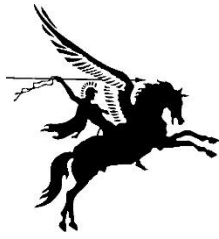




# THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



The following articles were originally published in the printed version of the Journal in August 2004, Issue No.13



# The Airborne Engineer

August 2004, Issue No. 13

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**Publication Deadline - December 2004 Edition**

Members submitting material for publication in the December 2004 edition of the Journal, are advised that the closing date will be Saturday 6th November. Articles received after this date will not be published until the April 2005 edition.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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## Association Chairman's Address

Bunny Brown

Dear Members,

It is at this time of year that thoughts go towards the AGM and Reunion. Bookings are coming in fast and furious (joking) so, I must remind you that all bookings must be in by the second week of September. Any bookings after that date will have to be refused as the hotel will have released all of the surplus rooms for other outside bookings. May I ask once again for a selection of donated raffle prizes. Mick Humphries has again volunteered his services to run the raffle. He did a terrific job last year raising funds for our Association, but requires your generosity to fulfil his task.

Also on the subject of the AGM our belaboured Secretary, Ray Coleman, has decided to stand down at this year's AGM. A worthy replacement is sorely needed - volunteers please contact Ray.

Sincere thanks are extended to Ray for running the biannual football draw. He manages to raise a great deal of money that goes to very good causes. This year the bulk of what has been raised will go to the Royal Engineers Museum in Chatham to provide a dedicated exhibit to Lt Col John Rock and Airborne Engineers. A further grant will go to the Double Hills Fund for their 60th Commemoration service.

We are also looking for an Assistant Treasurer. Major Dick Brown is still a serving officer and has to spend long periods abroad, so a volunteer to run the show whilst he is away would be a great help.

The following inclusions are copies of the text from letters exchanged between the Airborne Engineers Association and The Chief Royal Engineer, Lieutenant General K. O'Donoghue, CBE.

To: Lieutenant General K O'Donoghue, CBE

The Chief Royal Engineer

10 May 2004

Dear Sir,

At a recent meeting of the Airborne Engineers Association concern was raised regarding the possibility that the result of the recent 'postal vote' taken within this Association not to affiliate to the Royal Engineers Association has been misconstrued. Regrettably, it appears some senior officers of the 'Sapper' fraternity have the mistaken opinion that this Association is anti-Royal Engineer.

We wish to confirm sir, most sincerely, the Airborne Engineers Association and every member's total allegiance to the 'Corps Brotherhood.' The decision to remain autonomous and not become a branch of the Royal Engineers Association at this time in no way affects our pride in, or our unreserved loyalty to the Corps of Royal Engineers.

Finally, may I on behalf of all members of the Airborne Engineers Association congratulate you on your appointment as Chief Royal Engineer.

And the reply

To: Mr B Brown

Chairman

Airborne Engineers Association

01 June 2004

Dear Mr. Brown,

Very many thanks for your kind letter of congratulations on my appointment as Chief Royal Engineer. It is a huge honour and I look forward to the next 5 years with great enthusiasm.

Thank you also for your reassurances about the Airborne Engineers Association. I had not perceived there to be an issue.

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## AGM/Reunion Weekend – Coventry

29 October -1 November 2004

If you have not already booked your accommodation for the reunion weekend please be aware that the hotel management will not hold on to the surplus rooms after 2nd week in September. Now is the time to forward your booking application.

If you've lost or misplaced your booking form; please contact the editor [REDACTED] or e-mail [REDACTED] for a replacement. Please don't leave it until the last minute or you may miss out on a great weekend.

---

## AEA Golf Tournament

The 'Fergie' Semple Memorial Trophy

Following the AGM at Coventry this year there shall be a golf competition for the above trophy to be held at a local golf course. The trophy has been purchased from a kind donation made by Frank Menzies-Hearn who had the honour of 'piping' at Brig Fergie's funeral. Frank has donated his piping fee for this purpose.

The format for the competition shall be:-

Venue: Whitefields Golf Club, Rugby

Competition: Stableford

Handicap: % Club H/Cap max 18 (proof of H/C if possible)

Timings: 1230 hours Coffee & bacon sandwich in the Club house  
1300 hours First tee off

Players: Maximum 16 (first come fill the places)

Prizes: Best Stableford , the Fergie Semple Cup  
Best Gross score (TBA)  
Longest Drive (TBA)  
Nearest the Pin (TBA)

Cost: £5- 00

You have a choice, go shopping with the good lady or enjoy a game of golf. If you prefer the latter, contact Bob (Fergie) Ferguson on [REDACTED] to register your entry

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## Rogues Gallery



A very young Ernie Bugdale



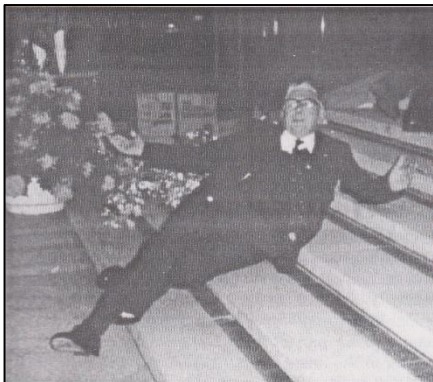
Louis Gallagher, Harry Lockwood, Paddy Boyce, Tony Manley, George Dunn, John Barrie & Bob Ferguson (Twickenham May 2004)



Henry Morgan & Pete Kershaw  
QMSI Course April 1979



2 Troop on Exercise 1950s - ?, Jock Donald, ?, Charlie Huggins, Jock (Glasgow), Sgt Bert Stevenson, Harry Evans, ?, Mitch Mitchell



Jack Hobbs (before and after) enjoying an evening out during an Arnhem reunion. Nice one Jack!



## Result of the European Football Draw

Ray Coleman

May I thank all those who responded so generously and supported our Associations appeal to raise funds to finance the Airborne Engineers exhibition in the RE Museum at Chatham.

We sold £3,953 worth of tickets and after deductions for postage, printing and prizes we made a profit of £2,831.

To date the proceeds have been allocated as follows:

The Airborne Engineer (John Rock) Exhibition        £2,000

The Double Hills 60th Memorial Anniversary        £ 500

The Memorial Garden to Suez veterans at Alrewas    £ 100

The remaining £231 is available to fund further worthwhile projects, which illustrate or record Airborne Engineer accomplishments.

The draw was conducted by Ray Coleman and made by Norman Penny, Phil Taverner, Reg Parsons and Tommy Handley. All are members of the Airborne Engineers Association.

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| PORTUGAL       | Chris Lunn, Leeds, Yorkshire             |
| GREECE         | John Wall, Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear      |
| SPAIN          | J. Hollings, Gosport, Hampshire          |
| RUSSIA         | B. H. A. Hooper, Wolverhampton, Midlands |
| SWITZERLAND    | G. Davies, South Kirby, Yorkshire        |
| CROATIA        | Derek Taylor, Tadley Green, Hampshire    |
| ENGLAND        | Steve Smith, Thetford, Suffolk           |
| FRANCE         | E. Gurry, East Clacton, Essex            |
| DENMARK        | Jack Thompson, Alderney, Channel Islands |
| ITALY          | Tom Carpenter, Birmingham, Midlands      |
| SWEDEN         | Tony Rutledge, Gravesend, Kent           |
| BULGARIA       | Sean Chambers, Aldershot, Hampshire      |
| GERMANY        | Bill Doherty, Fareham, Hampshire         |
| NETHERLANDS    | Sandra Reid, Edinburgh, Scotland         |
| CZECH REPUBLIC | Sylvie Blance, Helmsdale, Sutherland     |
| LATVIA         | John Thompson, Aldershot, Hampshire      |

Congratulations are extended to individuals who drew the winning and runner up teams, and to those who drew the other teams of the competition. We hope you enjoy spending your winnings.

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## The John Rock Airborne Engineer Display

at the Corps of Royal Engineers Museum – Chatham

Eric Blenkinsop

Calling all members, but in particular World War 2 veterans. In order to ensure that we are able to put on the best possible display we do require lots of authentic VJ\N2 Airborne Engineer artefacts in the form of equipment, clothing, weaponry, battle plans, campaign newsletters, such as Holdfast, Pegasus etc. We will have several cabinets to fill.

It is appreciated that much of this memorabilia is looked upon as family heirloom material and once gifted to the museum it would not be recoverable.

But it is important that we do put the Airborne Engineer well and truly on the map in the Corps Museum. This will probably be the last real opportunity for us to achieve this aim so please be generous in your response. We will collect where necessary.

Contacts : Nick Gibson [REDACTED] or Eric Blenkinsop [REDACTED]

You may rest assure that all donated material will be passed direct to the Curator at the RE Museum and receipts will be obtained if requested.

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## Normandy

by Leslie Thomas

*Ed: The following article is published by kind permission of the author Leslie Thomas. He had been commissioned by the 'Mail on Sunday' for their planned D-Day Supplement 6th June 2004. However due to former President Reagan's death on 5th June, the entire supplement was superseded by 6 pages on the deceased President. This article was forwarded by the authors cousin, Major (retd) Alan Graham.*

These days skylarks sing above the inland fields, a man reads a newspaper, sitting on a chair outside his kitchen door, shouting boys play football in a school playground overlooking the sea - and Omaha Beach, miles and miles of it, lies in sunlit silence, remote and empty.

From its landward edge, almost at its centre, I looked west then east, to where distance dissolves into a smudge. There was nobody; not a person, not a child building a sand castle, not a deckchair, not a windbreak, not even a footprint in the sugar brown sand. The boatless sea was shining and flat, mumbling as it came in. There was scarcely a gull.

Others were sitting on the low rocks with me; a group had set up a picnic table on the grass and were playing at boule, a few cars were in the car park and a line of teenagers sat munching and staring out to sea. Two elderly walkers paused, surveyed the flat sand, and walked on as though its silence were only to be expected.

Omaha was like a brightly lit but vacant stage, a place which had witnessed a triumphant tragedy. Sixty years ago it was strewn with soldiers, two thousand of them dead, and all the wreckage of an invasion undertaken in a storm and overtaken by one. To walk only a hundred yards inland, up through the summery lane that leads to the village of Colleville-sur-Mer is to know a little of what it must have been like for those men who survived the beach to push forward into the small irregular hills full of guns and enemies.

