Tom Brinkman accompanied by Mike Newton, Bert Gregory and Terry Maxwell, all members of the SW Branch, travelled to Mullion (Cornwall) to attend and act as bearers at the funeral of Maj (retd) Jim Snape. Also in attendance were Lt Col Pete Ellis QGM*, Majs (retd) Tony Roberts and Pete Kershaw. Jim Snape had served as 1 Troop commander and Sqn 2IC during the period 1971-74.

On Sunday 3rd June we held our Branch lunch at our usual venue, "The Star". On this occasion it was of special significance as this was the 50th wedding anniversary of Allen and Chris Mayfield (he of Cyprus and Egypt era).



Yorkshire

Mike Pallott

Since our last contribution to the journal we have held our regular and AGM in March and May respectively. At the AGM the existing branch officials were re-elected to their respective posts unopposed. In April and June the Branch held its now traditional bimonthly Sunday lunches one near Doncaster and the other near Ripon. The lunches have been well attended and the chairman thanks all members for their continued support.

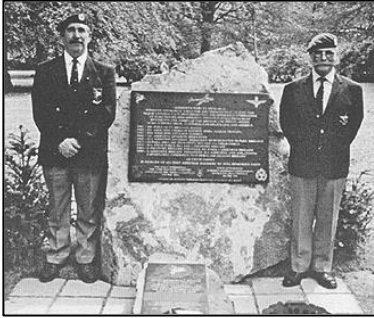
Ripon weekend 25th-27th May was a great success. The inspecting officer was Major General Richard Oliver ex 9 Sqn and 59 Sqn. (Yours truly was his first Troop SSgt in Singapore 59 Sqn 1966/68). Dave Rutter to note, the General has promised the annual fiver for the journal. No doubt a full report will be contained in the REA notes of the next Sapper magazine. The event was well attended by members of the AEA and the Standard was proudly carried.

Due to the East and West Riding Regiment deployment to annual camp, Pontefract was not available to us for the scheduled meeting on 13th July, and so the meeting had to be cancelled. Our next meeting will therefore be on Friday 14th September. All members are welcome and hopefully we shall see some additional members turning up.

Birmingham

Nev Collins

On Sunday 13th May at Coventry Memorial Park, the unveiling of the Coventry Millennium Pegasus Memorial was conducted by General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley OBE, KCB, DSO, MC. Distinguished guests included the Right Worshipful Lord Mayor of Coventry & Consort, the Mayor of Rushmoor (formally Aldershot & Farnborough) & Consort, Lt Col (retd) J.A. James SSO HQ Aldershot Garrison, Major K.V. Seeking MBE RHQ, Capt R. Todd Para Regt infantry Training Centre Catterick and other local dignitaries.



The Birmingham branch were represented by Bunny Brown (secretary), Nev Collins (welfare), Eddie McNuity and Bernie Adams. Following the ceremony, the four of us retired to Eddie's home, where we were greeted by his wife Helen for a garden party. There was a superb buffet laid out together with an abundance of drinks. We were soon join by Alf Dean (Para Regt) an honorary member of our branch, and to keep us on the straight and narrow, Alf Dean's wife Mary and his sister Jean.

Flanking the Millennium Pegasus Memorial, Bunny Brown and Nev Collins



An Airborne stone drinks cooler was in operation, and taking a central point in the cooler was a can of chain saw oil - it was to provide the additional lubrication, should it be needed! The end to an excellent day.

The Airborne Stone Cooler

Bunny is organising the 2001 AGM/Reunion which is to be held at the Bristol Hilton Hotel from Friday 5th until Sunday 7th October. The cost to members is £25-00 per head per night for double/twin bedded rooms. The Gala Dinner, which is to be held on the Saturday evening will be £22-00 per head. The meal will be 4 courses (silver service).

He who hesitates is lost - so if you would like to attend, please contact Bunny a.s.a.p.

