



THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



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The Airborne Engineer



December 2002 Issue No.8

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Publication Deadline - April 2003 Edition

Members submitting material for publication in the April 2003 edition of the Journal, are advised that the closing date will be Saturday 8th March. Articles received after this date will not be published until the August 2003 edition. **(Branch Secretaries please NOTE!)**

Kindly ensure that you forward your articles direct to the editor - address as shown above

Please don't leave it until the last minute or you may well miss the deadline!

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President's Message

Ian McGill

Gala dinner - sorry about the mix up with the Toast.

It's a great honour for me to take over as President from Brigadier Garth Hewish and I look forward to serving the Association as best I can, along with our new Chairman Bunny Brown. My service in 9 Parachute Squadron, in other Royal Engineer units and in the wider Army has instilled in me an abiding respect for all airborne engineers; it is therefore a great privilege to have a role in supporting them.

I warmly thank the Committee members, most ably led by our outgoing president and chairman, Brigadier Garth and Bob Prosser, for their valuable contributions. The Association has developed and matured under their direction; our growing size and vitality is testament to their commitment and vision. Our members have also played a vital role, all sharing a culture moulded by both the distinctive airborne and sapper ethos.

Best wishes to you all for Christmas and the New Year.

Introduction from our Chairman

Bunny Brown

Dear Members,



First and foremost I would like to introduce myself as your new Chairman. Bob Prosser has worked diligently over the last three years, and although he may have ruffled a few feathers, he has achieved a great deal, with the new Journal and the museums as two examples. I have a hard act to follow. I believe that we owe Bob a huge vote of thanks for his achievements.

Bunny accepts the gavel and chain of office from Bob

Blackpool, what a wonderful weekend! I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Mike and Sue Holdsworth for their terrific organisation of a difficult task. May I also thank George and Elsie Barrett for running the raffle, without the money raised; the weekend would have diminished the general-purpose fund. I would also like to thank Ron (Smokie) Gibson for being a general 'Goffer' and helping all and sundry.

Finally and by no means least, thanks to our Piper, Frank Menzies-Hearn for a super job 'piping in' our guests to the AEA/REA - Update. For those who could not attend the AGM, this has still not been resolved; and a subcommittee have been tasked to look into a fair and unbiased way of presenting the proposal for a postal vote on this important matter.

I have received many congratulations since taking the Chair, and know that I have the support of many. Please feel free to contact me; regarding any Association business, my time is yours.

May I take this opportunity in wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year?

Thank You

Shelia and I would like to thank everyone who kindly contributed to the beautiful bouquet of flowers and the bronze Airborne Soldier statue, which we were presented with at the Association reunion dinner at Blackpool. We were both overwhelmed and taken by complete surprise. The tour as your Chairman was a labour of comradeship, we never expected anything like this.

Thank you,
Shelia and Bob Prosser

Blackpool 2002- Reunion

Ed: A selection of photographs from the Blackpool reunion will be published in the April edition. But here's someone that couldn't stand the pace!

Nice one Ken!



And he's not the only one, check out page 56

Rogues Gallery



OC Maj Cowtan, Capt (2IC) Thomas, Woof Barke, Jock Cable
Beit Na Bala - Christmas 1945



Mac MacGowen, Tommy Vaughan, Woof Barke, Reg Shaw,
Steve Bowman & Rex our dog - Ismailia 1946



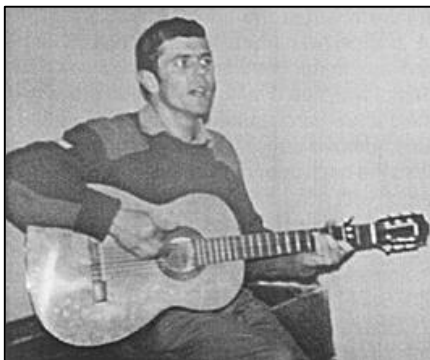
Bill Cable on left, others not known Had rum ration here at
Metullah 1948



OC's batman - Georgie Harper
at Lake Thula 1946



Bob Jones
Aldershot Sept 1945



Keith Cardy entertains at Rhine Barracks 1971



Phil Ecclestone brushes up - he's obviously going out on the
town!

A Tribute to our Dutch Friends

Mervyn (Gilly) Potter Sgt RE

261 Airborne Park Squadron RE 1st Airborne Division.

During our annual pilgrimage to Arnhem/Oosterbeek in September 1998, as had been my usual practice, I made a quiet walk to where my "slit trench" had been during the battle, which was at the west side of the Sonnenberg. There, together with my wife, I had a short conversation with the relatives of 2 glider pilots, whose bodies had been found recently during excavations for building work.

Then taking our leave, walking alone, I made my way in the direction of the main road, "Utrechtsweg." There I was spoken to by all elderly Dutch gentleman, who said "Hullo soldier, (I was wearing my red beret at the time) were you in the battle?" Yes, I replied, then he said, "Thank You." We talked for some time and I asked him, "Will you please answer a question for me," to which he replied, " I will try." My question was, "My wife and I have been coming to Arnhem/Oosterbeek, since 1989, hosted by a very friendly family from 1990 until 1999 and never fail to be amazed at the friendship, hospitality and genuine gratitude for our failed efforts in the battle, yet year after year, this genuine feeling of hospitality does not diminish. People of all ages, from young children to the elderly, approach us in the street and say, "THANK YOU" "Why, when we left you in terrible trouble from which you suffered until April/May 1945 and even after that. Why do you treat us with this exceptional friendship"? He pondered for some moments and said, "I will try to answer your question this way"

In May 1940, when the Germans overran our country, as well as Belgium and France, many of our houses were pillaged and contents sent off to Germany. Our radios were confiscated; they did not get mine; I hid it under the floorboards. Stories were circulating of our women being defiled. It was a terrible time for us. The Germans were halted by the English Channel, but were constantly boasting, it would be only a short while, before England capitulated. Where was America, why was she not doing anything?

Around this time, you had a new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill and when we knew he was going to make an important speech, word would go around and out came the hidden radios. On hearing his very famous speech, **"WE WILL FIGHT THEM IN THE HILLS, WE WILL FIGHT THEM ON THE BEACHES, WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER"** These words gave us hope, our only hope. On 17th September 1944, around midday, we heard a lot of noise in the sky and on looking up, saw the planes, gliders, and parachutists and knew, Winston Churchill had kept his word. That is the best answer I can give you" and he went on his way.

Squadron Recruiting in BAOR

Tony (Toots) Ridgway

Back in 66/67 I was told I was going on a recruiting drive round the sapper camps in Germany. There were four of us from the Squadron, 2IC Capt Garth Hewish, Sergeant Alex Craigie, LCpl Henry Morgan and myself (Sapper no surprise there) I was to be the driver. We were also allocated a helicopter and pilot from the Brigade. The plan was that Henry and myself would drive over to Germany with the Landrover and trailer packed with parachutes, suitcases, etc. and meet up with Garth and Alex who would fly over in the chopper. Henry and me drove over to Germany (slowly) and met with the rest of the team at a sapper camp in Germany, which was to be our base for the next few weeks.

We then went to as many sapper camps as possible drumming up recruits for our pre-para course back in Crookham. Garth was giving talks (i.e. bullsh***** the Sqn.) then demonstrating putting on chutes, using me as the guinea pig. I think the idea of taking me along was that I was the smallest bloke in the Sqn. (It couldn't have been for my driving skills, cos I didn't have any) and the object of that was to show that size was no barrier to joining the Sqn. When Garth and I stood alongside each other on the platform, it resembled Arnold Swartzenegger and Danny De Vito.



Brig Garth & Toots 35 years on.

Anyway, about two weeks into this jaunt, Garth came to me and Henry and told us that there was a Military air show (their equivalent to Farnborough) on the forth coming weekend, Garth and Alex couldn't go, so did Henry and me fancy a day at the air show. Rather than kicking our heels in camp over the weekend we said, "Yes Please."

Saturday morning arrived and Henry and I, dressed in, smocks, denims and red berets went to the parade ground where we boarded the chopper with our pilot (I never did get, to know his name). We then took off for the air show. Half way to our destination the pilot said, "I've got to land here, I won't be a minute" He then proceeded to land in a field a few yards behind the back garden of a German house, jumped out of

the chopper, through the garden and into the back door of the house. Five minutes later he emerged with a fraulein on his arm, dressed up to the nines. He escorted her back to the chopper, boarded, and then introduced us to his girlfriend.

We took off and eventually got to the airfield. As we approached, looking out of the windows, the traffic was horrendous. Thousands of cars formed a spider's web of traffic jams trying to get to the air show. Hundreds of staff cars, God knows how many stars between them were being directed to a parking area not far from the helicopter compound. After gaining permission, our pilot took us down to land. As we were making the final approach, I could see dozens of the top brass and their drivers all looking up and wondering who the VIPs were that were honouring them with a visit. All I can say is that when we landed and deplaned (or is that dechoppered) I wish I had had a camera to record their looks. Astonishment, disbelief, outrage, fury and jealousy were all written across the faces of those distinguished gentlemen as the chopper door opened and out pops the VIPs, Viz, one sapper, one lance jack, one pilot wearing nondescript overalls over his civvies, and one classy lady.

After landing, the pilot instructed us to be back at the chopper by 1700 hrs and disappeared with his lady. Henry and I, needless say, left to our own devices spent a lot of the time in the various beer tents.

We made our way back to the chopper at the appointed time and hung around for a few minutes waiting for the pilot and girlfriend. The scene was, if anything, even more chaotic than when we had landed. Staff cars queuing up to get out of their compound, top brass and their drivers seething with frustration, and to cap it all when the pilot and his girlfriend arrived, we all just strolled over to the chopper, boarded, and with smug grins on our faces, we gave a jaunty wave to the apoplectic brass, seething down below and took off.

Altogether a very satisfying end to the day!

I don't know if any of the recruits were successful, but we did bump into Fred Pinckney who had previously been in the Sqn. We must have kindled some nostalgia in him, cos a few weeks later he rejoined the Sqn.

From Sapper to a Civvy Manager

Scouse (Barnie) Rooney (9 Indep Para Sqn 1968-74)

It was in 1968 that Scouse Gaskill and me landed on the beach at Haig Lines after the serious lesson of P Company and Abingdon. Greetings came in the form of SSM asking us would we mind going to Kenya the following month as they were short of Electricians [Gaskill] and really short of Painters as they were building a road through some jungle, or other, and that a Painter would be a serious benefit to the squadron. We thought about it for about one second and told the SSM that we would help the squadron out in Kenya if we could, but would require some R & R over there to swan about a bit. This, giving the importance of our undoubted and needed skills was readily agreed to and the business was concluded with the writer being put on 'Extras.'

During a bit of fun in Kenya, up in the Aberdares, we heard through the grapevine, that a little problem had broken out in Northern Ireland, and, all of us being a-political and not knowing one end of a political spectrum from another, thought that if we could get there, we could sort it out and it will be all over! Sadness must take over now as the problem is still there some 30 odd years later!

Anyway, were was I, Oh yes, you are desperate to know about my stupendous rise to stardom after leaving the army - I only served with "Shiny 9" and never went elsewhere - Scobey Davies hired a van and delivered myself and my new wife Teresa to Nottingham where I found digs and took up my trade again (I joined up at 21 when I had finished my Indentured apprentice as a Painter & Decorator) in 1974 and followed my trade for the next few years and had two kids along the way [riveting reading isn't it?]. I was then seen as an outstanding Manager of people by a company I worked for and soon rose to the ranks as can-lad ere; (Site Manager) on the major industrial complex of ICI in Runcorn and Mid Cheshire, which I enjoyed for over 10 years. Anyway, again, they then found me out as a bluffer and gave me the elbow with, I may say, a few bob to be going on with. I then moved to other managerial positions within the north-west as General Manager to a national group and then, wouldn't you know it!!! They found me out again and I parted - with a few bob again - and started my own company Northern Engineering Maintenance Services in 1993 and never looked forward err...back since. I presently do stuff but am a keen advocate of doing nothing in particular.

This brings me up-to-date and after completing 100 new luxury apartments in Manchester for the Pearce/Crest Group of companies I successfully won the contract to decorate the new Halton College of Further Education on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal (started Monday 15th April 2002)

The following is a report from the local press:

A Halton company, which has been decorating the new sixth form college, have been so impressed with the facilities - they've enrolled for classes! The painting and decorating firm NEMS has been working on the new £3m development in Old Coach Road, off Percival Lane ready for its official opening. NEMS also scored top marks for the high standard of work they have produced. Main contractors Barr Construction Ltd praised the Runcorn-based firm for the superb finish achieved at the three-storey buildings, which were built on old derelict land. Some of the NEMS teams of decorators have been so impressed by the college itself they have been inspired to sign-up for further education. NEMS managing director, Barney Rooney, said: "This is a superb building and one that has been finished to the very highest standards. "It's a project that we are really proud to have been associated with since it's going to be a great asset to the whole area. "People don't realise that professional painters and decorators take a great pride in their job and have a lasting connection with the buildings they have worked on. In this case the lads have a real sense of achievement since this is a public building that is going to make a real difference to so many people's lives

Hope this gives you some idea of the sad life I lead! Other riveting stuff later - if you're interested

Story of the Matelot

Taff Brice (Sapper Retd) South Africa

Who is this shady character hiding behind the non-de-plume 'X9' and referring to the gallant band of jungle warriors of 2 Troop as fairies? (How on earth could you refer to anyone as ugly as Bob Fettes or Gobble Turk as a fairy?) Sounds like a 1 Troop smoothie to me. Come out of the closet you swine!

X9's reference to picking up a matelot reminded me of that particular day which unfolded as follows: Shortly after our intrepid band of super sappers had returned to the UK from Borneo, via the fleshpots of Singapore, the Squadron was drawn to play some crap-hat unit in the Army Rugby Cup in Honiton (Devon). Not wanting to spend many hours in the back of a 3 tonner (there only being on "Wings" seat), we prevailed upon Sid Rooth, the 2IC, to permit us to travel by private car. As you well know it's a long way from Aldershot to Devon so en route, numerous pit stops were made for liquid refreshment. The last few stops were for the sampling of the local scrumpy. We had a particularly sober team in my view that day, consisting of Pete Measures, Eddie Fisher, Toots Ridgway, Geordie Richardson and yours truly. With Toots as navigator we inevitably lost our bearings a couple of times. On one occasion realising that we were heading East instead of West, we pulled into a driveway of a large country house in order to turn around. We were confronted by a washing line with a huge pair of female bloomers, complete with elastic in the legs and a "brass plate" in the crotch. Geordie leapt out of the car and bagged the trophy.