Now all that remains is to look at the vast sand and think about what happened. The teenagers seemed to feel the same for they scarcely spoke, just munched. After sixty years it's about all you can do.

For me going to Normandy had been easy. The ferry from Portsmouth nosed over a sea as flat and grey as tarmac in three and a half hours. In those times, now history, some of the soldiers had been rolling out there for two days in ships full of the stench of frying bacon, eggs and sausages, in the worse June weather for eighty years, so seasick they could not wait to set on dry land - until they got there. I looked towards the coast they had seen, the long brown sands, the shadowy rising land behind them. I counted the spires of the four churches of Ouistreham which, with the lighthouse, were the marker points for the two men in a midget submarine, submerged for most of a day and a night, who then surfaced to set a green seaward-facing Deacon, a central navigation point for the six thousand vessels of the invasion fleet behind them. After all the millions spent on making ready and embarking this, the greatest wartime operation in history, the submarine men, lining up the churches and the lighthouse made their faultless calculations with a taut piece of string.

Ouistreham sits astride the River Orne on the extreme eastern flank of the D-Day beaches, Sword, Juno, Gold, set against each other like books on a shelf, to be assailed by the British and the Canadians, and then a gap to the American landing places at Omaha and Utah almost fifty miles away. Along the entire coast the weather remained appalling.

But now sixty years on, Ouistreham was blinking in sunshine, shaking itself ready for a new seaside season. Here is the pepper pot watchtower, built heftily by the occupying Germans, which controlled their guns facing the easternmost beaches. It had a steel door and it took the Royal Engineers four hours to explode it open, although they had tried knocking politely. The occupants came out and trotted off, no doubt gratefully, to spend the rest of the war in the safety of a prison camp in Britain while the invaders pushed forward into smoke, danger and, for some, death. It was a good time to become a prisoner. This immovable object is now doing its bit for Normandy tourism, which the French are handling delicately. True there are decorated D-Day tins of biscuits and chocolates, specially bottled Calvados and coloured books telling the invasion story - including a German edition called "Tag X." On the night of June 5th, there will be fireworks along the whole coast. And why not? The original firework display was something you were lucky to survive. In the city of Caen alone three thousand civilians did not.

There is a famous photograph of Canadian infantry jumping ashore on Juno Beach, the man in the foreground studiously bespectacled and the others carrying bicycles. They had firmly expected to pedal to Caen that morning. It took a little longer, six weeks.

Today it is only a few brisk minutes on the motorway (pausing to purchase a bargain consignment of champagne en route). Taking the old road, within eight kilometres, at Benouville you come to one of the battle's enduring sights - Pegasus Bridge. Actually it is not Pegasus Bridge you come across today, for the bridge has been replaced and now lies stranded in the grounds of the museum, but Arlette Gondree and her famous cafe. It is a good place for lunch and to hear stories. Madam Gondree herself remains smart and chic and does not mind repeating the adventure she has related a thousand times. She was four years old when the British glider men landed their silent machines on the far side of the bridge over the Orne. It was essential they secured it and the first stop was the house of Arlette's parents. "We were in this very room" she said looking around at the piled souvenirs and relics, including one steel helmet holed twice when a bullet both entered and exited.

"There were soldiers in the garden and we thought they were German. My father listened at the window and then smiled and said: "Anglais." Over the cafe door today is a sign, which says: "English Spoken."

Thus was the first house liberated in France, six hours before the beach landings began. It was not without cost. Lt. Den Brotheridge was shot dead as he led his men across the bridge and his grave is now in the quiet of the local churchyard, D-Day's first casualty.

Two men with straight backs and slanted red berets were outside in the sun. Bill le Cheminant and Reg Cherry, both in their eighties, both from Guernsey, had come to revisit the scene. "We did what we had been trained to do," said Bill. "It did not seem so special at the time. After the war I went back to Guernsey to grow freesias."

"We're the last two left," said Reg.

A bobbing crocodile of children came over the bridge. They were from the local school at Benouville. Teacher, Anne Godderidge said: "We tell our pupils about the war and the invasion so that they know they can live free now because of the soldiers who came then.

I wish she could have told Bill and Reg but they had gone. Probably for a pint.

Bordered by the invasion beaches the Normandy countryside is green and agreeable, crops stretching level to the horizon where a red roofed farm or an upstanding steeple is sketched against the sky. There are small intersecting hills and thoughtful rivers and the Calvados apple orchards. For years after the battles men ploughing often turned up relics, guns and ammunition, grenades, first aid packs and water bottles. They still find them occasionally. They stock the many town museums.

Every Saturday the farm produce decorates the market stalls between the lime trees in Bayeux, a town taken by the British on the day after the landings, with little more damage than a few broken windows. Its illustrious tapestry, the first strip cartoon, was taken to safe keeping during the war but it is back now, a seventy metre long story of an amphibious invasion nine centuries before the one now being remembered.

Bayeux does have a permanent, and silent, memory, however - the British War Cemetery, where four thousand of our troops are, laid alongside about three hundred German soldiers. Death has its own hospitality. Relatives have added their own inscriptions to the graves: "Our lad at rest."

There are eleven thousand Americans below the battalions of white stones overlooking Omaha, the shock scene at the beginning of the film "Saving Private Ryan." The two brothers of the real-life Private Ryan are buried there.

There are almost as many cemeteries as museums in Normandy. In one, no bigger than a well-tended suburban garden, are forty-six graves of British soldiers who died in the fighting for the small town of Tilly-sur-Seulles, which in a matter of a few summer days changed hands twenty-three times. The burial place is called Jerusalem, after a tiny hamlet, and I sought out the grave of Private Jack Banks of the Durham Light Infantry. He was the son of Jack and Fanny Banks of Darwen, Lancashire, and he must have concealed his true age, because he was sixteen when he died. The inscription on the headstone, below his army number - 14429036 - is from his mother and father: "God will tell why, some day, He broke our hearts"

It is a place to touch anyone. Ringed by trees and bright with birds and flowers there is a huge and ancient barn in the next field. A cock was crowing.

And, the equality of death again: lying six feet away from the Lancashire lad is Major Sir Robert Dalrymple Arbuthnot, Ninth Queens Royal Lancers, son of Brigadier General Sir Dalrymple Arbuthnot, CMG DSO, Fifth Baronet and Alice Maud Arbuthnot of Ludlow, Shropshire. He had been to Cambridge University where he gained a Master of Arts degree. He was 24.

No more than a lane in places the old French road D514 runs the almost length of the invasion coast. Each town and village has its memories and some scars remain. At Arromanches the scars are indelible, the wreckage of Mulberry, the floating jigsaw harbour, forever visible. On the seafront, though, is a cheery carousel, with plunging horses and pink pigs. It has been a fixture since long before Mulberry - established 1900.

I know two men who took their part in the world's most famous battle - my cousin Alan Graham, eighty this month, who was still nineteen when he found himself dangling dangerously below a parachute. When asked if he landed on D-Day, he answers briefly: "The night before."

The other man is Rear Admiral 'Teddy' Gueritz, who was once my neighbour in Salisbury. He is a gentle, friendly, man, exuding little of the authority he needed as the senior beach-master on Sword Beach. "Directing traffic" is his summing up. Under fire, of course. Kenneth More, with bulldog, played him in the film: "The Longest Day" (a title apparently owed to a German general).

There will be many retold stories when the veterans go back. The Hampshire who marched by their own front doors as they headed for the troopships in Southampton and still recall the courageous young girl who brought buckets of drinking water to them when they were pinned down by enemy fire.

Others will doubtless tell of the woman, who claimed to be English ("The Germans have never bothered me") who berated the invaders for trampling on her flower beds. And the French civilians who came to the beachhead wearing Red Cross arm bands, trying to help, one resplendent in a fireman's brass helmet.

At St. Mere-Eglise the effigy of U.S. Private John Steele win remain suspended by its parachute from the church tower. It has been hanging up there for years and the real John Steele is now dead. "I was only up there two hours," he used to say. "And that was long enough."

Almost at the end of the D.514 is Pointe du Hoc famed for the guts of the U.S. Rangers who scaled the cliffs under withering fire to overcome it only to find that the heavy guns they expected to find there had been secreted away. They found them in a wood and blew them up anyway. It is still a devastated landscape, full of craters and wrecked concrete.

From there I went back in the evening to Omaha Beach. The last four-ball on the Omaha Beach Golf course was on the eighteenth, the shore-side car park was empty. So, still, was the beach. There seemed no one but me even to watch its emptiness now. The sunset was streaking the miles of sand; the waves came in timidly, a solitary seabird piped.

Along the path came an American couple. They were from Ohio and his grandfather had fought through Normandy. We took in the scene together. "It sure looks peaceful now," the woman observed.

"It does," he said. "Real peaceful."

I could not escape the thought that was the object of the whole gigantic sacrifice. Peace. It's a shame we let them down.

Arrow has just published the paperback edition of "Waiting For The Day," the D-Day novel by Leslie Thomas. Arrow has just reissued "The Magic Army" by Leslie Thomas, also.

---

## That Quarry

Harry Barnsley

Bob Sullivan's reference to the quarry in his article in the April 2004 issue of our journal was of great interest to me because, to pinch a phrase from the repertoire of Max Boyce, "I WAS THERE". I still don't know where that quarry is, but I do remember patrolling around the top of it in case of infiltration by the enemy at night when a fellow Welshman and myself had the fright of our lives.

It was about midnight when we first heard it; it was a metallic rattle occurring at irregular intervals, which convinced us that there was more than one of the enemy crawling towards us. So we flattened ourselves on the ground as the noise got nearer, and by this time my stomach was churning like a cement mixer and my companion was in the same state, until finally the ENEMY came into view - a donkey dragging a tethering chain and gorging itself on the deep grass! I could have comfortably shot the bloody thing but for the fact that had I done so it would have brought the whole squadron charging up there, and life would never be the same for me.

I too remember the bombing attack, which resulted in quite a few casualties, many caused by flying rock. Maybe Bob can remember who was the officer who dived into the latrine for cover and came out with a rather overpowering pong, which caused the Bosch to retreat for half a mile.

I wonder how many of 3 Para Squadron can remember us going into a kind of brickyard where terracotta roof tiles were being made, there were stacks of them in the yard maturing. We were just making ourselves at home when Jerry started mortaring us, causing those tiles to fly everywhere.

And the time we were in a cement works in Colobelles when we and everything else were covered in a thick layer of cement dust.