B.J. Brown 134, Perch Avenue, Birmingham B37 5NB or phone: 0121 770 1810 or - email: bjbrown04@hotmail.com

Seven Volunteers Required

Jack Braithwaite

That was the heading on a sheet of paper handed to me by my sister in law's carer. Volunteers were wanted to raise money for The Chilterns Multiple Sclerosis Centre. The sum of £12,000 is required above their normal charitable giving; to buy equipment so they can treat more patients. At present they cater for 400 patients, which is only about one fifth of the people in the catchment area. There are fifty of these Centres around the country, giving encouragement, hope and friendship besides essential therapy, to patients, family and carers



Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is an incurable disease of the central nervous system. Signals sent from the brain fail to arrive causing loss of co-ordination. Like all chronic illnesses the problems are both physical and emotional. Patients suffer from a variety of symptoms and even simple tasks become impossible to do. In the UK more than 85,000 people have been diagnosed with MS. Costly drugs like Beta-interferon can help some, but most have to rely on steroids to stave off the recurring debilitating attacks. These attacks are unpredictable and lead to the eventual need for long term nursing care.

Jack and his instructor Ray Blain rigged up and ready for the jump

The volunteers had to get sponsorship to do a tandem parachute jump. The twelve who put their names forward were asked to raise £1,000 each. Not living in Buckinghamshire I thought it would difficult getting sponsorship. I spent a Sunday afternoon on the telephone contacting close friends and relatives, £450 was pledged by this effort. Then I contacted businesses in and around Amersham where Susan (my sister in law) lives. Of the 40 I wrote to and phoned only two were willing to sponsor me. Next I contacted organisations I belonged to and the people in them. The response was tremendous, with several people making collections on my behalf. My total pledged rose to £1,306.

The Royal Air Force Sport Parachute Association at Western on the Green was the venue for the Jump. Many AEA members will remember it as the place they parachuted during training. We had to report there by 0830hrs Saturday 23 June. Training was very relaxed. First we were given a jump suit, helmet, goggles and harness. Then on the way to the plane and during the climb to 12,000ft we were given instructions. On board the plane students and instructors sat in a rowing position with the student between the instructor's legs, one foot on the bench seat the other on the floor facing the rear of the aircraft. The move to the door was a shuffle along the bench as there was not room to stand up. After free falling for 7,000ft we were allowed to steer the chute towards the DZ. the instructor taking over for the landing. The landing was so gentle there was no need to check my spectacles, testicles, wallet or watch.

In the end eighteen people jumped and £15,000 has been pledged. The MS Centre Staff Patients and I would like to thank the Association membership for their tremendous support and generous sponsorship.

An advisory word of caution to those still serving in the Squadron - "Keep your feet and knees together, and always avoid a backward landing!!"

One final point, many of you will have undoubtedly noticed the editors 'deliberate mistake' by naming me as the third member in the photograph in the April edition. It was the photo with Mick Beadle and Willy Wiltshire. The third individual was in fact Jack Fowler!

The Lame One

Sod this for a Game of Soldiers Author - W. A. (Bill) Deakins

The above mentioned publication by one of our Association members, is an autobiography of his service life 1939 - 1945. The story tells of his life, from early days in a rural setting, through army training, to the beaches of St Valery, after Dunkirk, defence of the realm, transport to the Middle East and active service in the Western Desert. Bill was posted to "L" detachment at Kabrit, here taking part in operations behind the German lines, before and after El Alamein. Then with SRS of SAS, took part in the landings of Sicily and the invasion of Italy. The Regiment returned to England in January 1944, for the expansion with and training of new recruits, ready for D-Day and after operations in France. In April 1945, the Regiment landed in Belgium and joined up with operatives already in that area. They advanced through Belgium, Holland and Germany, arriving on the Luneburg Heath, where the German surrender was taken. The Regiment was posted to Norway to disarm the Germans, staying until after the Japanese surrender (Aug 1945). Bill had already returned to England (July 1945) for his several times postponed London marriage. The SAS disbanded in November 1945; Bill being posted to the Devonshire Regiment until demob in May 1946.