We found the match venue shortly after and paraded the bloomers, now mounted on a stick around the field as the Squadron flag. After the final whistle, and a reminder from Tubby Linham (SSM) that he wanted to see us outside his office the next morning, we set off back to Aldershot.

After a few more scrumpy we espied a large bearded matelot hitchhiking. It was decided that it would be great fun to stop a few hundred yards up the road and make him run to the car, only to be told that there was no room for him! "Going towards London mate?" muttered the matelot. "Yes," said Eddie Fisher spluttering with alcoholic mirth. But before he could add, "But you're not mate," the matelot had passed his bag through the window and I drove off leaving a very out of breath and furious matelot on the roadside. The bloke was obviously going home for a weekend's leave as his holdall contained numerous dirty shirts and skidders; these were quickly tied together and flown out of the window of the VW.

The inevitable happened a few miles further on, a black Wolseley with a blue light forced us off the road. We were unable to attend our meeting with the SSM the following day as we spent the night in the cells at Honiton and appeared before the magistrate the next morning. Fortunately the court treated it as a prank and let us off with a warning. So, after shaking hands with the matelot, the now AWOL band of supporters traipsed back to camp. Amazingly Tubby and the OC did not have the same sense of humour as the magistrates and gave us all a hefty fine. No sense of humour!

It is great to read the myriad of stories inspired by 9 Squadron - keep them coming. Maybe Dennis Scott, Charlie Edwards and Rick Mogg would be prepared to enlighten some of our younger members about the story of the "Sebastopol Bell?"

Do you know this Sapper?



We believe he served in the Airborne Engineers at the end of the war or was in 9 AB Sqn in the Canal Zone.

If you can put a name to the 'gentleman' in the photo, please contact Fred Gray on 01252 668339

The Dynamic Duo



Neil Westbrook & Fred Robson

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly was operating the Brownie camera Taken at Abingdon during the Argosy aircraft trials a lifetime ago.

Material for Publication

With our Association now boasting a membership well in excess of 1,000, there must be a vast source of stories and adventures waiting to be told. Why keep it to yourself? Others would like to share in your experiences. You can e-mail, type or even hand write your article, and if you've photographs to compliment your contribution; so much the better. My address, (editor) telephone number and e-mail address are published on page 1 of this and every publication - so you've no excuse!

You will also note that the cutoff date for acceptance of articles for the next issue is clearly printed at the bottom of page 1.

I eagerly await a flood of articles for future publications.

Where Are They Now- Follow On

Hugh Taylor (New Zealand)

Some interest in issue No 7 page 12, "Where are they now." For myself I can say that my final settling place is in New Zealand with that big slice of land Australia way to the left, which provides me with plenty of opportunity for travel and adventure.

Perhaps S.R. Arnold suffered a similar fate as myself an old sapper in 591 (Antrim Para Sqn returning to UK from Wismar at the end of the war in Europe.

The issue of Jungle Greens requires some explanation - they were not doubt mosquito proof but by some oversight of Ordnance were also sweat proof.

My unit now renamed 3rd Airborne Squadron embarked at Greenock bound for Bombay in quick time, destination - providing we survived - Kalyan. I will mention a few names of those also aboard, Arthur Griffith, Barney Scott, Big Joe Scott, Jock Drummond, Heslop, Davies and McDonough all of the 1943 vintage. The Squadron was formed from both Paras and Airborne engineers. Our new OC was Major P. Moore.

From Kalyan a small contingent went by train across India to Calcutta; the more unfortunates had the experience of another tropical sea voyage across the Indian Ocean and down the Malay Straits. Arnold mentioned the Pacific Ocean possibly in error.

Briefed for a seaborne landing between Port Dickson and Port Swettenham nearly overcame us. The landing was aborted but not before some unfortunates had their first experience of seaborne landing. The Japs gave up just as we struggled through the mangrove swamps. Back we went to our mother ship - not in any great shaped may I add, and off we went to Singapore in our sweat proof jungle greens. Most of us developed "prickly heat" overnight.

After a short period in Singapore we shipped out to Batavia and later moved to Semarang, the Pacific Ocean was by this time getting nearer! However we did qualify for the GS Medal and SE Asia Bar. We were still on ops and blew up a few arms caches found in the Javanese villages. Japanese infantry gave us support, a unique experience! Was the conflict over?

Not quite! I was left in hospital in Semarang and to my own resources - a hitched flight in a battered old Dakota to Singapore secured a joyous return to my unit near Mt Ophir up country in Malaya. Later we moved down to the swamps of the Maur River area. Was this to be the end, the 13th Battalion thought so, but we still had the Palestine experience to come.

Not before long we returned to the UK, Perham Down, to be met by SSM C. Evetts who had no liking for vintage Para's or section Corporals.

Later it was back to Germany, Neumunster - we all needed a rest - but another plan was executed, a move to Hameln. My last days as an airborne engineer! From Chepstow to Hameln via the rest of the world it seemed!

Incidentally our Brigade was the 5th ably commanded by Brigadier N. Poett.

The Dial Hall Privies Incident

A famous Lincolnshire incident took place at the Dial Hall, Donington. In early 1944 many soldiers of the parachute regiments were based in the area preparing for the attack on Arnhem. Dances were held at the hall in Donington, but a lot of the men from other parts of the country took a rather dim view of the bucolic Lincolnshire privies at the hall. They were bucket privies in two rows, with ladies and gents back to back and a wall between them. They were not well looked after and 'stank to hell.'

One night three Welsh soldiers decided to do something about it. Choosing a moment just before the National Anthem when they knew everyone would be at the dance, they slipped outside and put gun cotton primers down the privy - with catastrophic results. The explosion not only stopped the dance, it destroyed the privies!

The chances of being able to blame this disaster on enemy action were slim and the men of the 1st Parachute Squadron (Royal Engineers) were blamed. They were all charged 'barrack room damages' but not one told on the soldiers who had actually done it. Then they had to rebuild the Dial Hall toilets and re-concrete the floor to placate the villagers, though a ban on attending dances was less popular locally - the girls complained that they were being neglected, and the soldiers were soon allowed out again.

The unit stayed on in the area, their training on the clearing of mines and explosives focused around the Forty Foot Drain, and in September 1944 they flew from Barkston Heath to Arnhem. At least one of the 'Welsh Wizards' never returned.

How to Simulate Army Life

Derik Latham - BC Canada

Want to be a soldier again, but really don't want to commit precious years of your life? Here are some easy ways to simulate exactly what it's like to be a soldier in the Field again.

Surround yourself with people who smoke like chimneys, drink like fish, bitch/whine/complain about everything and use foul language that would make a navy blush.

Pack three days' worth of clothes and toiletries. Live in your back garden for two weeks. Go into the house only once in that two weeks to shower. Dig a hole in your back yard and live in it. Allow no direct contact with your family. Your only means of communication should be with letters that your neighbours have held for at least three weeks, discarding two of five.

Every two days, fill in the hole, move to another part of the garden and dig another hole. Every time you are approximately halfway through digging the hole, have somebody come by, compliment you on the fine hole you've dug and tell you to fill it in and dig it somewhere else. Always dig a hole next to the hole you're living in. This is your toilet. Re-dig the hole every time you move your living hole. Fill in the old hole and mark it with a "Foul Ground" sign. Have somebody remove the sign while you're not looking. Dig in that exact space in 1 months' time.

Collect a jar-full of ants, dirt, various bugs and mosquitoes. Pour them down the back of your shirt. Have week old fruit and vegetables delivered to your back garden and have your neighbours give you one per day until they all go rotten and have to be thrown out. Watch your neighbours eat as many as he wants, because he's non-tactical.

If it doesn't rain, turn on the sprinklers. If you're incredibly tired and fed-up one night, stand guard duty in your hole from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. don't sleep at all that day, even though there's nothing to do. Sleep for only twenty minutes at a time. No matter how tired you are. Even though there's nothing to do.

Cook your meals in your shaving mug. Eat everything cold. Buy food with instructions in Yiddish, so it never turns out how it should. Eat everything in three minutes. After eating, sit around for two hours; glad you ate everything in 3 minutes.

Buy two rolls of toilet paper. Ensure one of these two rolls is wet all the time. Run around your garden, periodically throwing yourself to the ground and crawling for at least 20 meters - or smack your shins, knees and elbows with a hammer to gain the same effect.

For two days in a row, walk 10 miles without stopping. Wear a poorly fitting backpack with 75lbs of weight in it. Bitch and whine the whole way.

Have one meal a week served to you floating in its own grease in a large cooler or similar insulated container. Serve coffee, juice and other beverages the same way.

There, isn't it great to be back in the Army again?

Remembering A Bridge Too Far

1st Parachute Squadron RE

The Reunion 28th/29th September

Published by kind permission of Pam McDonald (author of this article) which was printed in the "Swineshead Life" magazine August/September 2002

Immortalised as a film title, this quotation refers to the bridge over the lower Rhine at Arnhem. Operation Market Garden, the largest airborne operation, not only for World War II, but ever, was conceived to put Allied troops in the driving seat and bring the war to a swift conclusion. If it had succeeded in its objectives of taking and holding the strategic bridges through the Low Countries, it would have trapped the Germans in western Holland. However, the fates played a part, the 2nd Battalion Parachute Regt. Arrived at the bridge but their expected relief were held by unexpected concentrations of German troops and other circumstances. As ammunition and supplies ran out, their numbers were severely depleted although they fought to the bitter end. Heavy losses were sustained and the remaining men were captured, most of them wounded. What on earth, you may say, has this to do with Swineshead?

After being withdrawn from Italy, having fought in Sicily and previously North Africa, men of the 1st Airborne Division found themselves in Liverpool in mid-December 1943. Denied disembarkation leave on security grounds, as their removal from the front line was hush-hush, they were soon on blacked-out trains, travelling through blacked-out unidentified stations en-route for Lincolnshire. The 1st Battalion went to Grimsthorpe, 2nd to Stoke Rochford, 3rd to Spalding and the 1st Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers came to Donington.

Villagers soon got accustomed to 140 men parading every morning in the Market Square and attending church every Sunday. In fact every man had an adopted 'home' and friendships were made around a few family firesides, which were far more comfortable than draughty Nissan Huts. When off duty, it was only natural that some of these attractive unattached young men met up with and courted the young unattached ladies. As Swineshead had a considerable number of Land Army Girls stationed here, as well as the local lasses, there were many convivial dances for these neighbouring villages.



Bob Jones, Norman Swift & Jack Hobbs

The army pecking order when it comes to accommodation is renowned, so the 1st Parachute Squadron had its officers enjoying the Red Cow, where the plans were discussed casually over the plan table laid out on the billiard table (kept under a sheet in the interests of security!) More junior officers were based at the Peacock; the Sergeant's Mess was at the school and ordinary Sappers had to make do with hutted billets in the grounds of Karinany House off Maltings Lane and the rather unsanitary latrine arrangements. Bearing in mind that many homes at this time had earth closets, this was not so primitive a comparison then as perhaps it seems today, and for battle

hardened troops, no big deal. However, they must have been really gross, as I am reliably informed direct action was taken one night to "modify" the arrangements with the introduction of explosive charges. Of course as a punishment, the men had to dig some new latrines, but it seems it was worth it.



Cutting the 1st Para Sqn cake Mrs Dorothy Stainforth & Mrs Ingrid Rider



Parade commander Sgt Norman Swift, steps the parade off from the Red Cow

For the first two weeks, orders stated that no insignia or identifying badges were to be displayed, again as part of the disinformation campaign. Rumours in Donington as to who or what this unit was abounded but as leave was taken and men arrived and departed, the famous Pegasus badge was soon identified the 'special' troops became part of the community. Training absences, some to Ringway (now Manchester Airport), for parachute training jumping from Whitley bombers, some locally, were accepted and so nine months after their arrival, it was not thought anything unusual when equipment was convoyed out one mid -September Friday evening in 1944. The men followed early the next morning; they were heading for RAF Barkston Heath near Grantham, where later that day they enplaned and took their positions in a vast formation flying out over their former home, over Boston Stump and on over the North Sea.



The parade moves through the village of Donington

There were some 1500 aircraft, including fighter escort and 500 gliders. Many famous entertainers of the post-war era were of course on active service, Jimmy Edwards flew one of the towing aircraft that day.



Eric Booth proudly displays the portrait of the Arnhem Bridge that was presented to him and his wife Nina by Stan Pellow in appreciation for organising the event for many years

BBC news broadcasts confirmed the opinion of many sweethearts that weekend, that this was “it” when the scale of the action was announced, they had seen these aircraft fly over and knew it was their men up there.

It is not for this article to explore the twists and turns of the battle; suffice to say that these airborne Royal Engineers were in the thick of it with the 2nd Battalion under Col Frost. Those who survived were made POWs. You would think on repatriation, they would want no more of it. But since the 1960’s an annual reunion has been held, first at the Red Cow but in later years at The Comfort Inn, Bicker Bar.

About 27 Veterans will be amongst the 160 or so this year, including families: widows, children and grandchildren, many who have also served in the Parachute Brigade (or still do) who assemble from all over the world USA, Canada, Australia and the UK to enjoy each other’s’ company at dinner and honour their comrades. Reminiscing goes on into the night without bitterness or morbidity. The event is organised by Eric and Nina Booth, who met and married in Donington and came back to this area to live, as did many other couples. Sprightly, enthusiastic and charming, Eric and Nina are proud of the Squadron beyond description, but at the same time, matter-of-fact about the job Eric had volunteered to do in circumstances we can barely imagine and pray we never have to experience.