I wonder how many of our squadron members can remember Mr Roseveare liberating a two-seater OPAL coupe when we entered Germany and had reached Wisma, which, on our withdrawal back to the UK I drove in convoy back across and down to the outskirts of Calais.

---

## Right to reply to Poncho's Article

Bill Rudd

As Vice President and Chairman of the Yorkshire Branch I was most disappointed to read your article to the editor in the last issue of our Association Journal, your ill-judged comments with reference to the size and shape of our regular airborne soldiers was totally unwarranted. You suggest that our editor should compromise his integrity and apply spin to future photographs in our journals. Can I suggest that your article should never have been accepted for inclusion in the first place, to my mind you have done untold damage to the Association in the eyes of our regular airborne soldiers.

The committee and Branches of the Association have worked tirelessly over the years to create a solid foundation of friendship and understanding, this has produced a close-knit family of airborne brothers between Veterans and the regular forces i.e. 9, 51,61 and EOD, not forgetting the Regt HQ. Only recently my Yorkshire branch received a kind invitation from the OC 51 Sqn to an open day, specially laid on for airborne veterans, this coupled with an evening function to meet the full Sqn for a few beers and bite to eat. Incidentally these boys are jumping into Normandy in June to celebrate the 60th Anniversary.

I can just imagine myself as a serving member of 23 Air Assault, which includes 9 Sqn, or perhaps you did not realise? A number of these are fully paid up members of our Association and in receipt of the journal. I would most certainly ask myself the question, why am I supporting this Association after reading such a negative and embarrassing appraisal of the body size of the regular soldiers in the Regiment, or do you object to the formation of an Airborne/Assault Engr Regt. The first one formed since WW2; surely this is progress and can only enhance our reputation as Airborne Warriors in the Corps of Engineers, and the Association.

Your friends, as you say in your article, laughed at the lardy lads on parade, a very important parade at that, please also remember they had just returned from fighting a war and putting their lives on the line in Iraq. You and your friends, have I'm afraid, lost the plot, and I personally don't wish to support these views. Your use of the word LARDY (meaning pigs fat) is a total injustice to our resident Airborne Forces.

Like many I spent several years in the Sqn in the early days, I can assure you, that over the last 45 years, I have been in contact with the Sqn, on and off. I have seen a few porkers pass through the gates of 9 Sqn having passed the test. It is a fact of life that we all can't be, slim of waist, fleet of foot, and steely jawed, like you suggest, or perhaps you're not living in the real world.

My last on the subject, remember that the angle of the camera lens does not always produce a true picture?

---

## Arnhem- 60 Years Ago

Doreen Everitt-Hughes

This year, being the 60th Anniversary of Arnhem, moves me to share my written thoughts the day following the last official day for the return home for the men who had been in the battle at Arnhem. I need to share now my thoughts of that day of waiting.

With the Royal British Legion (RBL) I visit Jack's grave every year in Becklingen War Cemetery, N. Germany. The AEA Journal carried an article on an amazing coincidence concerning Jack, the then GSM Hohne Garrison, John Ferry and an old 9th Airborne Sapper, Eric Thorne, now deceased, and myself. The Journal carried photos of Jack's grave and GSM John Ferry greeting me on my annual pilgrimage to Jack. I also go to Arnhem each September with the RBL and the dates this 60th anniversary year coincide largely with the battle dates.

The day after I awaited Jack's return from Arnhem, I wrote of the hopes and fears that had crowded into my mind as I watched and waited in vain for Jack's return.

11th October 1944 Jack was reported Officially Missing. 27th November 1944 Jack reported as being a Prisoner of War, Stalag X1B Fallingbostel, N. Germany.

6th January 1945 War Office letter informed me, my husband, 2090772 Sapper John Everitt 9th Fd Coy R.E. 1st British Airborne Division, had died of an aneurysm due to wounds sustained in Arnhem. 29th November had been the date of my husband's death whilst a POW.

---



## All Men Who Are Coming Home

(written on Saturday 30th day of September 1944)

I stood by the door where as your bride I stood, four months before. This day today is officially the last for men of Arnhem to return home. Those who are coming home.

I watch the trains pull in. Empty, and then move on their journey. Each face is studied in that jostling crowd. I search for your face. Eager to see you separate from the throng. Saturday's busy traffic. Are there other special passengers being awaited. Hours pass. I still look for the train that is bringing you home. How will I greet you? With a smile as I walk to you. All of the anxiety eased away. Or, with great shouts and joyous tears as I bless this God-given day. Your return from the Battle that should never have been. You must come Jack. Please, make it soon. One man leaves the station. He is tall. His hands are adjusting his Red Beret, just as Jack does. The hands move away from the face. The man turns right. Away from where my prayers are. But wait, maybe there are others. A group of Airborne men following. Please Jack, be approaching the exit. Doors slam. The guards whistle sounds. The train pulls away. Passengers have left. Jack, where are you? This is the last Official day. You must come. A thought creeps into my mind. The wounded had to be left behind. Those able to evacuate had swum the Rhine to safety. How strong could Jack swim. Was Jack wounded? Was he captured?

I reject that thought. That would be loathsome for Jack. He had spoken kindly about the Italian Prisoners of War. How they had sounded at night as they had whistled and hummed a tune, Lillie Marlene. But all men were not kind.

My Jack and his mates had been beleaguered at Arnhem. They were exhausted. The Rhine was swollen. Swift currents. Dread thoughts wouldn't go away. It was almost dark. The station was dimly lit. There were no trains. I must go indoors. I would watch from the window. I would make out Jack as he came home. The evening was still warm. Jack loved the warmth of autumn. Jack, where are you. How are you? I think of how Jack spoke of his mates. How they all look out for one another. Maybe I shall hear from one of those good mates of Jack. Someone who saw him last. I shall not have to wait for Officialdom to tell me of my husband's whereabouts, I will hear first-hand from a caring mate.

I felt anger against the 'Chairborne Plotters' who had sent these brave young men into this battle. But what of Jack's mates. Where were they, how were they. All is very still. The last Official Day is over. There is a milk train. In the still darkness a brake clanks against the metal wheels. Smoke and steam glows from the engines furnace. All grows quiet again.

Dear God, let this desolation be but a brief interlude. Before all is well again.

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## Greeting from Down Under

Wally Gee

Thought that this might be of some interest for the Airborne Engineers Journal.



The photo is of Dennis Bateman Ex 3 & 9 Sqn, Reg (Chalky) White ex 9 Battalion and Wally (Brummie) Gee ex 9 Sqn about to go into the Ocean Grove R.S.L. after the Anzac March and Service.

After a very wet start to the day the short dawn service that took place at the Cenotaph in the centre of Ocean Grove. At the ending of the service about 100 of the hardy that suffered the rain retired to the Neighbourhood Centre to a

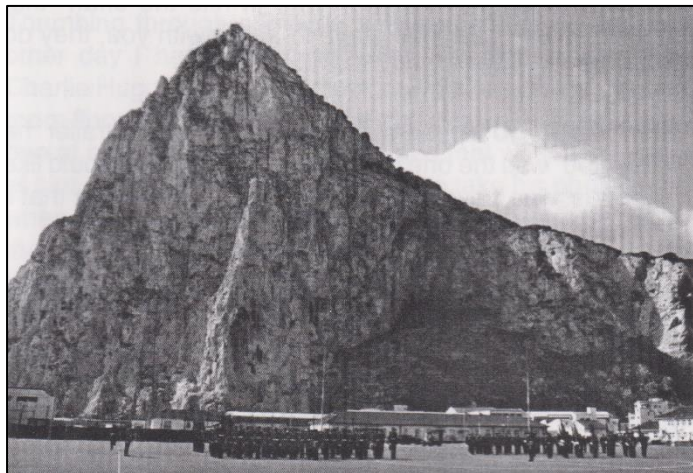
great breakfast of traditional Bacon & Eggs supplied and cooked by the Ocean Grove Rotary Club.

Somebody was looking after us, at the forming up of the March the rain stopped and Reg White Ex9 Para Batt. Sergeant Major (complete with pace stick) the Parade Marshall, marched the parade, consisting ex-service men and women, the local Fire Brigade, Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies up the Main street of the town. Most of the town turned out to cheer them on their way. The Service at the Cenotaph was well attended with about 800 in attendance. At the conclusion. It was off to the local R.S.L. to partake in as much of the amber fluid that one's body can possibly take. A great day. But I'm glad it only happens once a year. I don't think my body could stand up to more.

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## Parade Marks 300 years of Gibraltar Link

(Extract published with kind permission of the Gibraltar Chronicle)



Hundreds of Gibraltarians on Saturday 20 March 2004 paid tribute to 200 Royal Engineers to mark 300 years of British rule on the Rock. The soldiers paraded at Devils Tower Camp after the regiment's recent involvement in Exercise 25th Shot to test their military and construction skills enhancing security on the Rock. This followed a decision on security grounds not to hold the parade through Main Street as an exercise of their Freedom of the City as originally planned.

Gibraltar is the birthplace of the British Army's Engineer regiment. Its forebear, The Company of Soldier Artificers, were based there 300 years ago constructing 32 miles of tunnels and gun emplacements inside the famous Rock.

"We've had a flavour of the effort put in by those Artificers of old who hacked their way through the Rock with the most rudimentary of tools to create the vast tunnel network," said Lance Corporal Barry Reynolds, 24, from Nottingham.

Major "Rocky" Rock, the commanding officer, added: "Coming here we're returning to our roots, the roots of the Corps, and it has given the Sappers a real connection with what happened here centuries ago."

Royal Engineers were on parade together with the Royal Engineer Association and the Corps of Royal Engineers Band. The Freedom of Gibraltar Parade substituted the Freedom of the City parade, which would have formed part of the tercentenary celebrations. Mayor Judge John Alcantara inspected the troops.



**The Mayor queries John Parker on his wearing of a 'Red Beret'**

The House of Assembly bestowed the Freedom of the City on the Royal Engineers on 6 March 1972 in recognition of the work of the Engineers on the Rock. The REs have also had a week-long exhibition at the Garrison library. The Engineers have dug some 46 km of tunnels since the Great Siege. They have also been involved in many other construction works around Gibraltar including the fortifications and the Royal Naval Hospital. Second Lieutenant Laurence Whittingham, of 60 Headquarter and Support

Squadron, 39 Engineer Regiment said ahead of the parade: "Gibraltar is very important to the Engineers because of the amount of time we have spent here over the past 300 years. To return for this parade is a great honour for the Corps."