Price: £19-99 (Hardback Copy)

Available at all good book stalls

Published by Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd

Snowdonia Adventure – 2001

Friday 19th May - start engines. From various parts of the country, Northern Ireland and Eire car engines bust into life and the trek toward Snowdonia began. Some made early starts, especially those that travelled from far afield, the likes of Mike Ellery from just south of Aberdeen, Bob Watts from Dover, Joe Macintosh and Jonah Jones from Bexhill, Dave Grimbley and Charlie and Lorraine Dunk from Yorkshire. Chris and Marilyn O'Donovan probably had the shortest trip as they ventured forth from Dublin. It was great to see Mike Marshall again, unfortunately due to a domestic matter, had to leave on the Saturday. For some, the journeys were quite uneventful, but of course there were the exceptions! Joe and Jonah made reasonable progress on their journey from Bexhill, until they reached the dreaded M25. Caught up in an horrendous traffic jam things began to get rather uncomfortable; especially for Joe. The call for nature was becoming rather desperate! Taking a turning off the motorway, a suitable 'relief' spot was located. In his desperation to answer the call of nature, and paying no heed to Jonah's word of caution, Joe leapt over a low wall to seek refuge in the trees. The drop on the far side of the wall was not quite what Joe had imagined, and as a result managed to injure his neck and back - hence, Joe took little part in the active pursuits at Snowdonia.

Most had arrived at the Joint Services Mountain training centre on Anglesey by late afternoon, and the swimming pool was soon the focal point for reception. With much catching up of gossip and jokes, parched throats were in need of some liquid lubrication and our party of 22 headed for the local pub; in the village with the extremely long Welsh name. With closing time announced and definitely no more 'last orders,' in walked Joe and Jonah. Plead as they might there was no beer at this inn!

The walk (stagger) back to the centre was only about a mile, but the fresh air must have had some strange effect on John Barrie, for while most of us walked down the concrete steps into the camp, John fell down them, but, he kept his feet and knees together - thereby avoiding any serious injury.



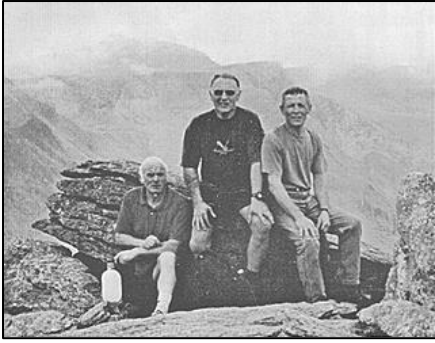
Due to the 'Foot & Mouth' crisis, a contingency plan had been organised by Chris O'Donovan so, instead of trekking across the hills on the limited walks that were open, we were to take a crash course in dingy sailing. Clad in wet suits and the obligatory life preserver, (slightly overweight men in wet suits is not a pretty sight) our basic lesson in sailing commenced.

It must have been the excellent tuition that we received from James Stokes, the resident instructor, because we were soon sailing up and down the Menai straits without too many mishaps. The day's sailing concluded with a race between the crews over a course set out by James. At the halfway stage, Chris (Poncho) with his trusty crew had forged ahead only to make a Horlicks at the turn. This gave the others a chance to overhaul him; and at the finish line, Mike Ellery and his crew of Tony Manley and Dave Rutter just managed to hold off Den Healey and his crew of Keith King and John Barrie. Poncho, ably crewed by Louis Gallagher and Porky Willis brought up the rear in hot pursuit. Other members, not wishing to participate in the sailing, had gone off to the Snowdonia National park and had found that the paths into the mountains challenging and enjoyable.

With all members of the party assembled at the boathouse by late afternoon, Tony Manley prepared an excellent BBQ. This was washed down with more than a few lagers; as we sat on the balcony in beautiful sunshine.

Poncho's organisation kicked into gear for the Saturday evening, and we were bussed to a nearby restaurant/pub for yet more food and several more pints.

It was unfortunate that during Saturday afternoon, we had to rush Bob Watts off to the hospital. Following a stay there for several hours he eventually was allowed to rejoin us, but was restricted in the volume of fluid that he was allowed to drink - and definitely no beer. His problem was of a person nature, and we'll not dwell on it, but he was given the nickname of "Bagpuss!"



On Sunday the party split into several groups, some sailing, others sightseeing or making use of the excellent climbing wall facilities and the remainder opting to head for the mountains. We again arranged to meet up at the boathouse in the late afternoon, and once again thoroughly enjoyed yet another BBQ ably prepared by Tony. It's been a long time since I saw men, and ladies for that matter, declining to return for seconds of marinated BBQ steaks and chicken.