Assembled under the 'Arnhem Oak' following the church service

On the Sunday morning a service is held at Donington, solemn but with associated military panache. There is a chapel dedicated to the Squadron furnished beautifully in English oak, which will still look magnificent in 200 years' time. The candleholders are representations of bridge components, created in

clay by a teacher from Donington School. The Roll of Honour is housed in a glass-topped lectern and records every man's name. It is a fitting memorial to brave men.

AGM and Reunion Dinner- Blackpool 2002

Bob Prosser

Once again, all had a most memorable weekend; it was terrific to see so many friends coming together, in some cases, after many, many years. Laughter rang out continually, pints were put down in vast quantities, and voices were hoarse but not dry.

Over 300 people sat down for the Reunion Dinner on Saturday evening and they brought the house down with a terrific rendition of the ORE. Presentations were made to Brigadier Garth Hewish and his wife Shelia on his retirement as our President, also to Bob Prosser and Sheila on his retirement as Chairman. Life Vice Presidents certificates were presented to our Secretary Ray Coleman our Membership Secretary Chris Chambers and to Tom Ormiston a previous Association Chairman.

At the AGM the new President Brigadier Ian McGill the new Vice President Tom Brinkman and our new Chairman Bunny Brown were all elected, the remainder of the Executive Committee remained in post having all been re-elected.

It took a long time for goodbyes to be said but with promises to meet up again at the next AGM, which will be at Coventry.

There is much to look forward to with the new blood of leadership taking us into the new era.

The Way I See It- Further Revelations X9

Firstly let me wish all of the AEA Members a very merry Xmas and a happy new year. Xmas, they say, is a time for giving and that it is far better to give than to receive. If this is a true statement, it is little wonder women have so many headaches! Merry Xmas!

I wrote a paragraph about the proposed link with the REA, but the editor censored me, said he did not want to stir up a hornet's nest. I can't say I blame him. Stirring up a hornet's nest would once again immobilise 2 Troop!
What is wrong with the older generation of today?

There's Dads Army scrambling upward and Jim Brierley and his POP friends falling downward, is there no sanity left in this world! I am getting a complex reading about these people. Why can't they grow old gracefully like any decent couch potato? Then there is Dennis Hunt, who at the tender age of 73 stood for three hours at the Cenotaph. I was incapable of that at the age of 23 let alone be capable at age 73! Boy they make me feel inadequate! Maybe if I covered the speedometer in my Morris Minor or removed the safety net from beneath my hammock I would feel life was a little more dangerous!

Joking apart, it's great to see these old 'youngsters' doing their thing. I have always advocated that a life without danger is a waste of oxygen. To all of you, my cap is doffed! C'mon the rest of you members, young and old, let us hear your stories.

Kota Mama 69

Jim Masters



The Journey by the reed boat KOTA MAMA 69 was completed by mid-afternoon on Saturday the 17th August at the Greenwich Yacht Club after its long Journey from Lechlade, Gloucester. The boat manufactured of reeds from the Somerset Levels, to pre Inca design, had followed the course of the River Thames over a period of eight memorable days.

Gerry Masters skippered the crew. I, his elder brother, accompanied him was demoted to cabin boy for this particular voyage, and a rescue boat piloted by Ben Cartwright and his 15 year old daughter Louise. A two-part bank party to cover the team's needs at certain critical times also supported them.

The Journey was not without incident. Perhaps the most interesting was when approaching Tower Bridge when some lashings came adrift. It meant tying up under the gaze of large numbers of tourists who must have been bemused by the sight four rather scruffy individuals trying to ensure that a very odd looking craft could head on down river. However it did; even though at this stage the stern was constantly awash as Kota Mama continued, as expected, to slowly settle ever lower in the water. The final mooring was at Greenwich where Kota Mama was handed over to an environmental group who thought that Christmas had come early.

Everywhere the crew were met with great kindness from the crews of passing narrow boats and cruisers. Lock keepers, river police and sundry other officials regarded the crew with quizzical eyes but were always helpful. One policewoman enquired whether we were part of a wedding party? A wedding! On a reed boat? An idea for the next time perhaps!

The scenery was stunning, the bird life wonderful, the nights uncomfortable but the weather hot. So, it was fun for all and three charities are to benefit. Who knows maybe a book could come out of it? How about "Three old men and a young bird in a boat"? Or has something similar been done before'?

"The Journey"

Gerry Masters

We launched without problem at Lechlade, the owner of the slip making no charge. This was the second of many instances of help we were to receive from people and organisations. The first had been when Peter Tolly, who lives near Oxford, stood in at short notice as bank support for the first half of the trip.

Jim and I paddled out into the river for a wobbly start to the journey. Half a mile downstream with Ben having now caught up in the support boat, we chugged on for ten miles and three locks. By this time we were feeling the strain a bit and decided refreshment was needed. We moored to the bank at the Swan, Radcott, where Andy, an old friend from South America, was waiting to see us pass by. Suitably refreshed we pressed on to pass our first planned night stop by about three miles. We camped at a place called Tadpole Bridge, beside the Trout Inn. Emergency repairs were carried out to the support boat as it had already sprung a leak. Here, our first night out, I discovered that my dear brother had loaded my tent back onto Andrew's lorry and it was now back in Ilchester. From now on I was to sleep under a ground sheet.

Second day out we passed through Oxford, again extending our journey well past our planned stop for a campsite at Iffley. We found it had closed down some time before and was now derelict. On to the next, and by now it was getting quite cold and uncomfortable, only to find that it had been built on and is now a hotel. A chat with the lock keeper and he offered his garden as a camp site, we accepted gratefully, set up the tents and retired to the Kings Arms for a warm up.

Day three on to Wallingford. By now the programme had been thrown away as we are making such good progress. We called in to the Barley Mow as we passed through Clifton Hampden, only to check that it was the place where Jerome K Jerome stopped on his "Three Men In a Boat" trip. We camped on the bank at Wallingford, just out of town; but close enough to get to the local Italian for a pizza, then back to have drinks on a neighbour's narrow boat before climbing into the sleeping bag.

Fourth day, can't leave until eight o'clock as Radio Oxford are phoning. Leave at ten past the connection is no good; we are in Goring at ten for an interview on BBC TV South. The young lady doing the interview asks Jim to keep behind the camera. Their viewers are not ready for his knees yet!

We are on the way again at ten thirty to have the interview with Radio Oxford on the move, via mobile phone. We are looking for a camp somewhere around Sonning. Peter fixes us up with permission to camp on the lawns of the "Shiplake Ladies Finishing School". "Pity the girls are on holiday," said the headmaster.

Ben has another batch of repairs to do on the rubber boat. It is leaking water in and air out. it means unloading everything. Next morning, as we stood drinking our first cup of coffee at 6am, a mink climbs over the boat. During the night owls, several of them, had woke both of us. We had been seeing a lot of wild life along the river, moorhens, coots, ducks, (of many varieties), swans, geese, shags, herons and quite a few kingfishers.

Day five, we had lost our bank support. Peter had to drop out at Shiplake. We had to call at a bank side filling station. 97p a litre! Next time we will carry our can into a town, we are using eighteen litres a day. We chug on to camp in the grounds of Clivedon House at Cookham.

Day six on to a camp site at Laleham, it turns out to be private site, but Ruth, our new bank support has chatted them up and we can use their facilities but have to camp on the strip of ground between the river and the road. What bliss our first shower and shave and while we are at the Kingfisher for a meal, Ruth does the washing.

Day seven, it's Friday morning, no I am not dreaming, there is a flock of green Parquets squawking overhead. As it turned out it was to be the first of several we were to see including white ones. We passed the M4 and M25 yesterday now it is the M3, our last day on the non-tidal river. We are heading to Teddington, the last lock on the river. It's here that we need to get information on tides etc. before we go any further. Teddington comes into sight. Ruth is already there and has chatted to the lock keeper. Ben is a bit nervous about going through without knowing where we can stop for our last night. No need to worry the keeper has already fixed it. "Go ten minutes downstream turn right into a disused lock under a concrete bridge, tie up to an iron ladder on the right and go up it to the office, they will fix you up" By the time we got to the place; Ray, the lock keeper had phoned them and it was all fixed. The place was the, Thames Young Mariners (TYM), a training establishment for youngsters. We were given the combination to the lock to use the facilities, information on tides and timings and left to come and go as we pleased.

Day eight, even the tide was perfect for us. Leaving at 0830 to pass through Richmond half lock just before high tide at 1020, then we will have the tide pushing us for the last twenty-eight miles and should make Greenwich by midafternoon.

Progress is good the PLA launch comes alongside for some light hearted banter and lets us have the phone number for checking in to control at passing Charing Cross Bridge, where only one span is open and traffic lights are in operation. I wonder what the water busses and cruisers will make of it, waiting at the light, watching this weird and by now rather low in the watercraft come through.

Now someone made the fatal remark, "Just a couple of hours to go and it's all over." The wind came up, head on. The tide was at its fastest. The wind against the tide, a recipe for rough water and where was it roughest? - In the pool of London, so that we could lose control in front of the maximum number of tourists - and we did. One of the bindings between the two boats snapped and for ten minutes we struggled to get out of the fairway and managed to get in the lee of HMS Belfast and tie on to a moored launch where we could get sorted out. The last part of the trip was done with the rear of the boat under water. I had retrimmed the load to try and get the front

higher to pass over the waves. No good, some of the waves were two feet high and we just went through them. Then the river police were alongside, "Is someone getting married?" he enquired. Is this what Londoners do when they get married? They posed for a picture, wished us luck and were away.

Past Greenwich and the Cutty Sark, past the dome with the Thames Barrier getting closer we spot the Greenwich Yacht Club, where Ruth has fixed a mooring for us, 155 miles from our start point. We land sing happy birthday to the commodore of the club and give him the reed boat. "I don't want that ***** thing" he said "but know a man who might." He went away made a phone call and 15 minutes later an earnest young man arrived, "Just what I need for my eco-friendly park, can I really have it?" "It's yours" and off to the clubhouse for a well-deserved drink and some food.

We cleared the gear, said our farewells to Ben, Louise and Ruth and made our way across London to catch the 1935 to Yeovil.

I am pleased to say we received nothing but help, friendship and kindness from all the people we met along the way. The many lock keepers, river police, PLA staff and other boaters all of whom helped to make it an enjoyable journey. This was first descent of the Thames in a Reed Boat. And next...

Never Volunteer

Fred (Stuart) Robson – Philippines

Ever hear the saying, “Never volunteer?” I’m sure all of you have, as in the Army it is rule #1 for every soldier. Let me tell you of an incident that happened to me because I did not observe this rule in civvy street.

Way back when, many moons ago, I was working as a grader driver for the Winton Shire Council out in Western Queensland. The town of Winton had at the time a population of around 1,200 and its claim to fame is that Banjo Paterson wrote the song ‘Waltzing Matilda’ at the nearby Combo water hole. Although the town is situated in what is mainly sheep country everyone there was a frustrated cowboy, and so every year the highlight of the calendar was the annual rodeo. This particular year ‘someone’ came up with the idea that all the publicans ride a bull at the rodeo. Their customers would sponsor them and the proceeds would go to charity. All five publicans agreed. However, about a week before the rodeo was due the manager of the State run hotel was taken sick. Because he was a Kiwi the locals concluded that he was sick with fear. Be that as it may! The problem was that the hotel was now without a bull rider. It must be understood here, that to an Aussie the next best thing to baiting Kiwis is baiting Poms. Rather than let them goad me into it, as I knew they would, I volunteered to ride as substitute. Surely if I could jump out of aeroplanes I could ride a ‘cow.’ Very cavalier!

A few days later the rodeo ‘circus’ rolled into town and I got my first close up view of a Brahma bull. It was at this point that I had my first serious doubts as to what I had volunteered for. The beast was huge and there was an awful mean look on his face. This was no ‘Daisy in the meadow’ type cow; this was a serious piece of beef. He looked big enough to supply Burger King with beef for a week! My ‘training’ by the rodeo cowboys prior to riding this monster consisted of nothing more than how to wrap the rope halter around my wrist and some words of advice. This went along the lines of, “when you fall off, make sure you roll away from his hooves or he will stomp your Pommy ass into the dust.” Charming, that sure boosted the confidence!

I have to admit, climbing the pen to mount this monster I was not in the least bit apprehensive, I was downright scared. So much so that I was in danger of losing control of a certain part of my anatomy which was twitching like the lens shutter on a Paparazzi camera, giving me fears of an accident in my pants!

So, there I was, astride this huge Bovine Quasimodo about to take the ride of a lifetime but if anyone at the time had given me the choice of being where I was, or elsewhere trying to shove a wet noodle up a wildcats ass, I think I would have chosen the latter.

When the gate of the pen was thrown open, this huge beefsteak with balls surged forward into the arena with me hanging on grimly to the halter and trying to dig my knees into his ribs, in an effort to stay on. It was a ‘no contest’ from the word go! Here was I, someone who couldn’t even ride a horse, attempting to pit myself against this lump of beefsteak that had the agility of Fred Astaire! As he bucked up, so did I, as I had little or no choice in the matter, but beefsteak being of far greater bulk than I, landed before I did and as he bucked again my descent was halted abruptly and painfully astride his rising bulk. My teeth rattled together as my gaping mouth was forcibly slammed shut. The problem was that my tongue must have been hanging out. How I never bit it off I will never know. My head and neck were pushed down into my spine and my crotch slammed against his rock solid back. The wind was completely knocked from me and as a loud gasp escaped my lips a slipstream of blood from my bleeding tongue all but covered my lower face. Up I flew again but this time before I could land beefsteak took off at a run that snapped my head back and all but pulled my arm from its socket. My long skinny legs were thrown up in front of me with my knees nearly touching my shoulders. It was amazing the strange contortions my body performed as I bounced around on his back.