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## Gibraltar Tricentenary

John (spaceman) Parker



The trip was very well organised except for a glitch in the accommodation which left me the only AEA representative from the North of England. The flight went without a hitch and we were very well looked after by Monarch Airlines who provided a very good in-flight meal.

On arrival in Gibraltar the coaches were waiting to transport us to our hotel at Ocean Heights, and although the accommodation was fairly basic; but was

of reasonable quality, having been obtained at short notice by Peter Ladlow, secretary of the Scarborough branch of the REA. Joyce and I quickly settle in.

On Thursday, during our extremely pleasant coach trip to Ronda in the Spanish mountains, I met up with a fellow Airborne Engineer, John Mason from Christchurch, and we shared a table with him over lunch.

Friday started with a get-together and a briefing on the itinerary for the weekend programme. It commenced with a band concert by the Corp of Royal Engineers in St Michael's Cave, and they were ably accompanied by the band of the Royal Gibraltar Regiment. The Pipes and Drums did a special piece and the applause almost rattled the stalactites. The finale featured a lone piper coming from the rear of the audience down to the front of the stage whilst playing "Amazing Grace." The entire performance had taken place against a backdrop of stalactites and stalagmites lit to great effect by special lighting made the evening very special.

Due to the possible danger of terrorist attack, the Saturday Royal Engineers parade was held in the Devils Tower Camp. There were 16 standards on parade with a fantastic backdrop of the 'Rock'. Special guests on parade were the Gov. CinC Sir F. Richards, KCB, CVO, Lt Gen Sir Scott Grant KCB, CRE, Commodore R. Clapp CBE and the mayor, the Hon Judge John Alcantara; who acted as the inspecting officer.

The official celebrations concluded with a superb formal dinner in the Sgts Mess with all standards on display.

Our visit also included a journey through the 'Rock' tunnels and later a visit to Morocco.

The trip to Gibraltar was a great success with much of the credit directed to the organisation provided by the Squadron and the REA. A special thank you also to the Officer Commanding and the RSM of the resident squadron for their excellent organisational skills.

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## The Way I See It

Reflections from the April Edition

X9

**Tug-o-War.** Don't be fooled by what the members of HQ, Plant and MT appear to be doing. They are merely trying to pull the skin off of one of Tony Manley's rice pudding! They only just succeeded!

**Isn't the Army Great,** It sends you to exotic places like Cyprus and makes you bash spuds as Reg Emberson did! Glad to hear you have fully recovered from your accident Reg.

**Good Picture of the Choir.** Looks to me as though you all had indigestion! Probably sounded that way too!

**Looks as Though** Brian Gibson, Eric Blenkinsop and Sid Burrell held their Coventry reunion inside of the local Jail! Who were you visiting guys?

**Good Account by Steve Briggs.** I believe he got it about right when he said that most who served in the Sqn consider themselves Airborne first and Engineers second. The real camaraderie does not happen until you join the Airborne forces. I believe that most Sqn members joined the Airborne because just being a Royal Engineer was not enough. Let me quote a few lines from Rudyard Kipling's 'Jungle Book'...

"The strength of the wolf, is in the pack, and the strength of the pack is in the wolf."

In my humble opinion the Sqn and indeed all Airborne Forces have always been a "strong pack" due to the strength of its "wolves."

**Poncho,** it is not what a person's physical appearance emits, it is what he has inside that drives him to equate with the Apollo's among us when the "fit hits the shan" that counts! Having said that I have to agree with you, they do look a little "chubby"

**Sean McCargo** appears convinced the cook trailer he "inspected" was the one used by the Sqn. What I would like to know is; was it ever parachuted? I don't remember that it ever was, but I'm sure someone will know.

**A Selection of Warriors...**7 yes, magnificent, hardly! I'm glad they all went to 1 & 2 Troops!

**Hong Kong '74.** Another "magnificent 7". Did the Sqn; really have that many cooks on the books? I guess the Sqn tradition of too many cooks spoiling the broth had to be kept intact! True members of the Sqn. Every one of them.

**The Ramisi Bridge** - 33 Years On. Well Peter, is the one remaining bridge the one built by the Sqn. or not? I would like to think that it is and all that Tusker was not downed in vain, after all, it takes a real man to quaff that stuff in any Quantity!

**Alive and Kicking.** I would like to say, welcome back to the land of the living Harry Dunstan! Now perhaps you can tell us first-hand about your infamous "gooseberry" as you call it!

**PONCHO'S** criticism of the unfit looking other ranks in the Sqn does not hold true for its past commanding officers. They all look a very fit bunch.

**Graham Sheward.** Graham, people like you amaze me but at the same time sicken me! You amaze me for what you are capable of doing at your age, (over 45 I assume). Not just an ordinary marathon, but the Snowdon Marathon! I must congratulate you and hope you will be competing in twenty years' time. The reason you sicken me is the fact that you make me feel so inadequate. When I read of your exploits I roll out of my all-weather hammock, walk twice around the garden then jump in my Morris Minor and drive recklessly down the motorway at over 30 MPH! Well done Graham, you have my utmost admiration!





Ken Tealey, ?, Norman Penny & Sid Warrilow (Egypt)

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## Memories of 2 Troop

Harry Evans

Thumbing through some back copies of the Journal the other day I had a laugh at Willy Wiltshire's memory of Charlie Huggins brushing muck down a hole in the barrack room floor in 2 Tp in Waterloo Barracks East. Charlie was one of my best mates in the Sqn and that would be typical of him. I remember him getting me to take his photograph when we did a training jump at Hankley Common DZ so that he'd have one of himself actually in mid-air. I was so busy fiddling about getting taking it and stowing the camera away in my smock that I forgot to release my weapons container and landed with it still strapped to my leg. We were always warned that this could be a broken leg job, but no damage was done apart from getting a good rifting from the RAF Flight Sgt instructor; who was on the DZ checking us out. He had no sense of humour at all!

Another time was when we tried to flog a pile of scrap iron to a dealer in Farnborough. This was the cast iron guttering and rainwater pipes that Gillie Potter and Dennis Scott had taken down from their workshops and from SSM Reg Orton's office.

We were loading it into the 3-ton Commer tipper that I drove at that time. Reg came out of his office to have a look at it, "You could get good money for that if you took it to a scrap merchant" says Reg, "unofficially of course." So off we went to the scrap yard. We asked the 'scrappy' how much he'd give us. He told us he'd give us about two minutes to get out of his yard before he called the Military Police. Needless to say, when we told Reg later, he laughed his socks off.

My daily task in the tipper was to go round the Squadron lines first thing in the morning and collect all the rubbish. One of the perks of the job was that you didn't go on first parade, so Charlie naturally wangled his way into being my co-driver; despite the fact that he couldn't drive! We used to end up at the cookhouse and if we were lucky got a bacon sandwich from Charlie Edwards. It saved a fortune on NAAFI breaks. From there it was off to the municipal tip in Farnborough. By the time we'd washed down the truck and given it a rub down with an oily rag it was time for lunch. A well spent morning in fact.

I was in the Squadron from 1954 'til 1958 and my first troop commander was Capt John Hooper, now Brigadier, who appeared in a previous edition of the Journal looking resplendent in his appointment as High Sheriff of Gwent. Bert Stevenson was Troop Sgt as in the photograph, which also features me sorting out the NAAFI list with Bert, Charlie with his camera and in front of him Mitch Mitchell, who went to the aid of an elderly standard bearer during the "silent march" at Arnhem. His actions probably saved the gentleman's life after suffering a massive heart attack (as reported by Ted Rothwell in the August 2003 edition). The picture was, I believe, taken during an exercise in Thetford, probably in 1955. Can't remember any other names except Jock Donald with his arms folded in the middle. I do remember that the other Jock on the front left did his pre-release course in 1956 with a bookmaker in Glasgow - he's probably worth a bob or two now! Bert

Stevenson and Charlie are now sadly departed, but we had plenty of laughs with them then.

I wonder if Ted remembers a job that 3 Troop took on in the summer of, I think, 1956 at the ghost village of Imber located in the middle of Salisbury Plain about 10 miles from Warminster. The village had been evacuated at the beginning of the war to provide an artillery range but has never been handed back. The buildings were all boarded up and although shelling had done no damage, the whole place was showing signs of wear and tear from the weather - sad really. A very peaceful spot to live I should think.

A good road ran from Warminster but going out of the village and up onto the Plain, it was full of potholes and in a very bad state. I was detached from 2 Troop with my trusty tipper along with a couple of other lades and we all went down there led by the 3 Tp Command, Capt Jock Brazier. Our first task was to ferry tons of asphalt from a firm in Warminster and remake the road. Following this task, we built a tower up on the Plain above Long Valley where a Brigade 'drop' was to take place. The whole thing was to be televised with cameras placed on the tower. Seating for the VIPs were also constructed using Bailey panels and planking. We probably dug some DTLs, but I can't remember doing that task. (I don't think portaloos had been invented way back then).

Our campsite, well away from the public gaze, was what you might call basic, if not primitive. We had plenty to eat and drink but didn't bother too much about washing arrangements as we got stuck into the task at hand, but when the great and good from Whitehall and the BBC arrived, we kept well out of sight. Once the demonstration drop had been successfully completed and the VIPs and media had left the site we set to on dismantling the various structures and loaded the stores onto our vehicles and then made our way to the School of Infantry at Warminster. On arrival at the main gate, Capt Brazier dismounted and gave a cheery greeting to the Provo Corporal, who had shot out of the guardroom like a cork out of a bottle. Blanched to the eyebrows and with boots like glass, he seemed alarmed at our appearance but threw up a massive salute in the best 'School of Infantry' fashion anyway. He nearly fainted when he was told that we were hoping to use the School's shower block to clean up and change into some clean clothes before returning to Aldershot. However, he detailed off a couple of escorts to guide us there and make sure we were not seen by any of the inmates. We enjoyed the showers, but I have to say that after a week bundled up in a hamper, our BDs ( battle dresses) were not the last word in sartorial splendour. Though it was no doubt with some considerable pleasure that the RSM saw us depart.

But what a gent' our leader Jock Brazier was. halfway back to Aldershot we stopped at a pub where he had laid on a real feast and plenty of beer which went down very well with all concerned.

A really good exercise and a job well done.