Tony Manley, Mike Ellery and Dave Rutter pause to enjoy the view

Despite the limitations imposed by the dreaded Foot and Mouth crisis, this was without doubt a great weekend. If you enjoy the company of others, enjoy a few beers, can share the jokes, enjoy the activities and don't mind Sunday evening was again spent in the local pub, but most could only manage a few pints -probably still feeling bloated from Tony's BBQ feast, laughing your way to sleep at night - then I strongly suggest that you join us next year. Poncho has already made a reservation with the Training Centre for May 2002, and will be publishing dates and details in the December issue of the Journal. Oh! and how much did it cost? Accommodation for 3 nights, 2 superb BBQs, 3 breakfasts and sailing tuition and the use of the equipment and swimming pool - £27 each for single guys, and slightly more for those who require family rooms. Beat that if you can.



Congratulations are extended to Poncho for his excellent organisation and to Tony for his splendid culinary delights.



Enjoying the culinary delights plus a few lagers

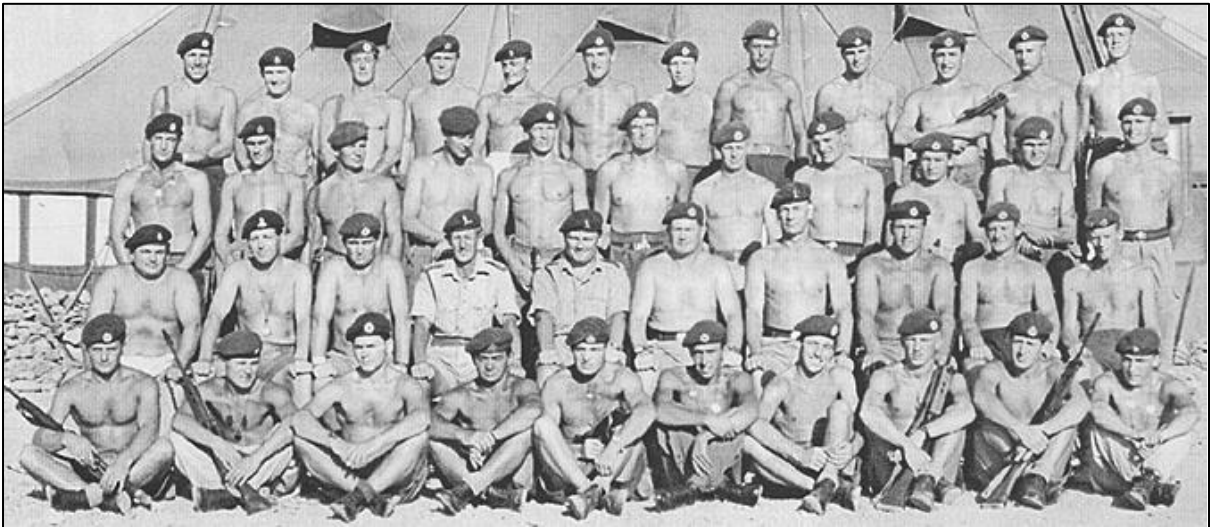
L to R:

Standing: Jonah Jones, Charlie Dunk, Barney Rooney, Tony Manley, Keith King, Den Healey, Bob Watts, & Mike Ellery

Kneeling: Joe Macintosh, John Barrie, Dave Rutter & Chris (Poncho) O'Donovan.

Missing from the group photo was Dave Grimbley, Louis Gallagher, Mick Willis and Mike Marshall

How They Were in 1965



Rear Rank: Alec Cragie, Brian Smith, Pete McCabe, Terry Wick, Scouse Richardson, Taff Rees, Les Smith, Josh Wills, Neil Westbrook, Tom Downey, Pete Plowman & Joe Houlston.

3rd Rank: Bill Rudd, ? , Mick Fisher, Fred Robson, ? , Taff Benson, Harry Lockwood, Tony West, Joe Stoddart, Mick Beadle & Fred Gray

2nd Rank: Buster Edwards, Mick Prime, Jimmy Simpson, Capt Sid Rooth, Maj Mike Matthews, SSM Wally Linham, Capt Doc Doherty, Rick Mogg, Jim Middlemass & Caz Cazely.