Having learned to keep my mouth shut my breath now rasped through clenched teeth and as it did so the blood continued to spread over my face. I remember thinking to myself, “Fall off you clown, fall off.” But it was the thought of what beefsteaks hooves could do that was keeping me on his back. Before I could decide anything one-way or the other, beefsteak committed what I think was a professional foul. This time at a sprint he rose with all four feet off the ground and as he did so he twisted his body to the right. A foul in anybody’s book! If I

ever had any sort of control before, I now had none at all as my balance was completely lost. Off I flew to the left. The problem now was that as beefsteak tossed me aside like the proverbial rag doll I forgot to let go of the halter! As beefsteak once again landed and took off running I was jerked foreword into a face down horizontal position that one again nearly pulled my arm from its socket and I slammed into his bulk. It was like hitting a granite wall and it was not reflexes, or indeed common sense, that made me release the halter but sheer lack of strength. The fall to the ground was only a matter of some three feet but I was travelling headfirst at what seemed to be around fifty miles an hour! I bounced once then furrowed along in the dust to a stop. I'd had better landings at Hankley Common!

Luckily beefsteak was not as mean as he looked, either that or he took pity on me, as he did not bother to turn and stomp me. I was quickly dragged to my feet by the rodeo hands and rushed to safety just in case ol' beefsteak had a change of heart.

Somewhere in the background I could hear the cheers, or was it jeers, from the crowd. It was about fifteen minutes before I could stand without any kind of support. The whole episode from pen opening to unceremoniously biting the dust was but a couple of seconds but it was surely the longest and most painful couple of seconds of my life. There was not a part of me that did not hurt. In fact, I had not hurt this much since playing murder ball on the opposing team to Rick Mogg! On both occasions I ached for a week.

I had obviously done better than the locals had expected as that night my glass was never empty, despite my concentrated efforts to make it so. The overriding opinion was that when I was 'riding' beefsteak I looked like Dracula doing an impersonation of Lee Marvin's' horse riding in the movie 'Cat Balou.' This was my one and only bull riding attempt other than a mechanical one in a Texas nightclub. I fared no better there but at least the landing was a lot softer.

For years after, every time I ate a hamburger I secretly wished it was part of beefsteak and I dreamed I was getting some revenge. So you see, rule number one - **never volunteer!**

Troubles in the Glen

Don Spary - New Zealand (3 Troop Commander 1957-58)

An article in the No 4 issue of our journal by Brigadier Fergie Semple prompts my reply from sunny New Zealand. The situation described by Fergie Semple in relation to the exercise in Scotland was not all 1 Troops fault! From memory 3 Troop went first to Aviemore and were based in the hills above Loch Morlich. Each section was given a different mountain to climb and to prove they had got there they had to let off a demolition charge on the summit. Unbeknown to us, friends of the GOC Scottish Command had an exclusive shooting party in the area and they blamed us for their failure to shoot any stags Garth Hewish and I spent the evening trying to placate the opposition but to no avail and the next morning the ADC to the GOC arrived. The rest is history and after 1 Troop's performance on the road to Skye Fergie would have been in for double trouble when he saw Tubby Butler at Para Brigade HQ.

Holy Revelations

Don Spary

We have been watching the news from Jerusalem and Bethlehem. It was back in 1958 that I took 3 Troop for a visit to Bethlehem and we had entered the Church of the Holy Nativity and descended into the crypt. On the



floor under a sheet of glass was a large stone and the priest in a hushed tone described how this was the beginning of Christianity. "This was where Christ was born." I looked around my "Troop of Angels" and they were all clearly impressed and looking so innocent and pure. Outside in the courtyard the most telling comment was from Sapper X who exclaimed, "Cor Sir wasn't it f***** holy in there!" Who was Sapper X?

In the Crypt - Standing: **Pete Drew, Derek Taylor, Ian Warmold, Tich Shaw, Mick Crampton, Taffy Williams, n/k, Vince Cairns, John Prince, Jock McEwan, Rae Gibson, Dave Pleasted, Steve Stephenson**

Kneeling: **Derek Leggett, Fred Cruse, Stevie Stevens, Spud Taylor, Brummie Greaves, Black Nicholson & George Holt**

Waterloo to Queen Elizabeth (Barracks)

Willy (Stuart) Wiltshire

I remember "Waterloo" - Waterloo barracks that is. I had just finished my para course at Abingdon and found myself in 6 section of 2 Troop (The Fairies). Waterloo was an old cavalry barracks that I believe were built for the troops on their return from the Crimea war. Our block was two tiers. Downstairs had been the stables and the doors were still split in two as for stables. The iron hay grids were still fixed firmly to the walls and the floors were of heavy wooden blocks. This was now our G1098 store. Our rooms upstairs was where the troops had been billeted and had not changed from those early days except for the introduction of electric lights. Lockers had been placed back-to-back down the centre of the room and the beds were down each side of the room. On the left hand side of the room, between the lockers and beds, was a gaping hole in the floor. It was about 18" long and about 4" at its widest point in the middle.

The following morning I went out to do my ablutions, and on return got dressed and went off to breakfast. On return I started to do what I thought was my bit towards sorting the room out. I grabbed the broom and started to sweep the night's rubbish into a pile to pick up. Charlie Huggins, an old hand, said, "Leave it." With that he took the broom and started to sweep the rubbish through the hole in the floor, forcing the larger items down with the handle. Suddenly there was a bellow from down below. Several minutes later, Rex Caunt, the G1098 storeman appeared at the door with a large double handled bin full of rubbish. He threw the contents of the bin all over the floor, turned on his heel and was gone, bellowing as he went, "You can keep your ***** rubbish!"

Charlie grabbed the broom and started sweeping the rubbish frantically back down the hole. Taff Harvey seeing my confused look said, "Whoever has it when we get on parade, keeps it."



Waterloo barracks was situated between Gun Hill and Hospital Hill with the hospital itself above us. Between the hospital and Waterloo barracks there was a parachute store and rugby pitch. When the Sqn was playing they would get 100% spectator support. One afternoon while supporting the Sqn rugby team who were playing some non-descript team, we were into the second half and were leading by some 30 points, a penalty kick was awarded to the Sqn. Kicking for goal was considered impossible due to the angle, distance and cross wind. It was

then that Rick Mogg grabbed the ball and placed it for the kick - what did we have to lose? He took about 20 paces back, lined up, then ran forward and kicked the ball. It shot forward like a rocket and was still rising as it passed through the posts. The spectators roared with approval. Reg (SSM Orton) was heard to mutter words to the effect, "If he could be as accurate with his SMG; Rick Mogg would be a marksman!"

The entrance into Waterloo barracks was at the bottom of Gun Hill with the guardroom to the left. One day the gas board arrived and dug a huge hole just to the left hand side. Reg Orton (SSM) in his familiar voice looked at the workman and said, "In my young day no gas board would dig a hole like that in front of my guardroom!" The next morning an extremely left wing type gas board official was jumping up and down next to the spot where the hole had been. He was screaming for blood and demanding to know who had filled in their hole. Leaving the gas board men to re-dig the hole, Reg said, "I shall get to the bottom of your hole." As he calmly walked away; Reg could be heard chuckling to himself.

At the time that SSM Reg Orton's amazing life story broke in the Aldershot news, Jim Somerville was doing a stint as Orderly Corporal and worked from a desk in the SSM's office. The morning following the publishing of Reg's story Jim went strolling into the office but within a few seconds came flying out just as fast as his legs could carry him. He was closely followed by one of the unspecified objects that had graced his desk. We later discovered that Jim had strolled into in office with his waist belt slung low like a cowboys belt, slung it on the clothes hook greeting Reg with "Hi Pard." (For the uninitiated, Reg had recently been awarded Honorary Marshall in one of the states of America)



Nee Soon barracks 1959

Moving to Malplaquet Barracks. Waterloo barracks was only 20 yard from the Aldershot NAAFI club, so the move to Malplaquet, which was located at the far end of Queen's Avenue, was not a popular one. I was a young sapper at the time but remember the sergeants' mess. They had a 3' plywood cut out of Adam painted up complete with fig leaf covering the appropriate part(s). Inscribed on the leaf were the words, 'Don't lift.' As the leaf was lifted it would reveal a torch bulb that would light up and a bell would

sound in the bar. The cut out was then strategically place in the Ladies loo. Of course the inevitable would happen; and the lady would emerge blushing to the cheers of the members in the bar.



2 Troopski

In those days a large number of us had motorbikes, which led to a number of crashes and injuries. There were several broken limbs and a broken jaw (mine). Following one of the accidents, Reg, still SSM, was heard to say, "One of these days one of these young idiots is going to break his neck" That following Monday there was no sign of Jim Somerville on parade. Later that morning a feeble tap on the SSM's door was heard and a sheepish young voice said, "Sir?"

Standing there complete with neck brace was Jim Somerville.

It was from Malplaquet that in 1958 that we went to Cyprus and then on to Jordan. While in Jordan we went to Jerusalem, the Dead Sea and various other places of interest. The 'action' came the following April (I think). On return to the UK we made another visit to Weymouth.

From Malplaquet the Sqn moved to Cove, and it was from Cove that we deployed on exercise to Stanford PTA, that culminated in the Sqn, accompanied by the OC, Maj Ian Wilson, marching back to Aldershot. Do any of you remember that little Russian ¼ ton trailer complete with fire and chimney that Charlie Edwards used to feed us?

Further deployments from Cove included our exercise in Singapore and Malaya. We were all issued with a parang to hack our way through the jungle and due to a few misses were well and truly blooded by end ex. I recall the ambush drills that we did for the NATO officers when we were all dressed in Russian uniforms.

From Cove the Sqn then moved to Gibraltar barracks. It was from here that the 'Fairies' (2 Troop) were sent to Kuwait. We stayed in Kuwait for about 17 days playing sand castles before being shipped out to Bahrain in an old LST (Striker) which sported one broken prop and the other on its way out. In Bahrain we were billeted in double bunks in the naval barracks (I was on the bottom bunk!)

After a few days I was volunteered to work for the RAF in my trade as a carpenter. Returning from late from work I crashed out on my bunk and fell asleep. Early the next morning I became aware of a slight tapping on my lower chest - no not tapping, dripping!! Joe on the top bunk had had a skin full the night before!

And finally on to Queen Elizabeth barracks in Crookham. The Christmas of 1963 was spent on duty until the telegram arrived ordering personnel to report back to barracks. January '64 saw us once again back in Cyprus and following a spell in Slim barracks at Dhekelia (courtesy of 33 Fd Sqn) we eventually moved to Xeros in a tented camp beside the golf course. Can anyone remember the Sqn basha and the singing along to the band that consisted of a guitar, a set of knives and Alfie Fisher on the Inerga Projector, which served as a trumpet? On the 1st April we were invited to become part of the United Nations force but on the 22nd April were invited to leave and we found ourselves back home once again. I remember a report that came back to the Sqn after our leave, that a soldier in para smock, wearing a blue UN beret and scarf had been noted speeding around the southern

counties I a blue and grey sports job with the hood down and scarf flowing in the slipstream (Jim Somerville). Has anyone else still got their UN beret with the maroon, patch or was it a dream?

Seven years, five different barracks and just a few of the thousands of memories from them. Since joining the AEA one of my highlights is on receipt of the Journal is to look at the photographs and names of those that I know. I see so many young lads and also so man distinguished mature, grey haired gentlemen. Could they be the same ones?

A thousand incidents come flooding back, some that I was involved in; others that I've heard about from other guys. This Christmas will be the 45th since my first one in "9" where the occasion started with a nut shell flying across the cookhouse and ended with young cook Foy in the swill bin up to his waist - only it was head first, wasn't it Charlie?

The Way I See It

X9

Drop in Malaya. Baz, I loved the line '...toward the green sea of Malayan jungle a thousand feet below.' Wow! Looks to me in the photograph that you are dropping on KL Airport! If you are dedicated enough to keep archives Baz, then you must get them right! Baz Henderson! Baz Henderson! The name surely rings a bell. Has there only ever been one Baz Henderson in the Sqn? Tell me Baz, is it in your archives how you turned a perfectly good drinking contest into something resembling a World Wrestling Federation fracas? Germany, latter part of 66. Doing fine with the locals, the beer was flowing and a beer-drinking contest was on. Obviously as things digressed, as they tend to do under such circumstances, friendly banter turned a little abusive. Someone, Baz, telling our German friends that they had lost two world wars and a world cup, brought this to a head! The melee was on. Tell us about it Baz.

A good article by the Rupert, Sam Hesketh. What he achieved in the Sqn, especially in the sporting arena, speaks well for him. I must say he had a good choice of raw material to work with, but he led it well. The way he speaks of those under his command in such a positive way also speaks volumes for him. I was transported back a few years by some of the names he mentioned in his article. Dad Wallis, is that the Dad Wallis with the laughter lines? Don't believe it, those are not laughter lines; nothing in the world could be that funny! I know the real reason Dad was blessed with so many laughter lines! Sid Davis, now not much else in the world could be as funny! Screech McCabe, he sounded like an out of control Michigan in normal conversation but when excitement took over he sounded like Tiny Tim reaching for a top 'C'! Danny Daniels, now there is much can be said about Danny, but not in a respectable Journal such as this! Did you ever learn to cook Danny, or are you still trying to 'Guild that Lilly'! Great guys all of them. Must try to get to see them more often.

In the Rogues Gallery the picture of 2 Section, 1 Troop. I think one of those in the background, not given a name, is Jimmy Brown. Jimmy, a National Serviceman from Scotland, served with 1 Troop on their first tour of Bahrain. This is a tale related to me while Jimmy was earning his thirty bob a week. Perhaps Big John Smith can remember the incident as I think he was 1 Troop SSgt. at the time and would have had some 'feedback' from it in the Sgt's Mess. The other player in the exchange was 1 Paras RSM Kelly, also a Scotsman. For some reason RSM Kelly did not take kindly to 9 Sqn. In fact, his address to any engineer he saw was 'Hey, fornicating engineer'! I think fornicating was the word he used, if not, it was something very similar but meaning the same thing! One day he happened on Jimmy committing the cardinal sin of wearing his PT shorts with the legs rolled up. 'Hey, fornicating engineer, c'mere'. Jimmy dutifully trots over and does his best to stand at attention. RSM Kelly then proceeds to lay into him on dress code and anything else he could think of. He finished his tirade by saying, 'If the army had intended for you to roll your fornicating shorts up, they would have fornicating made them that fornicating way, right fornicating engineer.' 'Yes sir, permission to speak sir.' Yes, what is it fornicating engineer'? 'What about my fornicating shirt sleeves sir'? Poor old RSM Kelly nearly had a fornicating seizure!