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## Kota Mama Caledonia Challenge

29th May to 4th June 2004

Jim Masters



Readers may remember past articles on reed boat journeys. Gerry, my young brother and I have just completed the fourth journey on British waterways, the latest being the canal which crosses Scotland from Fort William to Inverness.

Just to remind you, Gerry learned the secrets of construction whilst participating in the original South American expedition. He built our present craft, from Somerset reeds gathered from our home river, in 60 hours.

This time we travelled up to Scotland to join an international fleet of 21 traditional boats for the "Challenge". There was a class system but,

being a somewhat odd craft there were just two in ours, the other one was a rather large and glossy yacht! Side by side we seemed a mismatch but only they looked at all concerned. We were quietly confident.

It was very noticeable that the organisers were a little taken aback, too polite to say so to us though. We eventually learned that the forecast was "they will not last the first day," a feeling shared by most of the other competitors.

It was wet and windy, bitterly cold, but we crossed the start line knowing that we had the best craft on view. We were given a wide berth in the locks; they seemed worried about us scratching their paint work! Day by day we matched them in all but sailing and rowing - our power came from a superb 10hp Mercury supplied by our friends at E P Barrus. We refused to go away and it became apparent that we were assuming a quite special place in the fleet. Everyone wanted photographs and some even wanted to get on board, but only when we were moored up. The Scandinavian element even took over Kota Mama and used her as a drinking platform. Cheeky or what?

To cut a very long story short, we crossed the finish line at Inverness after quite a struggle with some impressive waves on Loch Ness. I guess it was too rough for "Nessie" to make an appearance but perhaps she is not a vegetarian anyway?

At the prize giving, where we expected nothing, the very last presentation was for Kota Mama! It mattered not that in the final speeches we were referred to as "eccentric, strange, cuckoo" etc. because we drew the loudest cheers of the night. I was even awarded a special prize by the Norwegian contingent. A walking stick! Is there a message there somewhere?

Now watch this space! We have been invited back next year so, so much for the funny looks at the beginning, AND we have been invited to take part in a similar event on the Loire (how we get across, or under, the Channel is yet to be decided - any ideas (polite...) on the back of a postcard please to The Editor). The Loire, all those vineyards! I can taste it already.

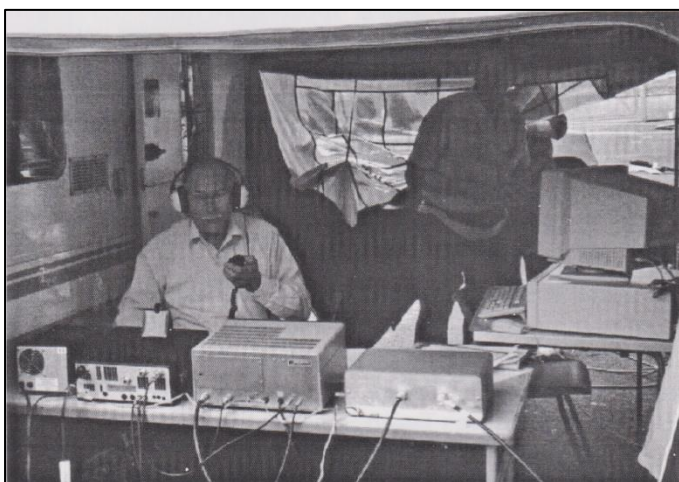
One does wonder what our friends in France will say about a reed boat, which has the appearance of having been "nibbled by Nessie." Does foot and mouth or Mad Cow Disease get passed on via reeds?

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## D-Day on the Air

Jack Braithwaite G3PWK

On the 5th and 6th June the Radio Branch of the REA Operated an Amateur Radio Station with the special call sign GB 60 Royal Engineers, to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of D-Day. The station operated from the Royal Engineers Museum at Chatham and was manned by REA members who hold amateur radio licences and amateurs from the Chatham area. A total of 32 countries were contacted from North America to the Russian Arctic and Europe, including stations operating from Pegasus Bridge, Sword Beach and an American TV crew on Omaha Beach. A card with a picture of the beach landing will be sent to all stations contacted. The Branch will be operating to commemorate Arnhem with the call sign GB 60 Airborne Engineers in September.



Jack Braithwaite operating GB 60 RE

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## Seeking Taffy Fellows

Horace Stokes

In Issue No 12 of our magazine (page 30) reference is made to the Sqn Hockey Team. I served with most of them in Neumunster and Hameln. Is the Bill Fellows the same Taffy Fellows who was 1 Troop Sgt in 3 Para Squadron in 1948?

If so, does anyone know of his whereabouts now?

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## Arnhem- Day of Attrition

Tom Carpenter

As dawn came on Wednesday 20th, the remnants of number 2 platoon, 9th Field Company, Royal Engineers, were still occupying the large villa situated at the corner of Hofstraat and Eusebius plain, a position which still afforded a reasonable field of fire in the direction of the bridge ramp and the roadway that passed under it. In one of the bedrooms was a bedridden lady who was obviously too ill to have been moved when the occupants of the villa had been forced to seek shelter from the ever increasing, storm of the battle now raging around Arnhem Bridge.

We were taking it in turns to look in on her and share what little we had to eat and drink. She managed to smile whenever we tried to converse with her, none of us understood the Dutch language but she seemed content and knew she was with caring people.

We were holding our own against the enemy infantry attack but, with our anti-tank weapons now seriously depleted, their tanks and armoured trucks were now getting bolder racing past blasting away with armour piercing rounds which came right through the outer walls into our positions. Then as the morning wore on they seemed content to stand off and pound our positions with high explosives. It was during this bombardment that our Dutch lady died when a shell exploded in her room.

Throughout the afternoon, I was at a firing position on the first floor looking towards the bridge ramp and embankment, although from this position I could not see Battalion or Brigade Headquarters which was just around a bend in the road, some sixty yards away, but from the smoke and flames in that direction I knew they were on fire. Our position, although rapidly becoming a heap of rubble after some twenty to thirty hits, was still not on fire.

At about 1700 hours with the villa now collapsing all around us, Captain O'Callaghan ordered us out to dig in the grounds. I and another comrade jumped from the first floor into the rubble now surrounding the position, we were now very vulnerable to the incessant rain of mortar fire, which was battering the area.

At about this time, as we started to dig in, a brief cheer went up from our position when a Meschersmitt which had been strafing the area, failed to pull out, wrapped a wing around a church spire and crashed into a small lake just beyond brigade headquarters.

Above the crescendo of explosions, I heard someone shout, "We're pulling out." I moved to respond when a blow like a house brick hitting me, knocked me over. I tried to move but my limbs would not respond. I became aware of blood on my neck and face and thought this is it. After what seemed an eternity I was aware of someone at my side placing shell dressings onto a deep penetrating wound to my shoulder and back, it was Sergeant Sonnie Gibbons, with Corporal Alex Lancaster.

With the enemy closing in fast, they got me up onto my feet and half lifting, half dragging me; we made for a small warehouse, where the remnants of 2 platoon had established themselves. Enemy fire and grenades followed us in through the doorway. Lancaster turned and fired a burst and this was followed by other platoon members, forcing the enemy to beat a hasty search for cover, and I was placed behind the cover of some cabinets and racking.

At this time I was quite alert but my limbs would not respond. My right arm was useless and was now supported by my yellow ID panel. I had a tremendous thirst but no water was available, however one of my mates found some tomatoes, which helped moisten my mouth.

The platoon strength was now ten men and most of those were slightly wounded but still responding well to the enemy attacks.

The positions held on the eastern side of the ramp had finally been overrun by the overwhelming enemy forces, who threw vast resources into trying to regain control of Arnhem Bridge. To enable them to move armour south to Nijmegen, the use of phosphorous shells to burn our defences out was now forcing us out of our defensive positions into the open and exposing us to his heavy mortar bombardment.

Battalion and Brigade headquarters were now blazing infernos. We were told that our wounded comrade who had been in the basement of these buildings had been evacuated when the senior medical officer had negotiated a local cease-fire.

At about 2200 hours on this Wednesday 20th September '44 I was moved towards the door onto the Hofstraat side of the warehouse. From here I was assisted by my comrades and covered up as we moved rapidly across the narrow roadway into the grounds which were at the rear of what had been Battalion Headquarters and the houses where the mortar Platoons had been on the corner of Hofstraat.

The position we now found ourselves in was certainly not one of tactical choice, it was an area about forty yards by forty yards bounded on all sides by buildings, which were now burning shells. I was helped into a slit trench, which was occupied by two men who I did not know. The trench had been dug close to a seven-foot high brick wall; lower brickwork had been removed to give a limited field of fire along Hofstraat.

At this stage in the battle there was nowhere to evacuate the wounded as the Regimental aid post had been burnt out. The enemy was now hemming us in on all sides, we could hear them giving orders and hear their mortars, which must have been firing almost vertically.

I was becoming very light headed and drifting in and out of consciousness. Loss of blood from the wounds coupled with lack of sleep was now taking its toll. In my lucid moments the events of the past few days went racing through my mind.

A crescendo of high explosives pounded the area, some of which I believed were coming from thirty corps who at this time must be just south of the Rhine. There were shrieks of very heavy shells passing overhead to augment the constant crump of mortars. I again was shaken back to alertness by a near direct hit on the trench to find one of my companions had been badly hit and was slumped at the other end of the trench.

In the early hours of Thursday 21st September, Major Gough with Captain O'Callaghan and A. Franks took the only decision open to them, to split up into small groups and attempt to break through the enemy who were now well ensconced all around our position, but only those who could move fast and unaided would stand any chance at all. The more seriously wounded were left in the comparative safety of slit trenches. While all this was going on I was still mercifully drifting, and light headed. In my lucid moments I was aware of my wounded comrade who was still in the trench and my thoughts of not seeing daylight again came crashing to the front of my mind.

I could not see any way out of the situation we were now in, short of a miracle in the form of thirty corps arrival, and I again drifted into oblivion, the variable states of consciousness persisted throughout this fearful night.

I came to again and was aware of someone looking down on me. It was daylight and in what seemed like a frozen moment in time, it dawned on me they were Germans. They uttered some orders to unseen people close by and I was soon being lifted out of a trench and onto a stretcher by two of our own men. This was going on in various parts of this garden of carnage. The movement caused me great pain and my right arm was totally useless. I feared that my companion of the lone night had succumbed to his wounds, as there was no movement from him. I had no way of knowing the exact time but I would think it was about 0900 hours on Thursday 21st September.