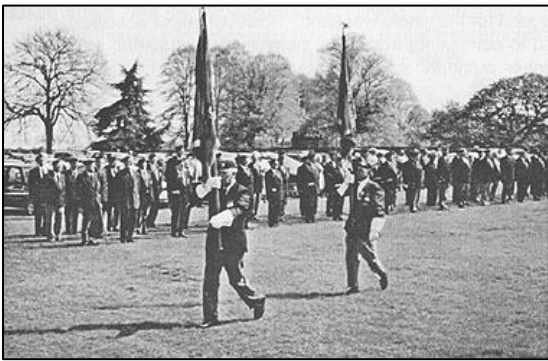
Sitting: Paddy Magee, Paddy Shehan, George Prentice, Sid Davies, Bruce Bissett, Alan Saunders, Percy Waddle, Cliff Joy, Ernie Bugdale & Sonny Hepburn.

Hardwick Hall

Bob Prosser

Beside the lakes West of Hardwick Hall, there was an Army camp, where, in 1941 early pioneers of the British Airborne Forces formed the 1st Parachute Brigade. For the remainder of the war Hardwick was the depot and school of Airborne Forces where volunteers from Britain and the Allies received specialised training to form the British Airborne divisions and other Special Operational Units.

Despite the foot and mouth problem, English Heritage still permitted the Annual Remembrance parade to take place. Considering that they have herds of rare breed animals in the grounds, this was extremely generous. The Lord Lieutenant for Derbyshire, John Bather took the salute. Roy King, our standard bearer led the parade of 23 standards in immaculate style again. The fly past of the Dakota C47 was received with cheers and the waving of red berets.



Roy King, Dave Mellor, Mike Greenwell, Peter White, Tom Thornton, Don Stevenson, Horace Stokes, Bob Prosser, Norman Hawkes, Henry Anderson and Peter Allan represented the Association. The weather was beautiful, allowing us all to picnic on the lawns.

Roy King - Leading by example with the Association Standard

The Edinburgh Troop

2 Troop 300 Airborne Squadron RE TA

D.H. Thomas

When the TA was re-formed after the war, the planners in Whitehall created 16 Airborne Division - commanded by General Roy Urquhart (Ex. Arnhem).

One of the units of the new Div. RE. was 300 Airborne Sqn, which, after an initial flirtation with Liverpool, ended up based in Glasgow. There was a rumour that the legendary Col Alistair Pearson DSO (x4) had a hand in this arrangement.

Those aware of the Edinburgh v Glasgow factor will realise that Edinburgh felt sidelined by the fact that no airborne unit had been allocated to the City. This situation called for the exercise of the traditional airborne initiative!

300 Sqn was commanded by Peter Dixon (Ex 6 Div) who lived in Edinburgh. I also lived in Edinburgh (Ex 6 Div & later 9 Sqn), as did R.Barr (Ex 6 Div).

The Edinburgh TA Association was sounded out and they were quite enthusiastic about having an Airborne TA unit in the City. They offered to provide the necessary finance and the appropriate accommodation. Armed with this support, Peter Dixon went ahead and unilaterally transferred 2 Troop of 300 Sqn from Glasgow to Edinburgh. The launch team comprised P W Dixon (Sqn OC), D H Thomas (Tp OC), and R Barr (Tp Sgt). The new unit was based at the Drill Hall in York Place.

The Troop was soon flooded with recruits. They included a number of students from the University, and likewise of bus drivers from the City Transport Dept. There was soon a stream travelling south to Abingdon in Oxfordshire for their two-week parachute courses, returning proudly sporting their new wings. Then trouble struck! The Edinburgh evening paper started printing the odd article about the Troop activities. Eventually higher authority, in the form of HQ Scottish Command became aware of this unauthorised unit on its doorstep.