Dads Army on a WWW

We can see it's not the World Wide Web Lofty. What it looks like from the photos' is a geriatric remake of the movie 'The Great Escape'! It's obscene, grown men acting like a bunch of outward-bound teenagers! I would say from the looks of them, most are 'outward bound'! Put them all together and I can safely say I have seen more hair on a pork chop! The pictures taken from above them makes it difficult to distinguish between their heads and the boulders! Lofty Aldridge is stood there looking like an anorectic Santa Clause! If I were you Lofty, I wouldn't do that too often. Dave Grimbley, in trying to 'recapture his lost youth went a bit too far and now drinks from a baby bottle!

The hearing aid episode says it all. Tell me Bill, what does the MBE after your name stand for, Member of the British Earin' aid society? I can believe that the pubs did well that weekend but I bet the chemist shops did better! Now we have to touch on a very touchy subject, mainly because it concerns the editor and he may censor me. The editor of this Journals unbecoming behaviour! You must remember Dave that 'golf is only a good walk spoiled' and because you are a lousy player there is no need to get emotional about it. Next time you play a couple of bad shots and want to throw your Teddy out of the pram just think, you may hurt the poor Teddy! Now

pull yourself together and give your Teddy to charity! Take up rose growing, I can tell you it's a lot less stressful. It's good to see 'third world soldiers,' in this instance Tony Manley from the Army Cuisine Corp who served very ably with 9 Sqn, being made to belong, despite what they dished us up. It's all very well to *embrace* them into the AEA but do they also have to be *kissed by* Bill Rudd!

Seriously though, it's great to see all those 'silver oldies' out and about doing something like this. Keep it up guys, and let's see more of us lazy ones participating next year. I would have joined them had I not such important things to do. I had to weed the lawn, check my hammock for frayed ropes, watch the roses grow and ice down the ingredients for the whisky sours! Maybe next year I won't be so busy.

By the way Lofty, don't bet on sunshine for next year, remember, the sun only shines on the righteous!

Falklands Reunion

The notation that the former troop commander, Robbie Burns, was attired in bright red corduroy trousers is cause for comment. He would hardly be the 'Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim'rous beastie' that his namesake wrote of. In fact, the only other man that I know of that was attired in bright red trousers was one Will Scarlet. He used to skip merrily through the forest singing things like 'hey nonny no.' Is there a parallel here somewhere? Surely we do not have a former 9 Sqn. troop commander who skips merrily through the glens of Scotland with his pigskin piano under his arm singing strange songs! It doesn't bear thinking about. Give the pants back to your wife Robbie; I'm sure she looks a lot better in them! (God knows what colour his underwear would have been...)

Now a little bit on my soapbox

The BBC was asking for people to nominate who they thought was the Greatest Briton. By the time you read this the TV series will have been aired and the result known. No matter who wins on Channel 4, I can tell you here the person who deserves the title of the Greatest Briton. Without him there would have been no British Empire, and without him all our Kings, Queens, Generals, Admirals and Politicians would have been nobodies.

He is the man who stood solid behind his longbow. He is the man who steadfastly held the 'thin red line.' He is the man who, without hesitation, 'went over the top.' And he is of course, the man who without fear, went 'a bridge too far.' He is of course, Tommy Atkins. For those unfamiliar with the name Tommy Atkins, it is a name given by Rudyard Kipling to the British soldier, hence the name Tommies. In a poem to Tommy he said it all.

For its Tommy this and Tommy that an' chuck him out the brute, But it's Tommy this and Tommy that, when the guns begin to shoot, And it's Tommy this and Tommy that an' anything you please, and Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool, you bet that Tommy sees.

Soapbox

Being an ex-soldier I naturally site army battles but of course when I mention Tommy Atkins I mean all branches of the British Forces, Army, Navy and Air Force. Without him Britain could never have been Great.

As a certain 'little' French General once said...'Soldiers generally win battles, Generals get credit for them.'

It has always been the lot of a soldier to be an expensive thorn in the side of society in times of peace, but a heroic shield to the nation in times of strife.

Yes, the Greatest Briton is the lowly soldier who put his life on the line, in order for whoever was responsible, to put the Great in front of Britain and for those of us who followed, to be proud that they did, and kept it that way. In my view, Tommy Atkins will always be the Greatest Briton I stand down from my soapbox!

With the belated news of the passing of Jim Middlemass several years back, let me just say that I hope he died with a full tank of someone else's petrol in his car! This way I know he would have gone with a smile of his face. Hope the Gods smiled kindly on you Jim.

Anecdote to John Vickerman

Eric Richards

I was sorry to hear of the passing of John Vickerman, and would like to relate the following Anecdote in his memory.

In mid-1947 I was the Store man on the Airborne Training Increment, Barton Stacey when Capt (Johnny) Walker (Now Brigadier (Retd) Walker) was its OC ex 2 Para Sqn RE. After I came back from Palestine, all of the Increment Training Staff were ex 2 Para Sqn. We had one sergeant (McGeary) and 3 full Corporals when SDI John Vickerman arrived, I believe from the RE Training Battalion at Lockerbie. On his first day when about 25 other RE volunteers joined us on their first parade when the three training Corporals noted that John was standing alongside them.

They told him to fall in with the rest of the training troop, he immediately told them that in his rank as Sergeant he should not be in the ranks with the other Sappers. The senior corporal ordered him to get in the ranks. John then stated that he was senior to the corporals He was then informed he had a choice of either returning to his RE Training Battalion or obeying their orders

You all know how it was in Pre P Coy training and P Coy that irrespective of one's rank which included volunteer Officers, you all came under the Training Staff whatever their NCO rank. John just could not fully understand this having just arrived as SDI of an RE Training Battalion.

Anyway he had to accept this ruling and after completing P Coy and his Parachute Jump course was posted to the 3rd Airborne Sqn RE in Germany.

A few months later the Increment was disbanded, and I was posted to the 3rd Sqn in Germany where John Vickerman was made the MT Sergeant. Most of 3 Sqn had served from D-Day onwards and I do not think John knew how to fit in to an Airborne Unit. He just could not understand the Ethos of the Airborne soldiering after so many years as a Drill Instructor. For instance, one of the MT drivers said to him that his engine was missing from his 3 Tonner. John's reply to him was, "I am getting fed up with this stealing in the MT!"

Later when they disbanded 3 Para Sqn most of us that joined the new 9 Sqn but John Vickerman never came into '9' as they had sufficient senior NCOs.

Many years later at the first AEA AGM in Rhine Barracks John was present. It was the first time I had met him since in 3 Airborne Sqn. During the AGM John was appointed as the AEA Standard Bearer. After the meeting and at future Airborne Forces Days John kept telling me about the way the Junior NCO's ordered him about during his Airborne Increment twining way back in 1947.

The moral of this story is if you wish to become an Airborne Engineer you should not spend too much time on the Staff of a Basic Training Battalion Unit. Poor John; he never forgave those days of his very short service in the Airborne Engineers.

PS. But at the end of his day the AEA did him proud.

Further Anecdotes

David Rance, Ontario Canada

Spurred on by the constant carping of our esteemed editor, pertinent to the lack of journal input from Canada, I am moved to take up the quill and respond accordingly.

An anecdote that comes readily to mind is the case of the phantom gnome gobbler of Puckeridge which claimed, thanks to the valiant efforts of the Aldershot constabulary, more notice at the time than the celebrated Profumo affair.

One of the final tests I gave squadron 'wannabees' during my tenure as pre-para NCO, was an initiative exercise. One such test involved bringing back a leprechaun from Ireland. A host of these diminutive elves duly arrived with the exception of one, which was barely discernible as a one eared stone rabbit.

All said and done, aforesaid gnomes were taken to a final place of rest by my garden pool at Puckeridge. To my consternation, the following week, I was confronted by the C.I.D. in the squadron office to prove the origin of the gnomes. Dublin, Bantry Bay and Enniskillen was fair enough for the gnomes but the blasted rabbit was my downfall, since the legitimate owner appeared claiming it came from her garden in Church Crookham.

As in the song 'Black Velvet Band,' I next appeared smartly arrayed in No. 1 dress accompanied by my distinguished attorney, Captain John Hill RE at Odiham assizes to face charges on nineteen different counts of gnome gobbledy and one of rabbitry. I was given the option of accepting the court punishment or a trial by jury at a later date in Winchester. Some choice don't you think? Despite a brilliant defence by Capt. John Hill and further testimony to my impeccable character, a common trait in all 9 Sqn. personnel at the time, I was deemed guilty, warned against future heinous crimes such as this one, fined three pounds and threatened with an immediate accompanied posting to Hong Kong should I transgress again. All this while the bloody gnomes looked down imperiously at me from the magistrate's bench. Five years later, I lost my job as head of security in your British Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden as a security risk due to my criminal background. Moral of the story is obvious: Beware of sappers bearing gifts, particularly gnomes or stone rabbits.

It occurs to me that there are numerous anecdotes such as the above and if anyone would care to send me their particular saga I would be happy to compile a booklet for subsequent sale by the QM to augment Association funds. The gauntlet is cast.

In closing, may I offer thanks and congratulations to all involved in the most excellent Queens Jubilee certificate sent out to members. Made this old sweat feel very airborne and very proud.

There you are Mr. Editor, you've got your bit from the land of the Eskimo and the Polar Bear!

Sunday in Sussex

Eric Blenkinsop

There cannot be a nicer way for me to resume the responsibilities as branch representative than to commence with a report on the branch Sunday in Sussex. This is an annual branch event arranged by courtesy of Bertie and Dee Fordham.

We all met at the Five Bells at South Chailey for lunch and as usual the event was well attended by branch members and their ladies. On the day we were most fortunate to have in attendance several notable non-branch members as follows:

Norman Swift and Jack Hobbs, veterans of 1st Parachute Squadron, who, we understand are the only two surviving members of air Troop RE which was the very first Airborne RE unit, formed with 20 or so members. It was from this troop that the Royal Engineer element for the Bruneval raid was drawn. We are fortunate that they both reside within our catchment area and our thanks go out to John and Sue Grosvenor and John and Lisa Elliott for enabling them to join with us. Unfortunately, due to health reasons, Gordon Spicer another Arnhem veteran was unable to join us this year.

Also with us for the day was Dave O'Dwyer accompanied by Ruby, a lady friend. Dave, apart from being a personal friend of Bertie Fordham, volunteered for airborne Forces whilst serving in Italy, returned to the UK for training and was subsequently posted to 591 (Antrim) Para Sqn RE to take part in the Normandy landings. He eventually returned home to become the first PSI appointed to 301 Para Sqn (TA) at Mitcham Road, Croydon.

Last but not least were Dave and Jeannette Rutter from the Aldershot Branch. We understand that they were retracing their Sussex roots!

So, as our Association President would say, "We wined and we dined," but fortunately Skinner couldn't make it. Then it was off for the highlight of the day to Bertie and Dee's idyllic Orchard Cottage for a most pleasurable afternoon in the garden.



Gordon Spicer & Jack Hobbs
(taken on a previous occasion)

There was quite a distinct 301 Para Sqn (TA) flavour to the afternoon as Bertie was a troop sergeant with them when I arrived as PSI to take over from another notable Arnhem veteran, the late Sgt Joe Mallett. Thank goodness the motorbike and sidecar was Joe's personal property and did not go with the job!

Our Chairman, Arthur Cheesman also served with 301 and Terry Porter was the National Service permanent staff driver. Terry and Elaine own the jeep that is featured in the photographs, and it would be true to say that he developed his love for the Jeep through restoring the clapped out Willys jeep that he found behind the garages at 301. He spotted the featured one on a farm building and having done a deal with the owner spent six months restoring it. Terry managed to trace the vehicle history back only to 1962 when it had been rebuilt in France and used by 3rd Squadron Armoured Division and 2nd regiment Para Foreign Legion



Bob Woolley, Bertie Fordham & Arthur Cheesman
(taken on a previous occasion)

As always on these annual afternoon occasions, tea and cakes were served, a raffle was held which yielded £51.00 for Bertie and Dee's favourite charity - the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

Once again, a truly memorable day!

Group photograph taken in Bertie and Dee's garden



Herne Bay “Airborne Corner”

John Iddenden ex 9 Fd Coy AB RE & 1st AB Sqn RE



Us old Airborne bods of the Herne Bay Royal British Legion are very proud of our “Airborne Corner.” Our chairman Dick, ‘ex Royal Navy’ encourages the ex-service men from the three services to contribute to this ‘Corner.’

Regretfully I am no longer able to travel to the “Double Hills” service of remembrance, but the picture and verse of the Horsa glider reminds me every time I enter the Legion.

Kiwi Calling

Vic Rhodes - New Zealand

In response to your call for some input from New Zealand, I thought that perhaps our readers might find the following extracts from the Pegasus News Sheet - HQ 6 AB Div dated 14 February 1948 of interest. In particular Baron von Schuschnigg ideas –

America - Help for Europe

Mr Marshall has appealed for support to the European Recovery Programme and has warned the American people that they are facing the most crucial decision in American history. He said that the Soviet Union and her communist allies have been trying to exploit the post war crisis in Europe to get control. But if a stable, healthy Europe could be organised, the Soviet leaders would be more inclined to agree on terms for a peace treaty. On the British proposal for a Western European union, Mr Marshall said, 'This development has been our greatest hope.'

France - Proposed Customs Union

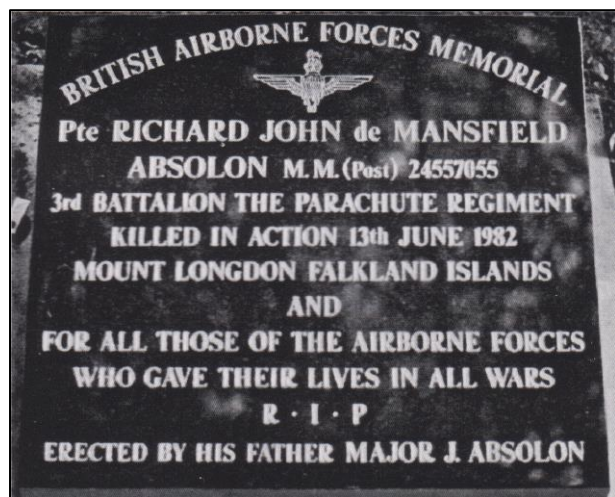
Mr Bidault, the French Foreign Minister said that Europe must be organised particularly on an economic plane. Much depends on the German problem and on finding a place for Germany in a United Europe. He stressed the French belief that differences between East and West could be overcome.