As I was carried from this place I could not understand how I or anyone else had survived the past 12 hours and my thoughts then turned to how my comrades of 2 platoon had fared in the break out. There was still the occasional burst of small arms fire locally. As I was placed on a jeep I was aware of the menacing presence of our German captors, and although I was extremely uneasy some of them were smiling and making friendly gestures towards us. Maybe they were also surprised and pleased to have survived the past few days.

We were driven a short distance to a German command post, where an extremely well dressed officer appeared, I thought possibly to question us, but on seeing our condition he made some comment like, "it was a good fight and the war is now over for you," this in perfect English. He then turned to our driver and escort and issued some instructions. We were then driven another short distance pulling up at what was possibly a schoolhouse where some more of our lads were being put on open trucks. As I was placed on one of the vehicles, I was looking and hoping to find some of 2 platoon, but as far as I could see there were none about. I knew I was with comrades but didn't know anyone personally and would have been happier to have seen one of my mates.

We eventually moved off, and this again was a very short journey, being about a mile, before pulling up outside St Elizabeth's Hospital. There was chaos with heavy anti-aircraft fire aimed at incoming resupply drops as my stretcher was carried into the foyer by British medical orderlies. Here was a scene of the fruits of battle with the whole area of floor space littered with wounded men and women, German, Dutch and English. I was placed alongside a young German with a chest wound with English, Dutch and German medical orderlies and nurses attempting to deal with this flood of casualties. I was given some coffee by one of the nurses, the first drink in almost thirty hours - it was nectar. I was feeling very vulnerable laying on the floor with all the activity both in and around the building. After about an hour had elapsed a British medic came and asked how long it had been since my wounds were dressed.

I explained some twenty hours previously and that it was still the initial dressing which had been applied when I was hit. The medic said he would take a quick look but said the Germans were preparing to move us to another destination. He helped me to my feet in order to remove my Dennison smock and battle dress blouse, but decided to leave them and open up the already slashed clothing which Cpl Lancaster had cut from neck to waist. Any movement was excruciating, so the medic decided that, due to the impending move, he would just place another dressing over the original one without disturbing the package. All my clothing was beginning to feel like stiff board due to the amount of congealed blood.

The medic had hardly begun when the Germans ordered us outside. He finished, then assisted me to the door as I told him I felt less insecure on my feet. I was helped out through the doorway and into an ambulance aboard which were four Germans on stretchers and four of us as sitting passengers. One of the German wounded was the young man with the chest wound. The doors were closed behind us and not long after we were underway, the time was about 1400 hours, Thursday 21st September.

Believing as I did that thirty corps was just across the Rhine, any move towards Germany would reduce any chance we had of a quick end to our captivity. I had already had enough of this present uncertain situation and yearned to be out of it. The ambulance had no windows so we were not able to see where we might be heading.

The Young German was trying to communicate and was showing me photographs. I was able to understand when he made a point that he had been wounded on the Russian front, then pointed to his present wound with the word 'Kaput.'

The photographs were of his family and girlfriend. The way we were now talking, although with difficulty, made it hard to believe that only hours ago we could have been looking at each other down the sights of our weapons and I could possibly be responsible for his present condition. Such were my thoughts, but there was no enmity in his tone.

The ambulance pulled up abruptly and we heard the driver and his companion get out fast. There was a lot of air activity possibly due to air resupply drop, and our driver had obviously been scared by a very low flying aircraft.

When they returned to the vehicle the rear doors were opened and we could then see along a straight roadway densely wooded on both sides. One of the drivers gave the German wounded a slice of black bread and a piece of black bread and a piece of something greyish looking which was supposed to be cheese. There followed a heated argument initiated by the soldier who had been talking to us and the drivers. Two of the other wounded Germans joined in. We hadn't a clue what it was all about but it led to us receiving the same ration. Being very hungry I tried to eat some of it but found the bread rather hard and bitter tasting, whilst the cheese had a very profound fish-like taste, almost revolting. I slipped most of it

into my Dennison smock pocket, looking at the three other British lads who were also grimacing. Oh for the good old British army standby of Bully Beef. At this time little did we know that in the following eight months we might beg for what we had just received.

Eventually we were again on the move and proceeded towards our unknown destination. At about 1700 hours, Thursday 21st September '44, the ambulance pulled up again and then reversed. When the doors were opened we could see we were facing a doorway leading, into what looked like a barrack type building where there were plenty of guards and medical orderlies around the entrance.

Here the German wounded were removed, leaving us with friendly gestures. I thought we might follow and get some treatment, but the doors were again shut on us. After a while we were again on the move, but not very far. When the doors opened this time, a very different scene came into view. We were on a railway siding with cattle trucks lined up. There were a considerable number of our wounded comrades waiting around and a large number of German guards with menacing attitudes. There was certainly no medical treatment available for us here.

At about 1800 hours with a lot of shouting and pushing, we were ordered to board the train. With great difficulty we helped each other up on to the wagons. Wounds were varied, smashed limbs, severe head and trunk wounds. We helped each other to settle on the hard wooden floor of these smelly enclosed trucks with just a very small aperture high up on each side. There were about 50 men in our truck and as we all, with much cursing and groaning, tried to get our pain wracked bodies into the best position. The door was slammed shut leaving us in a gloom with just two shafts of light from the apertures close up to the roof. It was most disquieting that up to now no-one had asked for name, rank and number. To the Germans we were nonentities and could be lost on our journey of unknown destination and duration.

Although I was with comrades, I had never met any of them before this time. How I missed the lads of 2 platoon with whom I had been on many a happy occasion. As the time dragged by, the cursing, and groans of my companions became more profound as they struggled to ease themselves into more pain free positions. With no movement of the train we could hear the German guards talking and laughing in the darkness outside. We had been sitting or lying in this enclosed cramped truck for about 314 hours and any bodily function had to be performed in the corners. Anyone having to answer a call of nature was greeted by more abuse and cursing as he staggered and stumbled over the body littered floor in the darkness, towards the selected corner.

With many thoughts tumbling through my mind I drifted into a fitful sleep. I was aroused by a chorus of my companions calling for water and banging on the sides of the truck as everyone was very dry. I'd had a small amount of coffee at about 1300 hours, some ten hours ago, but many of the others had not had a drink for a much longer period. Our demands fell on deaf ears. Soon there was a violent shunt as the engine was coupled up, and this again evoked groans and cursing from the lads around me.

Eventually we were underway again on our journey - but to where and what? The chatter in this cattle truck became more subdued as the motion of the train, accompanied by the clackety clack on the track began to lull me to sleep, but my mind was full of the events of the past few days. What had happened to 30 Corps? We were told at our briefing on Saturday 16th, seize and hold your objective. You will be relieved within 48 hours; you will then march on Amsterdam. We had held for almost double the 48 hours at Arnhem bridge without any immediate support or relief. I had witnessed my comrades maimed and killed at the coffin and clog factory on the Monday morning and again in the White house on Tuesday when the 105 mm destroyed our positions there. What, I was wondering, had befallen the remnants of 2 platoon who were in the garden prior to the breakout. There were about 10 of us at that time. Captain Eric O'Callaghan, Sgt Gibbons, Cpl Lancaster, Sgt Cawood, Sprs Turner, Cottle, Tunningly, Donaghue and Fox. They and a few others from the mixed units that had reached Arnhem bridge were the last men in the area still resisting at that time and were attempting to break through to friendly forces.

I gradually drifted into a dream state, I could not tell how long we had been moving, or how far we had travelled when the train came to a standstill. Then the sound of explosions, mingled with anti-aircraft fire and with the flashes punctuating our gloom through the apertures, we quickly realised how vulnerable we were and in danger of being hit by a friendly bomb dropped by the R.A.F or the U.S.A.A.F

After about ten minutes things quietened down again but an hour passed before we moved again, very slowly as though traversing damaged or temporary track. After about thirty minutes we were picking up speed and the motion was having a soothing effect on me and I was soon drifting again as the unseen landscape slipped by. After several more short halts daylight was with us so that we could at least see one another in the gloom. As the day wore on, the train seemed to be travelling very cautiously with stops becoming more frequent so that when, at one of these, the door suddenly opened, we were all surprised with the inrush of air and light, and a sudden chorus from the guards of orders, which we couldn't understand, but with great difficulty we were helping each other painfully to our feet and towards the door. I could see we were at a siding in what must be a town with many buildings close by and the guards were ordering us off the train. Close by were a croup of civilians, also someone dressed in a colourful civic style uniform. At this time I believed it was organised to hurl abuse at captured British airborne soldiers for propaganda purposes, but when seeing the blood stained condition of us as we struggled to help each other off the high floor level of the truck, many of the onlookers moved to assist us. Two of our companions had succumbed to wounds in the gloom of that long, thirsty, hungry journey. It was Kassel time, about 1500 hours Friday 22 September. As if in a dream state and still wracked with pain, we moved off on foot. After a very short walk, possibly half a mile, we arrived at a civilian hospital, where we were to receive our first quick medical assessment. Physically we were all nearing total exhaustion with varying degrees of first and secondary shock due to massive blood loss.

It was only a self-disciplined state of mind that was going to bring us through our present ordeal.

Most of the guards were posted outside with one or two within the ward areas. When my turn came for assessment, my clothing, which had already been cut from neck to waist, was cut right down, and, with great pain, was slipped off my right shoulder and arm, and the shell dressing eased off. There followed the painful removal of the dressing which Cpl Lancaster had packed into the entry wound some 48 hours ago to stem the blood flow. Then came the unpleasant process of having a metal rod pushed into the wound and moved about trying to locate the foreign body bullet or shrapnel. These probes were about 18" long and the process was carried out without any anaesthetic or pain killer of any sort. Failing to locate anything by this method the wound was packed and dressed with a crepe paper type material. They then attended to the flesh wounds on my right leg. A shirt was found for me as mine and my vest were totally ruined with blood. My battle dress blouse and Dennison smock, though a bloody mess and cut right through, would have to serve me for some time yet. I was helped away to a bed and unbelievably a nurse brought me a bowl of barley soup, my first warm food in six days.

Our two 24 hour ration packs had been used up by Wednesday so we were all very hungry, the meagre ration of black bread and small portion of cheese or fish did little to ease our pangs.