Peter Dixon was ordered to report to GOC Scottish Command at the Castle to explain what was going on at York Place. The General gave him a rough time, telling him in no uncertain terms that no such unit had been authorised by Whitehall and therefore did not exist! Peter responded by assuring him that the unit certainly did exist, and to prove it he would parade all 50 members, many of them already trained parachutists, on the Castle Esplanade, for the General to see for himself. He said that he could not guarantee that the press would not turn up, and that there might be minor chaos in the City bus services seeing the number of drivers who would be on this parade.

So the result was game set and match. The General was a big enough man to accept that he was outflanked, and ended up giving his approval, and undertaking to lean on Whitehall to have the unit regularised.

Thereafter the unit continued to prosper. A parachute-training balloon with crew was enticed up to Edinburgh for a weekend.

A large turnout of parents and girlfriends assembled at Balerno SW of Edinburgh to see their line shooting loved ones prove that they actually had earned those wings.

The Troop was soon up to establishment. Most of the student members had to join up to do their National Service after finishing at University, and several found their way into the regular 9 Sqn. One even extended his service, got commissioned, and returned as a Troop officer. Whilst the unit was now fully legitimate it still had the odd problem with higher authority!

Training in the handling of explosives in a drill hall is not particularly interesting, so when the Troop was approached by the owner of a derelict mansion in the Borders, who wanted the building demolished; this seemed a perfect answer. Then other owners followed, leading to a series of very popular weekend training jaunts. The owners were very appreciative and contributed generously to unit funds, which covered drinks around for the whole weekend. However, these activities led to complaints from local demolition contractors, and higher authority stepped in and banned such "training exercises."

There were many amusing incidents in the early years, including that of the piper taken down to the first Regimental Annual Camp. The CRE had agreed that he should replace the traditional bugler. However, he was nearly lynched by the less enlightened members from south of the Border when playing "Reveille" on the first morning, and had to take refuge in the guardroom. A compromise was reached when his pitch was moved several hundred yards from the tent lines, and thereafter peace reigned.

It is very fitting that the 2 Troop which grew out of an eventful but interesting beginning should live on as the foundation of the Edinburgh branch of the Airborne Engineer Association

Spring Fling 2001

Brian Jones

Having arrived at Washington DC we were bussed to Lynchburg to stay at the Holiday Inn. It was quite a long journey, 4 hours! Our hosts who invited us to take part in their local Memorial Ceremony made us very welcome. We ate out in some really excellent restaurants, talk about gourmet, even I could not handle it all.

Our next port of call was to Fayetteville and Fort Bragg (a huge base and the home of the 82nd Airborne). We were again invited to several ceremonies and a sumptuous banquet. A spectacular parachute drop had been organised and we watched as the paras jumped from C17 Globe Master aircraft. Following the para drop we took part in the Divisional Review. There were literally thousands of troops on parade including the American Veterans. Our contingent of approx. 80, which included 6 standards, brought up the rear of the march past, and we due a loud applause from the spectators. The area we were staying in was civil war country, "Confederates" i.e. West Virginia, North and South Carolina.

Our next location was Charleston SC. A lovely city, and I wish we could have stayed longer. Our itinerary included a visit to Appatomax, where the civil war ended. Numerous BBQs were consumed and all had an enjoyable time.

For our return to Washington we had an overnight stop in Richmond, and then it was to the airport for our return to the UK.

An enjoyable and interesting trip - and as they say in the 82nd, "Airborne All The Way"

The Paratrooper

In Henry's day the battle fray
Was fought with pike and long bow,
And victory was won by he
Who drew the straightest strong bow.
I'll start my fight with a harness tight,
And a chute packed neat and sure,
And jump to Hell at the Devil's yell
Through an aircraft's aperture

The nights were bright with tavern's lights,
And loud with laughter ringing.
Landlords' wenches, dance, and dice,
And rowdy raucous singing.
I'll stake my chance on a Devil's dance,
With 'D' rings as my daughters,
And seek my fun with a Tommy gun
And heavy-duty mortars.

From Plymouth Sound due westward bound
Those oaken frigates wallowed
Up salty green hill, down salty green dale,
While the wheeling seagulls followed.
I'll sail my sky 'neath a canopy
Brisk breezes notwithstanding,
And scorn to cuss a sudden gust,
And an awkward backward landing.