Austria - Approval of a Federation for Europe

Baron von Schuschnigg, the former Austrian chancellor, speaking on the post-war Europe yesterday said that Europe should make a fresh start and forget the past. Commenting on the proposed United States of Europe he said that this was an ideal federation and has great future possibilities.

Somebody, somewhere must have had a crystal ball way back in 1948!

A Falklands Commemoration report appeared in the Airborne Flyer in June 2002; it relates to an event on the 16 June this year where we held a Falklands Commemoration ceremony. We managed to muster some 30 red berets that travelled from all over New Zealand to attend. The commemorative service was in memory of Pte Richard John de Mansfield Absolon, 3 Bn Para Regt who was killed in action on Mt Longdon just one day before the cessation of hostilities on 14 June 1982. He had been awarded a posthumous Military Medal.



A memorial to Pte Absolon was laid in the grounds of St Mary's soon after the formation of the New Zealand British Airborne Forces Association in New Plymouth in 1988. A small stone is to carry the love of a father (Major John Absolon) for his son who died in the Falklands War 20 years ago. The stone, which received the blessing at New Plymouth's Cathedral, is destined to be cemented into a cairn of commemoration at Pangbourne England. Major Absolon said the cairn would be a permanent reminder of those who fell in the Falklands campaign.

The Airborne Flyer gave yours truly a bit of a thank you write up "Vic Rhodes is to be congratulated for a

very well organised event and it is to his credit how smoothly things went. It was no mean feat of co-ordination."

There's only a handful of ex-Airborne in New Plymouth but we keep in contact and attend the occasional parade, and those fit enough, attend the National British Airborne Forces New Zealand Inc (BAF/NZ inc) reunions.

Much as I would have liked to attend the Blackpool reunion (I was born there) I'm afraid even at pensioners bus fare rate it was just a little too much!

The Journal does the rounds to non RE's. It does them good!

Reflections of a Brummie Sapper 1945 – 1952

(More Like a Thomas Cook's Tour) Harry (Brummie) Howell

From Brum to Carlisle, (Hadrian's Camp) across the water from Stranraer then on to Omagh (County Tyrone all in one journey to attend basic training. In those days it was like going abroad! Once sorted out and earmarked for the Royal Engineers it was off again to Fulwood barracks in Preston for RE training. (Salient points) Always a panel man Marching through Preston to the river Ribble for pontoon bridging - but first we were marched knee high into the water - they made sure nobody kept their dry feet!

Sometime later I found myself in Normandy with Monty's British Liberation Army. Shortly after Arnhem, (That Bridge Too Far), my company were asked to recruit for airborne forces. This was something I had always wanted to do. Since briefly meeting some of the lads of the 1st and 6th Airborne Division prior to D Day I had admired them and wanted that 'red' beret. Yes, I was the only one to apply from my company - the lads thought I was slightly cracked. It was around that time Jerry had begun his last push around the Ardennes and things livened up a little. I found myself in Antwerp waiting for a boat to the UK. Once there I the town was under heavy attack from V1s and V2s. I vividly recall watching and hearing the flying bombs engines cutting out before diving for cover.

I was posted to 1st AB Sqn who was based at Woodhall Spa (Lincs). Then it was off to Hardwick for the pre para training - I should never forget that 10-mile hike with full kit and the old Lee Enfield rifle.

Ringway next stop. Being under command of the RAF for a couple of weeks was very enjoyable, but not without its moments. The RAF stick instructor was a truly kindly man and helped us to get through the course, I shall always recall his words to us, "It's all swings and roundabouts lads." The photo features the stick that I jumped with; this included 2 RAF sergeants who were training to be instructors. On our first Dakota jump they were 1 & 2 in the stick.



**L to R Standing: Spr Davenport. 2nd & 5th RAF trainer instructors
Kneeling: 2nd from left Alex Baker & extreme right Harry Howell**

Flying over Tatton Park DZ the first refused to jump, he was screaming his head off and somehow managed to hang on to the door - he was 'helped out! The second refused and was unhooked and shoved to the rear of the aircraft. You can imagine how the rest of the stick felt - but out we went with no further mishaps.

Our instructor to my mind was at the top of his job; a credit to the RAF. He also jumped with us at times; I recall on a balloon jump he asked me to check his rigging line. A great guy, I wish I had kept in touch with him.

Like all Paras it was a proud day when we paraded to receive our 'wings' on the old Ringway aerodrome.

Posted to the 9th AB Sqn an incident I recall at Eastham Hall Stoke before leaving for Norway involved a certain Phil Hiat and his inseparable friend Travis who returned to camp one night much the worse for wear and terribly late. Having disturbed everyone collapsed on their beds. Being told by the lads to put out the lights, Phil duly obliged by reaching for his pistol and shooting the light off the ceiling! Phil had won the MM at Arnhem, so I expect he was just letting off a little steam! I cannot recall anything coming of the incident - more important things to going on in those days I suppose. I would dearly like to know if he is 'still' with us. I believe he came from Colne in Lancs. Anybody out there?



My OC during the Norway and Palestine Ops was Major Cowtan who I believe come from the 1st AB Sqn, later after I left in 1946 he was promoted with a few gongs for excellent work by 9 AB Sqn in Palestine. An article by John Iddenden in issue No 2 of the Journal brought back memories of returning with souvenirs, I returned with a Luger P38 and a long barrelled Mauser, both 'retrieved' from the Jerries. No customs problems though, but I can't remember what I did with them - shame, I could have given them to the museum!

Quastima area Palestine - Maj Cowtan's babes with some locals amongst the orange groves. Harry Howell rear row 2nd from left



After Norway, the 1st AB Division was disbanded and the 9th AB Sqn found themselves at Bulford joining the 6th AB Division preparing for Palestine. We embarked on one of the old Castle Line ships at Liverpool in September 1945. I believe the ship was the 'Durban Castle.' Following 10 days at sea, enjoying the evening concerts and tombola, we arrived at the port of Haifa. Does anyone recall Sgt Dunstan and his party piece, 'The Raspberry?'

An observation of these early days, I found it quiet for a while, not all doom and gloom. I recall playing a lot of football; some of the games were against Italian POWs. There were also a lot of professional footballers serving at that time, one of which I believe was Wilf Mannion the England inside forward. He was, I believe serving with the Green Howards (someone will correct me if I'm wrong). But it was not long before the Stern Gang and the Irgun Zvai Leumi played their card.

I was fortunate to get local leave and was able to visit Beirut the Lebanon and to go skiing in the mountains. I believe the latter resort was called the Elephant Ski Club - a fantastic place. During Xmas 1945 I was fortunate to join a conducted tour of the Holy city with the padre (I told you it was like a Thomas Cook tour!)



Wyke Regis - Weymouth (Always a panel man!)

My demob came through in 1946 and I came back thorough Egypt crossing the Suez at El Cantara then up to Port Said. The route back to the UK was well organised on a boat to Toulon in Southern France then on up to Oostende and finally the UK. I'm sure they referred it to as the 'Medloc Route.'

Like some many others; I found Civvy Street so unsettling and it wasn't long before I re-enlisted for a few more years - but that's another story!

A chance meeting with a chap wearing a Para badge, who was a complete stranger, who thought he knew me, sparked my interest and was introduce to George Barrett, membership secretary of the Birmingham branch, and so I became a member of a very keen and well attended group of former Paras. May I say I am proud to sit with those Birmingham rascals Bob Jones, Tom Carpenter and the other veterans and members.

Exotic Places

Kenya 1971



Derek Arnold, Steve Olive, Yossel Brain & John Leach

Belfast 1970



Colin Bond & Harry Huggins

Libya 1968



Fred Pinckney & Biddy MacMillan

Keeping the Adrenaline Flowing

Jim Brierley, Cowes Australia

With my 78th birthday coming up in September 2002 I had given some thought as to how best to celebrate it in terms of skydiving and hit on the idea of doing 7 jumps on Saturday and 8 jumps on Sunday; and perhaps finishing up each day with a formation jump from height. My fellow Club members thought it a good idea and the Chief Instructor (CI) offered to repack one jump for me to conserve my energies.

After the second jump the CI shouldered me aside and said he would take over repacking for the day, which was splendid news. All I had to do was jump on the plane when there was a spare slot and jump out again at 2,200 feet. I had finished the 7 jumps by 4:15 p.m. and got involved in an 8-way from 12,000 ft. Still feeling chipper I went up to 10,000 ft and did a 4-way (it started as a 7-way but became a bit of a shambles) and, lo and behold, I had completed 9 jumps on the first day. As was expected of me I bought a slab (24 cans of beer) and drinking commenced. I should mention here that there is no drinking on a drop zone whilst jumping is still in progress. Before the party warmed up I quietly went off to a motel I had previously booked to avoid the 80 kms journey back to my home on Phillip Island.

Day 2 came up and the weather wasn't looking too good. Low cloud and wind gusting to 20 knots, but it wasn't long before I was up and away for my first jump. The first surprise of the day was the Chief Instructor telling me that I would have to do my own packing as he was tied up with students. The next surprise came soon after when, on my second jump, the suspension lines of the main canopy rapidly twisted upwards and at 1,000 ft I decided to cut away and switch to my reserve. All went smoothly and I came in to a stand-up landing in the target pit. More fortuitously, one of the on-ground skydivers jumped in to his car and headed for the paddock where my canopy and reserve freebag had drifted. I wondered how I would continue jumping without a parachute but another jumper offered me his gear and then the students' packer reminded me that my old Raven 4 parachute (which I had donated to the Club for jumping display flags into special events, (like the Grand Prix and Footy Grand Final) was available and waiting. I was able to complete 7 jumps on the Sunday before the sun went down and my body began showing signs of age.

Over the weekend I had managed to do one jump more than I had intended and not quite in the order originally planned. As one wit pointed out "9" and "7", made me 97! My daughter said if I had cut my jumps to four a day then I could have said that I was only 44!!

I now have to collect my repacked reserve before travelling to New South Wales for a POPS (Parachutists Over Phorty Society) fun meet in early October.

Airborne Forces Weekend

Dave Lincoln

About 25 AEA members attended the weekend together with a number of ex-squadron members, I arrived at Rhine Barracks on Thursday evening and was shown to the room set aside for us. We were all looking forward to a good weekend and what a weekend it was. The squadron left early on Friday morning to enplane at Brize Norton. After a good breakfast we assembled at the admin area with squadron wives and children and boarded a coach to take us to Everleigh DZ. The weather was excellent and despite a slight breeze it was very pleasant; and as we waited for the Hercules, the BBQ arrived and was soon being stoked and loaded with sausages, chicken and beef burgers together with the Army's staple diet of baked beans. The cooking aroma drifted over the DZ like a cloud. Around 1155hrs we spotted the Hercules circling and we were all asked to keep within a circle of hard standing to make the DZ safe. At 1200 hours precisely the Here ran in, the first pass was made over the DZ and Charlie Dunks ashes were broadcast over the Everleigh DZ. The Here went around and returned for a drop of 40 Engineers, a marvellous sight in itself, only to be followed by a third pass when 48 exits were made. What a fine display by the Squadron and I am sure that we were all rooting for the lads as they landed. In the meantime, the beer and lager had arrived and as the lads left the DZ the alcohol flowed and victuals were duly consumed. They had been in the Here for some time and needed the beer to revitalise their sweating bodies. Much chatting ensued and we eventually reloaded the coach for Aldershot, Surprise! Surprise! On our return the squadron bar was open from 1500hrs on Friday until 0400hrs on Saturday with a function in the Sergeants Mess on Friday night thrown in-between as well.

By Saturday morning I needed some fresh air so decided to visit Farnborough Air show. Another very pleasant day before meeting everyone again in the Pegasus Bar to get into training for the Saturday night bash and function in the Squadron bar. At about 0230hrs Sunday I decided to make a break and journey home, much to my wife's surprise and having no door key did not help!

I feel sure that I speak for all those attending whether serving or not - that we all had a most enjoyable weekend and we would like to thank the Squadron both for the hospitality shown to us and kind understanding of our senile incapability's. Good luck to you all.

Footnote:

It was brought to my attention that SSM Neil Fitzsimons was to be married on the following Saturday. After much phoning around on the Friday afternoon I finally found the venue and thought it in order to e-mail the following message.

"Congratulations and good luck to you both in the future."

From the Airborne Engineers Association.

9 Parachute Squadron RE

9 Parachute Squadron has undergone an exceptionally busy 14 months. We have completed an Operational tour to Macedonia (OP BESSEMER), deployed to Afghanistan (OP FINGAL) deployed on Ex EAGLES STRIKE and conducted an Overseas Training Exercise (OTX) in Cyprus (EX LION SUN 14/02). In between these major operations and exercises we have maintained our engineer-training programme and conducted 3 adventure training packages.

Ex Eagles Strike (08- 19 Jul 02)

Ex EAGLES STRIKE 02 saw 9 Parachute Squadron deploy a SHQ element, Field Troop (+) and a large Echelon initially to AMC South Cerney and subsequently to the Stranraer area, by road and parachute insertion via Carlisle followed by a Parachute insertion onto STANTA.

1 Troop deployed to South Cerney on the 08 July 02 for the first phase of Ex Eagles Strike. The troop consisted of three Sections and a HQ element. The initial phase of the training at South Cerney was to shake out the troop on the Engineer equipment that would be played during the Exercise. The equipment we were using was all Section Commander related taskings, this included the 5 Bay SS MGB and the 5 Bay MGOB. Later during the Exercise the Troop would be tested on the task reporting procedures and an Air Portable Raft build at STANTA.