After eating the soup I was assisted into bed where, with my mind in a turmoil, I drifted into the sleep of total exhaustion. I had no way of knowing for how long I was asleep when I was dragged back to wakefulness and pain by guards and medical staff shouting and getting everyone out of bed. Then I could hear the howling of air raid sirens. We were assisted down to the basement area and here we met our first Russians who, on seeing us made an effort to sing, 'God Save the King,' recognisable only by the tune. This did not go down well with the German guards who, very menacingly ordered them to be quiet. This brought the sound of anti-aircraft fire and the crump of bombs resounding throughout the building. The raid didn't last long and we were soon being helped back to the wards where I was again soon cocooned in the safe harbour of sleep.

I do not know for how long I slept but we were dragged reluctantly back to the reality of our situation by the guards shouting out orders. We were ordered to get dressed and to move out into the hospital courtyard where about 50 of us assembled. I had been helped to put my battle dress blouse on, which was now in two pieces pinned together with the Dennison smock pinned at the back. Both of these items were stiff as board where blood had dried through. I'm sure I could see a look of compassion on the faces of some of the medical staff who were watching our departure.

We were once more on the move, dragging and helping each other very painfully along. There were many leg and foot injuries with us so the pace was extremely slow. After about one hour and having covered about two miles, we had a very sobering moment when we were ordered off the road and into a field with the guards watching us from a distance. I'm sure it set many a mind into overdrive as to our fate. We had been kept hanging



around with our thoughts for about % of an hour when a car arrived and a civilian got out and walked over to us. After taking a look at a few of our companions he went back to talk to the guard commander, who had apparently seen the gunpowder rash that was developing on some of us and thought it was typhus, which was prevalent in many parts of Germany at this time. The doctor having satisfied the guard that we were not contagious, we were once more on the move. It was a clear sunny day and high overhead were the vapour trails of many B17 Super Fortress bombers on their way to devastate some target area deep inside Germany. It made me realise what a very dangerous place Germany was right now and whoever was at the receiving end of the fly past we were witnessing would be paying a very heavy price.

We eventually arrived at a narrow gauge railway where we boarded the waiting train of narrow trucks, the air activity high overhead continuing. The train moved off passing, small villages which seemed oblivious to what was going on overhead. After about five miles we were passing through a large military cemetery, possibly from 1914/18; it was vast. We eventually stopped short of what was a small prisoner of war camp which I would say was no more than ten miles from Kassel. As we waited outside the wire, a brief cheer went up from our motley crowd when a guard in one of the goon towers, having seen a large silvery object hurtling towards earth, jumped from his perch some 25 feet up. We all ducked as the object bounded into a field close by. The object turned out to be a reserve fuel tank jettisoned by one of the many fighter escorts who were covering the air armada overhead. The jump had not done him any good as we saw him stretchered away. We were eventually counted and ordered into one of the huts. The room I now found myself in contained about ten, two-tier bunks, of which I claimed a lower berth as I would not be able to climb up. As it was now getting dark the shutters were closed on the windows and the dimly lit gloom of the place enveloped us. After we had moved around discussing our present unpleasant situation with each other I decided to ease myself onto my chosen bunk. It was a painful exercise in the cramped space and on to bare wooden planking. Fully clothed as no blanket was available, feeling miserable and hungry, I remembered the small piece of black bread and fishy cheese I had put in my pocket in the ambulance days ago. It looked decidedly most unappetising, but I started to nibble away.

I was lying there trying to enjoy this small morsel when the hut door opened and in strode a guard with the most viscous looking dog I had ever seen, somewhere between a wolf and a husky. The guard was shouting, something like 'Kommen sie essen.' He was followed by another guard carrying two loaves of black bread and two tins of what turned out to be a herring like fish in oil. I struggled up again in order to get my fair share but the division was a bit of a problem. No one had any implement for cutting the bread so they thought about breaking it into chunks. I then remembered my short hacksaw blade which I had sewn into my battle dress epaulette. These had been issued to us as part of our escape gear with a silk type map and compass in the form of two brass trouser buttons. The saw blade made the issue easier and it also made me aware of the fact that to survive in this austere atmosphere we would be going basic. My small pack had contained mess tins and a combined knife fork and spoon set all lost en route since capture. I soon had one of the fish tins in my pocket and it was a start towards collecting something that would contain liquid foodstuff until we were issued some implements by our host. This in reality never happened as everything, in Germany was short, from now on it would be one of scavenge and we would soon learn to pick up anything, from rusty wire to removing the odd nail from planking in the huts and the very bunks we slept on. Everything, however small had a value in our present surroundings. Having gained my rations, I ate the fish and put most of the bread in my pocket, unknowingly I was developing a habit that continued after the war, I was hoarding something for later. I climbed onto the bunk and when the lights went out had a fitful pain wracked night listening to the sniffing and scuffing of the dogs under the hut blending with the groans and curses of my companions. It was a long night, each man with his own thoughts of happier times and far better billets.

At about 0600 hours we were roused and ordered outside where a head count was made, this was Sunday 24th September. At about 0900 hours our captors provided some warm ersatz coffee made of burnt acorns. This was shared by drinking from a German canteen which was taken from us when it had all gone. Those towards the end received it cold. The need for some sort of container became more apparent.

The day dragged on monotonously and I was becoming more pain wracked and stiff. Every breath I took was agony. The paper dressings applied at Kassel hospital had by now almost disintegrated. I was getting concerned, most of the lads with leg or arm wounds were able to try and make things easier for themselves. I asked one of

my companions if he could help ease my dressing on the back and shoulder. All he was able to do was scrounge a couple of handkerchiefs which were placed loosely over the sodden paper with the shirt to keep it in place. It was very much a case of survival of the fittest and fend for yourself as we were all in the same predicament with no help from our captors whatsoever, such was our existence at the time, we were nothing.

Many years on we hear a lot about P.T.S. (post-traumatic stress) I think we all would have been good candidates to have received counselling for P.T.S. following the past few days experience.

At about 1700 hours came the sensitive business of dividing black bread again, this time with a small portion of the fishy cheese, followed by an issue of what was called mint tea. It tasted like senna pod, but it was wet, although that's all there was to commend it.

On Monday 25th 0600 hours again head count then ersatz coffee at about 0900 hours still from a shared field canteen mug. Then onto the unknown monotony of the day trudging around the outside of the hut.

At about 1100 hours more guards arrived and we were ordered to form up with a lot of pushing into line, again we were on the move, a very bedraggled group dragging one painful step after another. It wasn't a long haul. Around the back of the camp we approached a railway siding with a raised wooden platform at which was standing two carriages with windows heavily boarded out, and they were liberally bedecked with the red cross symbol top and sides. When we were ordered to board the carriages we were surprised to find that they had compartments fitted with wooden seating. Eventually we were hooked up and following much shunting up and down the line we were on our way again.

The only observation points from our carriage were very narrow windows about 3" wide, one looking forward and one to the rear either side of the carriage. There was an armed guard in each compartment and a sergeant in charge of the carriage.

Progress was very slow with many stops such was the state of the German Railways with the constant air raids both day and night. We had no idea in what direction we were going, North, East or West. The many stops and rattle of anti-aircraft fire from passing trains denoted very much the attention being paid to this area of Germany by the allied air forces this day, and the German trains had at this time flak guns mounted front and rear. At one of our enforced stops the guards quickly vacated the coach and we found ourselves locked in these Red cross bedecked cars. When one of my companions looked through the observation window his cursing and exclamations brought others to view. At some point in our journey the two carriages had been shunted and were now in the middle of a goods train which of course was a legitimate target. We appeared to be in a marshalling yard, probably at Hanover. The roar of low flying aircraft and cannon fire had us all trying to make ourselves very small, looking for any available cover which of course was impossible in the enclosed carriages.

The attack went on for minutes which under these conditions seemed like hours. The area soon was quietening down and after a time the guards returned. They had sought cover in shelters at the side of the track and on their return they were met with a hail of abuse. The guard commander went a bit spare threatening to shoot us all and when he found that someone had been at his kit and some cigarettes were missing it was a bit tense for a while until one of the chaps started to sing, "Oh Mr Porter what can I do, I wanted to go to Birmingham and they put me off to Crewe." It was a little bit of light relief which got all the British singing and left the Germans dumbstruck. We were still singing an hour later when the train pulled into Fallingbommel. It was now quite dark as we formed up for the march to Stalag XIB and the unknown, we trudged along again helping each other, passing German troops with their girlfriends in the shadows.

Fallingbommel was a training area for panzer grenadiers and as we trudged up the hill on our left we became aware of goon towers and high barbed wire fences which surrounded very many huts with searchlights panning the area. To say the least, our first impression was one of gloom and certainly not welcoming. We marched in through the first gate and were halted outside what was the administration block. Close by were about 150 more of our walking wounded who had already been counted through. Our party was counted, we then joined the larger group. We were kept hanging around in the cold night air. very hungry, thirsty and dying on our feet. After some considerable time we were marched to a compound where huts were surrounded by more high wire and goon towers at the gate. We were once again counted, then counted again. All we wanted now was somewhere to get

our heads down out of the damp cold night air. We had become accustomed to being deprived of food and drink and didn't expect Stalag XIB to be any different.

Stalag XIB Fallingbostal was an old camp, and when we arrived it already contained Russians, Yugoslavians, Poles, Dutch, French, Serbs, Belgians and Croats to name a few amongst some 25,000 inmates. At first sight on this dark damp night, to many of us it looked like the end of the world.

When eventually we were ordered into our allocated hut the stench and squalid appearance that met us was unbelievable. Closely packed three tier bunks with wooden slats, no blankets or pillows, very dimly lit along the gangway with the bunks on either side. We were told the lights would be going out almost immediately. I found myself a bottom bunk alongside the gangway and, fully dressed, I eased my pain wracked aching limbs onto the wooden boards. The lights went out and we were now in total darkness with our thoughts and the grumbling of our companions. I lay there trying to rest but found it impossible as I was aware of bodies shuffling along the gangway cursing and saying they were being eaten alive. I was also having a scratch. The Russians who had occupied the hut until we arrived had left us lousy, the irritation as these insects burrowed and fed off us was too much for many of us and they continued to walk up and down the aisle throughout this long night. We were all ready when the guards moved in shouting, 'raus' 'schnell' etc. to get outside for 'apel' (roll call).