In days of yore men went to war
On horseback, clad in steel,
Or laid along fully fifty strong
A Norse invader's keel.
On an airborne ship I'll make my trip,
With the engines' steady roar,
Hooked-up strop, then a silk held drop
Eight hundred feet or more.

All I ask is the stoutest task
And a high wide sky above me,
And nine good men for a stick of ten, And the girl at home to love me;
And a clean jump through, and a landing true,
And this the vow I made -
I'll fight, I'll fly, I'll jump, I'll die,
With the Parachute Brigade

D-Day Ceremonies for the 6th Airborne Division in Normandy 5th & 6th June

Chris Chambers

This year was a special occasion for veterans of 3rd Para Sqn RE at Troarn on 5th June. A special ceremony was organised in memory of O.C. Major Tim Roseveare DSO who died last year. His son Lt Col Andrew Roseveare was in attendance for this ceremony.

On the 5th June, a ceremony was held at "Le Mesnil" at the Brigadier James Hill square, and wreath laying was conducted at the 3rd Para Bde Memorial and at the 1st Canadian Para Bn followed by wreath laying at Bures sur Dives at Capt Juckes Memorial and a ceremony at Troarn. On the following morning (6th June) Ranville ceremonies were followed by wreath laying at "Ecarde" at Amfreville at the plaques of 3rd Para Sqn RE and 8th Para Bn.



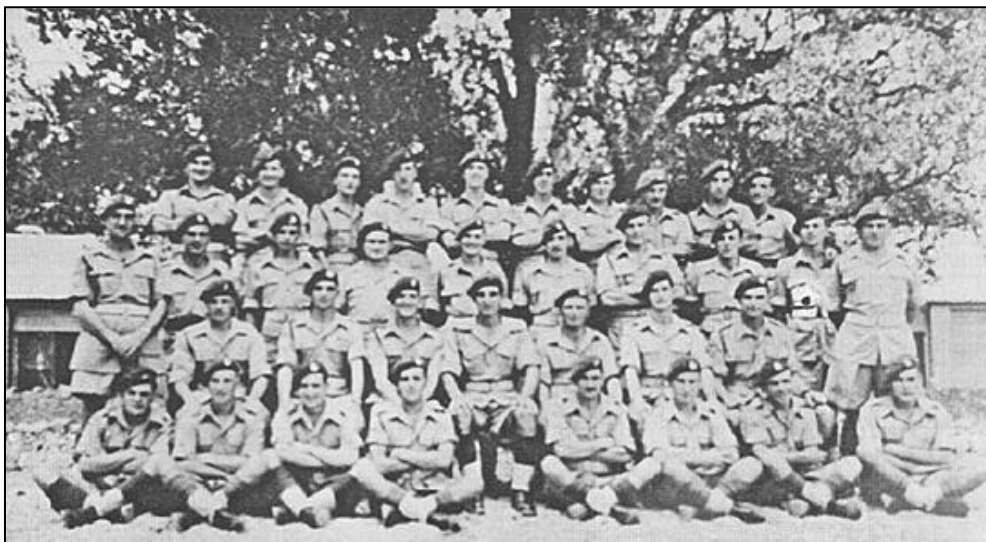
Matt Newall (3rd from left) Chris Chambers (with the Association Standard) Bob Sullivan (5th from left) and Alex Taylor (from New Zealand)



Lt Col A. Roseveare, Coriane Lopeut & Chris Chambers

2 Troop 9 Airborne Squadron RE

Near Haifa - June 1947



Rear rank: Beard, Regan, Cosgrove, Garrie, Sharkey, Evans, McCall, Ball, Vaughan, Griffiths
Second rank: McCrystal, Gilbert, Astles, Rees, Gray, Gutteridge, McIlraith, Simmons, Pilling, Brodell
Sitting: LCpl Watt, Cpl Wright, Sgt Walker, Capt Messervey, Cpl Cleverley, Cpl Loughlin, LCpl Stratton
Front rank: Harrison, Gilliland, Walls, King, Grey, Davies, Langford, Wylie

This photograph was submitted by Fred Cleverley who had the unique Army number 14444444