The Para programme for the exercise was full. The 1 PARA Battlegroup had three Para insertions and the Sqn managed to get onto an extra (one off) insertion not related to the exercise for the troops that were not affiliated with the Company's.

All three Sections were affiliated to A, B and C Coy's, giving them Close Engineer Support on Route Denial Tasks and Nuisance Minefields. They also had the Chance to work alongside the Rifle Coy's as Rifle Sections during the Assault Phase which showed the Company's that they had a real time asset in that the squadron could adapt from Engineering to Infantry Soldiers of the highest order at a moment's notice.

The final Phase of the Exercise was the Insertion by Para onto Frog Hill DZ (STANTA). The troop would now come together for the APB raft build. This was added into the Scenario to bring a full and demanding Exercise to an end with the Battlegroup crossing over the raft to a place of safety after carrying out a non-aggressive extraction of civilians from a hostile area.

All in all an excellent exercise that tested all areas of the Squadron down to the youngest Sapper.. Having given Close Support Engineering to the 1 PARA Battlegroup, the long existing relationship between the Battalion and 9 Para Sqn is as strong as it was on OP AGRICOLA.

The Squadron's Plant element of our Echelon, assisted by 51 Air Asslt Fd Sqn were able to conduct a real time plant task for the local Forestry Commission. This 4 day development of Spectacle Loch Car Park allowed practical plant training to be carried out off line from the Ex EAGLES STRIKE scenario and kept the local Forestry Commission on side. The Brigade managed to gain some media interest from the local paper thus softening the blow to the vast amount of military movement within the exercise area.

Ex Lion Sun (1 Sep- 6 Oct 02)

The Squadron deployed on Ex LION SUN 14/02 between 1 September 2002 and the 6 October 2002. This gave the Squadron a much needed respite from the hectic day to day life of Aldershot. The Exercise was designed to be an infantry skills development package. It was broken down into four phases. These consisted of:

- a. Troop Training
- b. Range Package
- c. R & R
- d. Final Exercise.

The Troop training phase allowed individual Troop management's to exercise all levels of command in whilst achieving a squadron objectives list. The beauty of this phase was the freedom given to each management team to train their men as they wished.

Troop training consisted of section and Troop level tactics, signals, optics training, CRTs, break contact drills and other patrolling skills. The Cyprus training area lent itself to the development and practice of beach landings and helicopter drills. This phase proved to be excellent development for the Range Package and Final Exercise.

Although not planned, 3 Troop began their contribution to OP FRESCO training early. They developed their firefighting abilities during a section attack when a smoke grenade set the vegetation alight. The troop, armed only with fire beaters, did their best to save the harbour area but their efforts were in vain as it burnt down along with a large amount of the surrounding area. The only part of the harbour area to survive the fire was the 'Thunder Box.'

The Range Package, consisting of a week's intensive training on the GPMG, 94mm ODT, 9mm Browning Pistol and everyone's individual SA80s/LSWs. The training started with the emphasis on individual skills including instinctive shooting, CQB and IBS ranges, working up to fire teams and section level attacks. The culmination of the ranges was a live section attack at night. Everyone found the range package both physically and mentally demanding, mainly due to the searing heat and the intensive training you would expect from doing live battle drills. The results of the whole range week proved to be excellent with all Troop members attaining a high level of personal and section skills and drills.

Each Troop finished the range package at Dhekelia and went straight on to a well-deserved 4 day R&R. There were a variety of activities on offer - sky diving, a cruise to Egypt and PADI diving. Some individuals were lucky enough to get places on a RAPs course.

The Squadron deployed on the 5 day final exercise on 1 Oct 2002. The exercise kicked off with a beach landing in Mk 1 and Mk3 Rigid Raiders. Once on the ground troops had to scale a 40 ft cliff face via a fixed rope. 3 Troop (Recce Tp) were on the ground 24 hrs before the Squadron arrived. Observation Posts (OPs) were inserted and Close Target Recces (CTRs) were carried out, gaining as much information as possible. The beach was secured for the Squadron insertion and after carrying out two Troop level assaults and a Troop ambush a rapid extraction by Rigid Raiders to an LSL was conducted under fire.

The second phase of the Final Exercise was saw the Squadron inserted by Wessex at night. 3 Troop provided our Recce Force collected intelligence through OPs and CTRs - this time on Paramali Village and for a period of 3 days. Each Troop was given a Troop level attack or assault to carry out before a "grizz" of a tab to the final harbour area. A Final FIBUA attack onto Paramali Village brought an outstanding exercise to an end.

Exercise Pegasus Drop (14-28 June 02)

LCpl B Tulett

9 Para Sqn Free Fall parachuting expedition this year, aka "PEGGY DROP", spent two weeks at Prostjov in the Czech Republic. Lt Toby Rider organised the expedition; hence he flew out there letting the rest of us drive! The autoroute suggested a total time of 10 hours - try 19! To keep the cost down to a minimum we drove out from 'The Shot' to the Czech Republic by minibus, which in itself was more of a ninja test than a journey - ten blokes with hangovers from a Squadron function is not good in a small minibus. We broke the journey into two stages spending a night at Frankfurt, where LCpl 'Muzza' Walker (being an ex-BAOR soldier), took it upon himself to introduce the blokes to local delights and culture (say no more)!

The Sqn already has a lot of experienced Skygods, in particular the AO - Capt Mick Coles, W02 (SSM) 'Fitzy' Fitzsimons (AFF Instructor) and Cpl 'Smudge' Smith (coach and all round sky junkie). Also LCpl Stewart Bean, Spr 'Fatty' Galloway and LCpl Thomas Walton, took part in the hope of making their way up the ladder in the Skydive world. In all there were eight AFF (Accelerated Freefall) students and eleven experienced jumpers. The first day was spent ground training where Cpl Smith and W02 (SSM) Fitzsimons took us through our paces. Due to their lack of co-ordination, the two officer students found this a lot harder than the blokes!

In all there are 8 levels to the course. This can be achieved in 8 jumps. However, only Spr 'Zippy' Humphries, Spr 'Boily' Boyle and myself managed to fly though the sky like true pros. The officers again picked up the rear with a huge total of 25 jumps between just the two of them! After nearly landing in the trees off the DZ (due to some poor canopy handling), Spr Humphries managed to make a complete recovery into being the course pet and sailed through the remainder of the course with ease. Mr John Home, now a civilian, but ex-OC of Joint Services Parachute Centre at Netheravon, and W02 SSM Tommy Trindall (currently Sergeant Major at Netheravon), were both able to help instruct. Unfortunately, John went back with a black eye and a sore nose after being punched by an over-enthusiastic Spr Boyle pulling his ripcord in freefall. All this was captured on video, which proved to be highly amusing. All of the students progressed well and by the end of the trip had achieved their BPA Category 8, including LCpl Ross Tuley who only just made it on the very last jump on the exercise. (LLLLloooooosseeerrrr).

The SSM, W02 Fitzsimons, being a keen Squadron military parachutist, suggested everyone do a military style exit from the aircraft on one of the jumps. Everyone wore green kit and carried out the correct drills as if jumping from a Hercules. When given the 'RED ON' and the 'GO,' the 'stick' of newly qualified skydivers exited the aircraft. This led to some amusing unorthodox aerobatics, which again was caught on camera. It was also a rush to take a backwards step off the tailgate off an M18 (Hip). Cpl Smith and W02 Trindall managed to film most of the skydives from some awesome camera angles and produced an excellent video, with everyone on the exercise receiving a copy.

In all 21 people completed 550 jumps and we achieved the following:

8 x Cat 8s: Capt Jarvis, Lt Rider, LCpl Graham, LCpl Tuley, LCpl Tulett, LCpl Walker, Spr Humphries and Spr Boyle.

1 x 100th Jump: LCpl Walton.

1 x Formation Skydive: LCpl Stewart.

The expedition was a huge success and it will add to the strength of the Squadron Skydiving Team, which now boasts some 30 qualified sport parachutists. Thanks again to our AFF instructors: SSM Fitzsimons, Mr John Horne and coaches W02 (SSM) Trindall, Cpl Smith and Capt Coles. We can certainly recommend Czech for cheap beer, lovely weather and beautiful women. We came, we jumped - we nailed it! Blue skies... **AIRBORNE.**

OP Fresco

The squadron is currently warned off to deploy on OP FRESCO in direct support of 3 PARA. We have been given two Temporary Fire Stations (TFS) to man in Hitchen and Hemel Hempstead. Those Cyprus Firefighting hours will come in handy!!!

News from the Branches

Aldershot

Betty Gray – Secretary

The summer has almost gone and no one has hardly noticed it's passing. Two big events have taken place during that time and both had the good fortune to miss the very wet weather that we have all experienced this year.

9 Squadron organised an Airborne Forces Weekend that will probably be the last one in Aldershot before they depart the old garrison. Those of us that had the good fortune to be able to attend can only stand back and say to the organisers what a wonderful effort it was. The weekend opened with ninety men of the Squadron jumping, in three sticks of thirty, from a C130 aircraft with Major Bob Rider leading the first stick on what was to be his final jump as OC the squadron. This was followed by a superb BBQ on the DZ with families and friends. Friday evening was the usual stag night that the Squadron are famous for. On Saturday the Squadron excelled itself by staging by far the best party ever held in the Squadron lines. Everything was very refined until the "witching hour" of midnight when Squadron tradition demanded that someone get up on a table to do the "Zulu Warrior." We, and the ladies, were not disappointed. On Sunday, a family's BBQ was laid on but by this time after a hard weekend of partying it was much more subdued. The cooks worked hard and produced another superb BBQ which was very much appreciated by all those members of the AEA fortunate enough to be there.



As this period of the year is BBQ time the branch held their annual affair with forty-eight people attending. The weather again was very good to us and warm enough for everyone to sit out in the sun and enjoy what has now become a permanent fixture in our calendar. It was good to see Bob Sullivan looking so well after his major surgery earlier in the year and be able to say hello to him before he and Nina dash off to Barbados yet again. Tommy Handley is almost back to full fitness and was able to attend with Audrey keeping an eagle eye on him. We also had three visitors. Bob and Sheila Prosser down from Gods own county of Yorkshire and Jim Crozier over from Australia. I'm sure they enjoyed their visit to us as much as we enjoyed seeing them.

Birmingham Branch

Nev Collins – Secretary

The following members and their respective partners, Alan Brough, Roger Howies, Bunny Brown, Tom Smith, Ozzie Holdsworth and Nev Collins, attended a Queen's Jubilee Dinner hosted by the Monks Path Rotary Club in early June. This was a resplendent formal occasion in which we were well fed, watered and superbly entertained. He's finally taken the plunge - stalwart member Ozzie Holdsworth finally plucked up the courage and married Sue on the 12 July. This event was followed the following day by a church blessing, which the branch members attended in force. Following the service a garden party with a sumptuous banquet dinner and evening entertainment culminated the day's events. The dinner and evening buffet was well supervised by our master chef Chris Green. The Master of Ceremony for the evening was Nev Collins who acted with all decorum until succumbing to the demon soft drink later in the proceedings.

An invitation to provide a team for the SA80 rifle shoot on 29 July was quickly ceased upon by the cream of our shooting prowess members Larry Perry, Roy Hicks and Roger Howies. This was a Joint Services & Regimental Association event and was hosted by the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. Teams representing the RRF and the Staffordshire regiment provided stiff opposition on the day, and although our branch representatives did not actually display their prizes to us, we understand that they equipped themselves with excellence and consumed their 'prize' in situ. Our thanks are extended to Dave Clark who pulled all the right strings to achieve the invitation to participate.

On a sad note, Roger Howies, Mac Nash, Dave Hill and Nev Collins undertook the duty as pallbearers at the funeral of Alfred W. Brough; father of Alan Brough at St Peters church (Dorsington) on 15 July. Alfred was a former SNCO of the Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders. Sincere condolences from the members of the branch were passed to Alan and his family.



A kind invitation and subsequent acceptance to a late summer croquet afternoon and high tea was received from Lord & Lady Areley Kings, whose country seat is in Worcester; and has an 11 bedroom cottage in Hampton in Arden (my how the other half live!) Tom Smith, who, having beaten off stiff opposition, received the winner's trophy, and upheld the honour of the branch in the croquet competition.

Our senior members Bob Jones and Tom Carpenter attended the 1st Para Sqn Reunion on 28/29 September at Donington. This event has been held each year since 1946. Bob Jones accompanied by his wife Violet, George Barrett and Tom Carpenter were supported by Kevin Lamberth, who carried the Arnhem Veterans standard, and our branch secretary Bunny Brown, who carried the Airborne Engineers Association standard during the parade and march from the Red Cow pub to the Donington village church. A brief report recorded, superb weather, excellent food and drink and delightful company.

Congratulations to Rip Kirby who celebrated his 70th birthday at the Kingstanding Royal British Legion on 5th October-well done mate.

Medical update on our Northern member Bud Oldfield reports that he has received a hip replacement, and we now wonder if a new hip flask has been added to his Christmas list!

From the members of the Birmingham branch may we wish A Very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year to all branches and Association members and to our hard worked, tolerant, patient - *don't miss the deadline*-editor, Dave Rutter.

Chatham Branch

Eric Blenkinsop

Having missed the July deadline for issue No. 7 of the Journal, I am playing catch up, so a few belated thanks from the Chatham branch. Firstly to the then chairman Bob Prosser and the executive committee for the presentation of the Jubilee scroll to all members, not forgetting 'Big' Tom Thornton, the Yorkshire scribe for his unstinting efforts in personalising them all.

Next t, the Yorkshire branch for their ingenuity and the hospitality in putting on the Elvington Air Museum "Airborne Forces Weekend." It had been a tremendous achievement by all concerned in establishing a permanent AEA landmark in the Elvington Air Museum. We in Chatham like to think that we have made a small contribution to the Elvington Museum, so thank you Jim McCartney and Nick Gibson for arranging for the manufacture of the Memorial Plaque by 1 RSME. Thank you also Chairman Arthur for the transportation of the plaque to Yorkshire at the risk of a hernia!

The branch was well presented at the museum and Peggy Neave was delighted with the collage dedicated to her late husband Capt Les MM. She intends to be there next year with one or more of her sons.

Attendance at the 6th Airborne Division annual dinner held at the Victory Club included two of our WWII veterans; Ron Gibson and Jim Rogers together with several branch members and their ladies. For future reunions at the Union Jack Club the reigns have been taken up by our own secretary Ron Gibson, until, like all old soldiers it just fades away.

Double Hills - The branch was well represented and the occasion gave them the opportunity to meet up with several of the SW branch members. Joy of joys, the weather was good and the service took place at its best location, 'On the Hill.' Although it was relatively low key after last year, there were some 12 to 14 standards on parade and a 'march past' took place. As always, the Association Double Hills representative, Jan Chambers was in attendance accompanied by her son and daughter. The get together afterwards in the village hall with tea and cakes rounded off the day very nicely. It brought back poignant memories of the Welcome Clubs, which flourished in towns and villages throughout Britain during the war. It was as always, a most memorable day.

Blackpool - Like the Big Dipper the venue has its highs and lows, but as always the big high at the Saturday evening festival dinner more than compensated for the little lows along the way. In reunion terms it was tremendous that some members were still meeting up for the first time in 50 years - 3 AB Sqn members Bill Perry and Ben Tavener with Lew Shaw and Sid Warrilow - 9 Sqn 3 Troop in the Canal Zone, our Bob Woolley and John O'Connor with Paddy Fahey and Joe Waugh. Thanks to Pam Seaman (Blue) Harold Padfield had a most memorable 81st birthday party with a magnificent cake. Thanks you Ron Gibson for your sterling efforts of the raffle, which made a few bob for our meagre branch funds. It is a healthy sign that so many of our members were able to participate in the Association activities.

We wish all Association members and their families a Merry Xmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year and a Joyful 2003.

Edinburgh Branch

Mick Walker

We decided to be proactive over the REA matter and our Dougie Archibald secured an invitation from the local Edinburgh Branch to an indoor games night. It came, as something of a surprise to us that none of the REA guys knew anything about us possibly coming under their wing! That did not detract from a good night and they were very hospitable and allowed your correspondent to win 2 of the 3 events. This embarrassed Kim Panton as he felt we were not being very courteous guests and deliberately "threw" the final of the third event - the darts. At the time of writing we have just returned from the Blackpool AGM. Unfortunately Brian McKean, our Chairman, could not attend. His excuse takes some beating - he was sailing in the Mediterranean with an all-female crew!

Jock Donaldson is currently visiting Australia where he hopes to link up with our 4 Antipodean Branch members. He has been instructed to collect their Branch subs and Journal dues.

We are presently looking forward to our AGM in November and then joining our friends in the PRA for their Xmas dance, which has become a feature in our social calendar. The former will hopefully give us the opportunity to meet up with Ian MacIntyre again. Ian was one of those who responded to our advert on a website and turned up for his first meeting. Unfortunately he got the date, time and venue right - 1300hrs on the third Sunday of the month at the RBL - but ignored the fact that we meet only on alternate months and found an empty hall! You can't blame him - after all he is a Glaswegian and a Clyde supporter.

South West Branch

Bob Runacres - Branch Secretary



Our August meeting was held in the grounds of John Hooper's house in Monmouth overlooking the River Monnow. We had to keep it short because we were competing for airtime with the Monmouth town band playing just across the valley at the town carnival, but that gave us more time for the superb lunch that John and his lovely wife had organised for us.

Really welcome visitors from Yorkshire at the lunch were Tom Thornton and Bob Prosser, and of course as usual, the laughs and tales came spilling out as is normal at these times. To Bob Prosser, the South West Branch would like to say how very much indeed that all the thousands of hours of hard work that you have put in during your tour as Chairman are so very much appreciated. As John Hooper said so succinctly, you may now bask in the glory of a job not only done well but also done brilliantly.

L to R: sitting: Bob Runacres, John Hooper, Terry Maxwell middle row: Tom Brinkman, Charlie Willbourne, Tom Thornton, Stan Jones - rear row: David Milner, Alan Mayfield, Cyril Halett, Bert Gregory, Ray Richards, Bob Prosser, Merv Potter, Shelia Prosser and hiding behind the post- David Brooks (late on parade!)

And talking of jobs well done, praise must go to the committee that organised the Blackpool weekend. Everyone that I talked to thought so too. So well done lads and thanks for a great weekend. Having breakfasted on the Sunday morning with Sean McCargo and listened to a tiny sample of his adventures around the world, as we were leaving the dining room I remarked how great it was to be in the company of such a brotherhood. Sean's remark to me, and he meant every word, "It's priceless." Considering that he had flown in from his work at Chernobyl in Russia for just 36 hours to attend you can see why.

The other function of note in this neck of the woods was the well-attended Double Hills Memorial Service in September, which concluded with a march past. We were blessed, for a change, this year with a dry sunny day, which helped when the vicar gave us his blessing too. It was refreshing to see how far some had travelled to be in attendance.

We are currently planning a late Christmas Dinner in January. This will hopefully give one of our most stalwart 'Members,' Yvonne, wife of Tom Brinkman; time to recover from a major operation planned for November. Without Yvonne's consistent help in the background, selling raffle tickets at our branch meetings, our funds would not be anywhere near as healthy as they are. Good luck Yvonne, and get well soon.

Thanks go to Mike Newton for his sterling work as our outgoing chairman and our congratulations and best wishes go to Tom Brinkman not only in his new role as branch chairman, but also in being voted as the Association Vice President at the October AGM.

Yorkshire Branch

Bill Rudd

Well Dave here we go again, no reminders required this time? It goes without saying, that the highlight during the last period was our Blackpool Reunion. The feedback from the many members I spoke to was, "What an excellent weekend." Our membership secretary can vouch for that, well done Chris for showing the way? Moggie found difficulty in keeping up with you!

It is quite obvious to all of us, I hope, that Mike Holdsworth and his band of volunteers, especially Sue his wife did a sterling job with the organisation, and deserve a big thank you from all attending. A tremendous weekend among many friends!

What's happening in the Yorkshire Branch, not a lot? Well we have our Xmas Dinner planned for Saturday 14th at the Unicorn Hotel Ripon; this will take the form of a full Xmas lunch with wines, cost £15 per person. Hopefully accommodation will be available in Barracks for those wishing to stay the night. This will be followed by our Annual Dinner on Saturday 8th February in the WO's & Sgt's Mess by kind permission of our resident RSM Paul Eldred (Ex 9). This has now become a very popular event on the yearly calendar, cost £15, which includes 5-course meal, wines, entertainment and dancing till late. My advice is to book early, especially to all our friends outside the Branch; the rumour is that the Birmingham Branch is coming in a 40-seater coach? Again Barrack accommodation will hopefully will be available, booking forms from me on 01423 536191.

Over the last year our venue for our meetings has become a little difficult, for many reasons, and to this end we are planning for the future. We have kindly been offered the use of Queen Elizabeth Barracks Strensall York, meetings will be held the Sgt's Mess and accommodation will be made available for members wishing to stay the night. A final decision will be taken at our meeting in November.

On the welfare front it was nice to see Big Tom Thornton discharged from hospital, and fully recovered, Well done Bud Oldfield, who had hip replacement recently and was seen running round Blackpool? Lastly Dave Goodfellow who had to cancel his Blackpool trip due to an operation for gallstones, poor Ginge lost his deposit, but is now on the mend, Richard certainly was a little lonely without you Dave?

We now look forward to the Feb 03 General Meeting in Aldershot when hopefully we can finalise the issue of the Postal Vote and get the voting form out to all members. The Yorkshire Branch would like to take this opportunity to send our festive greetings to all members of the Association for a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year.

Wales 2003- Warning Order

Chris O'Donovan

Wales is going to happen again next year. Indefatigable is booked for the weekend of 16th - 18th May. Lofty Bates is organising golf, Tony Manley the scoff and Marion Crosbie light duties.

Most of the married rooms are booked up but if you want to go on the first refusal list apply now. Communication is easiest and cheapest by e-mail. My address is codonovn@tcd.ie

Activities look like being hill walking at various levels of ability, golf, swimming, Welsh language karaoke, Greek dancing and 'orrible young people's drink swallowing.

Pete Bates will be organising two golf outings in the vicinity, I presume one would need a bag of golf bats to do that but basically I haven't got a clue, if you're interested get further details from Peter. Marion, ably assisted by Dennis Healey has two good easy walking routes planned.

Moving house?

If you're due to move locations, don't forget to forward me (editor) your change of address!

Sqn Rugby Team -1964

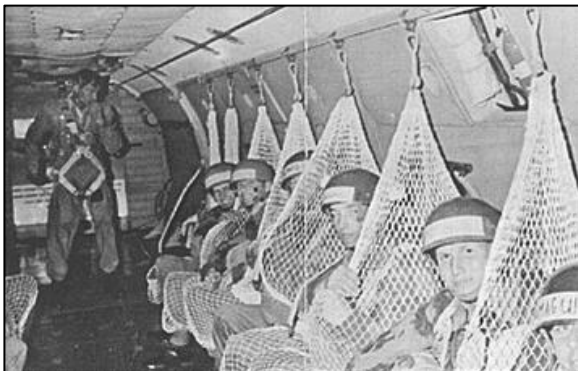
Standing: Sacu-Sacu, Mick Qarikau, Taff Lougher, Capt Alex Wright, Harry Lockwood, Laqeretabua (Atu), Henry Morgan & Mick Fisher
 Kneeling: Capt Mike Sims, Mick Prime, Capt JJJ Thompson, Jock Wallace, Capt Gerry Taggart, Taff Reece & Capt Roger Christie



**Eric Richards as Capt
 Johnny Goddards driver
 Malta Bks 1950**



**3 Troop deploy into the Libyan desert having received
 instructions on how to use the sun compass from Johnny (QM)
 Humphries OBE (1968)**



**2nd from the right - Lofty Marshall aboard an Argosy during his
 Abingdon qualifying jumps**



**3 Troop - Handa Island 1967
 Capt David Walker, Dave Goodfellow, ?, Pete Thorpe, Harry
 Huggins, ?, Mick Qarikau**

Membership Secretary

Chris Chambers

Since the August edition of the Journal, a further 11 members have joined our Association. They are as follows:

Member	Units Served	Dates of Service
Frank Ryan	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1975-1981
Bryn Hitchins	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1954-1957
Peter Breckenridge	9 Para San RE	1994-still serving
Jim Queen	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1976-1978
George Heard	9 Indep AB San / 9 Indep Para San RE	1952-1956
Richard Ray	9 Para Sqn RE	1981-84/-1987-89
Gordon Page	131 Indep Para Sqn RE	1959-1972
Henry (Robin) Morgan	9 Indep Para Sqn /131 Indep Para Sqn RE	1964-76/1978-80
David Clark	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1965-1968
Christopher Shillito	131 Indep Para Sqn/131 Indep Cdo Sqn	1968-still serving
David Catchpole	131 Indep Para Sqn/131 Indep Cdo Sqn	1968/78- 1985/00

Gentlemen, welcome to the "Airborne Engineers Association"

Happy Landings,

Chris

Association Shop

Description	Price	Post & Packing (UK Post Rate)
Association Ties (Pegasus logo)	£12.50	£1.00
Association Blazer Badges	£13.00	£1.00
Association Jumpers (sizes 38-48) Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo embroidered 'Airborne Engineers'	£24.00	£3.10
Association Sweatshirts Maroon or blue logo - Med/Lge or XLge	£16.00	£3.10
Association Polo Shirts - Fred Perry Style Maroon or blue logo Medium/Large or XLarge	£15.00	£2.50
Association T Shirts - Maroon only - Large or extra-large only	£9.00	£1.80
Association Shields	£17.50	£3.30
A Memoir of 9 Para Son RE in the Falklands Campaign 1982 by Maj C.M. Davies MBE (now Colonel)	£12.00	£2.10
Anniversary Ties (silk with Wings & Pegasus logo)	£15.00	£1.00
Christmas Cards (pack of 6) Association badge on cover	£3.25	£1.00
Association Cuff Links (slightly smaller than the lapel badge)	£8.50	£1.60
The Shiny 9th (1939-1945) by Patrick Pronk The history of 9 Field Company (Airborne)	£9.00	£1.80
The 9th (1787-1960) by the late Tom Purves (Special offer while stocks last)	£10.00	£3.80

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

Please note my address when submitting your orders:



My thanks for your continued support,

Jan

Subscription Payment- Standing Order

Editor

A vote of thanks is extended to all members who have now opted to pay their Journal subscription by Standing Order. It not only takes the worry out of having to remember to post your annual fee; but more importantly, it saves me a considerable amount of time sending out reminders, and in some cases 'final reminders.'

I have received many more applications for Standing Order mandates and some of you may be wondering why you have not received one. There are two possible explanations. Firstly, if your individual Journal account is in credit you will need to reapply when you next receive a 'reminder.' I need to keep an up to date record of exactly who is paying by Standing Order so that Dick Brown (Association Treasurer) can check against the bank statements of who has actually paid.

Secondly, some members applied too late for the mandate to be handed in to their bank by 15th October. This date is fixed in order that payments are received and listed on the AEA November bank statement.

I sincerely hope this now clarifies the matter, but if you are in any way concerned, please feel free to call or e-mail me with your query, ((my address etc. is published on page 1)

Finally, many thanks to our overseas members for responding to my plea for Journal material - and to George Jones (Australia) -a professional proof reader – I hope you don't find too many errors in this edition. It was great to meet you at Blackpool George.

Blackpool Reunion

Sleeping is for wimps!

Sweet dreams Tony.



On the Battlefield

Liam Longmate, 11 year old grandson of Brian Oldfield

The bloody battlefield smoky and bare,
Soldiers in their trenches very aware
The dirty flooded ground,
With dead bodies scattered around
Where all the guns are firing it's a deafening sound.

Tall and pure red the poppy grows,
As it sways in the wind to and fro
The blue skies appear over her crimson head
Rows upon rows the poppies cover the dead

Joe Galea



Friends and colleagues of Joe Galea will be pleased to see that Joe will be forever "Airborne"