We were a dishevelled bunch as we shuffled out to form up in five's, then followed the farce of the guards counting from both ends of the parade, passing in the middle, comparing numbers present, then starting over again until their two counts balanced. We found to our displeasure this was going to be a ritual that was going to keep us hanging about in the early hours of many a freezing bleak morning to come. Many of our comrades were short of clothing and footwear, sick and wounded alike, but all had to drag themselves out for this mental torture. After roll call on this morning I found Danny Weddell of 2 Platoon was here with us. Both his lower limbs were injured so he was finding it more difficult to move around. At about 1130 a.m. some watery soup arrived in what I can only describe as a dustbin, we had no utensils to collect it in, until I remembered my fish tin which, although a little battered, allowed me to get a little which I shared with Danny. The issue of rations at this early stage was a shambles, first come first share with those who couldn't move fast enough, going short or even without. My own movement was painful and becoming more laboured but I forced myself to remain independent as possible. Many of our wounds were now infected and the stench of suppurating flesh was nauseating. The only means of personal hygiene was a limited cold water supply with no more means of drying off. There was no heat in anyway and the latrines broken and blocked.

We still had not been processed for P.O.W status, so we realised we were just 'missing in action.' The day wore on with groups standing around discussing the events that brought us to our present intolerable situation, and I believe many of us were still in a state of shock and lethargic. Others had already started to look around for anything useful that could be turned into containers or eating implements. There was another roll call at about 1300 hours and we were given certain orders and rules about the issue of rations, also that, during an air raid, all men would go immediately inside their hut, as there were no slit trenches or shelters for protection. Whether the Germans believed we might be able to signal to allied aircraft we could not understand. The wooden huts provided no protection. Each man was given a blanket during the afternoon, many were threadbare and had holes but never the less it was a start. Then at about 1600 hours there was an issue of black bread, eight men to a one 114 kilo loaf which gave us a thin slice per man, there was a pat of tefalmarge, a watery type margarine. Also an issue of the mint tea, again collected in my prized fish container.

This was to be the basic existence of our foreseeable future. There was another roll call at 1800 hours, with the check and double check which would become routine, and after being dismissed, we dragged ourselves back into our billet. None of us looked forward to lights out and the fearsome onslaught from the lice which although present with us during the day seemed less active.

The following day started again with the guard yelling and banging about in an intimidating manner. The roll call farce went on far too long and there was an even longer wait for something to eat. Then around mid-morning an air raid alarm sounded. I was climbing the steps to get into the hut when a shot rang out hitting a glider pilot sergeant who had hesitated and looked back. He fell down almost on top of me, and we were quickly pulled into the hut where he died within minutes. The shot had been fired by a guard who we all came to know as Hungarian

Joe and most hated. Another result of the air raid was no soup as the detail was not allowed out to collect it from the cookhouse. This, we were to find, happened more often as the air activity increased and we got hungrier.

The conclusion of this personal account by Tom Carpenter will be continued in the December issue, entitled, "Out Of Chaos Comes Order"

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## Internet Contact- Down Under

Wally Gee has kindly informed the Association of the contact address of the British Airborne Forces Australia website:

[WWW.bafa.org.au](http://WWW.bafa.org.au)

Check it out, I'm sure you'll find the contents very interesting.

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## Ex Eagles Sapper

15th -24th March 2004

Ex Eagles Sapper saw 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) deploying on its first Regimental exercise since its reformation in the early part of 2003.

The exercise aimed to test the combat engineer skills and ability of the two field squadrons, 9 Parachute Squadron RE and 51 Field Squadron (Air Assault), with 12 Nova Scotia HQ Squadron providing the command, control and logistic support that was required. The Regiment was very lucky, since we were provided with a large amount of support helicopter assets, which were made available for both the transport of personnel and equipment. This means of delivery is fast becoming the Regiment's bread and butter.

### 9 Para Sqn RE

Lt Andy Lowe (2 Tp Comd)



9 Parachute Squadron deployed on exercise with two field troops, Support Troop, SHQ, and Echelon. Initially we were to get the exercise off to an excellent start with a parachute descent but the weather conditions prevailed and a full SH insertion was rapidly set up instead.

The abundance of helicopter assets made available to us meant that we were able to practise our air skills, such as: aircraft emplaning and deplaning, marking NATO T, the setting up of helicopter landing sites and

rigging equipment to fly forward. It also enabled the development of new SOPs such as devising new underslung load schemes and the use of an on-board liaison officer.



#### Constructing the MGB (Medium girder Bridge)

There were a variety of tasks given to the field troops such as: a brigade waterpoint, reserve bridge demolition, MGB double and single-storey of various sizes including an unplanned reverse strip, NEB, live abatis and tactical minelaying. Most tasks were completed within time and resource constraints, the last engineer work being done early on the Saturday, before the Regiment moved to an FMB at Watton Airfield.

There followed a 36 hour period of reconstitution for everyone before we deployed back into theatre for the 72 hour infantry phase. Again a parachute descent was planned, and this time it was aircraft availability that scuppered our hopes. After another SH insertion we moved to a LD before continuing with a superb advance to contact. This went extremely well, with 4 positions being cleared over an 8 km stretch, and the SSM was pleased to have given out most of his ammo for resupply by the end. A rapid final attack went in just before last light and then we moved to a Regimental harbour area for orders.

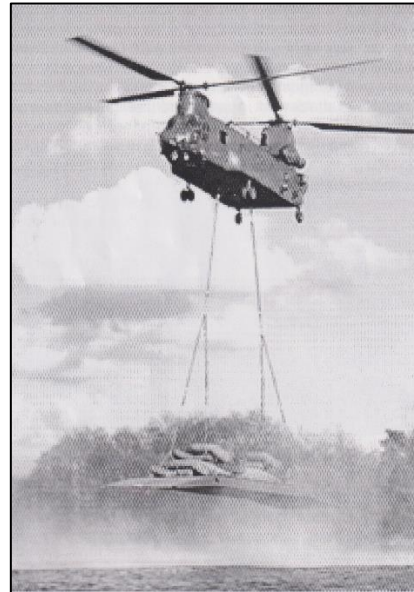


**Outloading the mine stores using a Supacat**

A series of standing patrols and ambushes were mounted from this harbour. The culmination of the infantry phase was then a Regimental river crossing followed by a tab to an assembly area and assault on Eastmere Village. The crossing was extremely well organised and run by 12 Sqn and led to the whole Regiment being across within 5 hours, bar the ATMP which the QM and SQMS thought better to drive along the river bed than swim. The following tab was much needed to warm up parts chilled by the water. Once the Squadron was firm in the

assembly area final battle preparations were made before moving down to the LD. On H hour, 9 Sqn led the initial assault on a heavily defended Eastmere Fibua Village. After breaking in, which was intensive due to the amount of field defences, we established ourselves and then began house clearing. 7 houses and a few hours later, 9 Sqn handed over the assault to 51 Sqn who echeloned through and continued the fight without any overall momentum being lost.

Eagles Sapper was a well-planned exercise and as a result it ran extremely well at Squadron level. The Squadron was worked extremely hard and were justifiably proud of their efforts, and we can only hope the Regimental planners decide to do it all again in the near future.





## 12 (NS) HQ Sqn (Air Assault)

Spr Andy Hull

We deployed onto Thetford training area by Merlin and Chinook helicopters on the morning of 15 March after a long night of briefings and waiting to deploy. Once we had reached the drop off point we had a short tab to RV with our vehicles, we then moved into a harbour area where vehicles were cammed up and routine in defence established.

The first phase of the exercise consisted of Combat Engineer tasks. Our part in this was to run the HLS from which stores loads we had prepared would be moved to task sites by air. We were split into 3 small sections of Rigger Marshalls (RM) with each section being headed up by a Landing Point Commander (LPC). Cpl Mark Lever

was our section LPC, the section was made up mostly of Plant Operator Mechanics (POMs), who were able to get things done quickly due to their above average intelligence and physical prowess.



There were a few small teething problems as we were doing this type of exercise for the first time since completing our RM training, however we quickly got to grips with what was required and each stores lift went off smoothly. After the first couple of lifts we all knew what we had to do and we were able to work well as a team. It was good to see that there was plenty of helicopter support and a wide range of loads and vehicles were taken to the task sites underslung on DROPS racks, in nets etc. In addition we had to recover all the stores from site once tasks were completed in order to ensure that they were ready to outload again for future tasks. By the end of the first week we had all gained plenty of experience of working with helicopters.

### **Endex**

During the second week of the exercise Support Troop was involved in back loading the engineer stores while the remainder of the Regiment conducted an infantry phase. Due to the large amount of stores we had a total of 11 DROPS vehicles, some of which were attached from other units, plus civilian contractors involved in moving kit from the exercise area back to various store depots. The backload of stores was to continue for almost a week after endex, but was eventually completed in time for us to have a night in the Sqn Bar and go on Easter leave.

Overall we all learnt a lot from a very busy exercise. I look forward to doing more of this type of training during my time with 23 Engr Regt (Air Assault) and hopefully doing it for real when we next deploy on operations.



## News from the Branches

### Aldershot

Don Doherty

How did the Freedom of Aldershot March go? Well you may ask! Talk about, "it rained on my parade" isn't in it. We had assembled at Rhine barracks when the monsoon started, the intelligent ones had umbrellas, guys like me just got wet! After all that the march itself went well as the rain stopped as we stepped off. The AEA was very well represented, more so than the REA who, because of their smaller turnout, marched with us. After the parade we made our way to Montgomery Square where marquees had been erected, each designated to participants. The Corps marquee supplied all with an excellent curry lunch plus the usual hot and cold drinks, hot to thaw you out, cold to reach the other parts! HRH Princess Anne, who had taken the salute, went round all the marquees talking to present and past members of all units and spent time in the Corps marquee.



Derek Taylor with some of the lads, the one on the extreme left took part in the Marathon, when asked if he would do it again the reply was unprintable, source, Editor.

We are now relocated in our 'new home' in Buller Barracks, and we extend sincere thanks to the 9 Sqn QM, Capt Jugsy Unsing, the SSM, Al Pearson and in particular to the Sqn tradesmen for their sterling efforts in establishing the new "John Rock" room.

The finalised itinerary for the Arnhem Trip has been produced by John Smith and reflects the amount of detail and hard work that has been put into it, John we hope will be able to relax slightly before starting to get involved in the Xmas festivities, the venue for which has not been decided yet as we are hoping that we may have the use of the facilities in our new "home to be" time will tell.

We have also welcomed back into the branch Mick Porter who rejoined us officially at the Aldershot march past, Mick now takes our membership total to 54, it's nice to see the figures going up even if it is slowly.

We continue to get a good turnout to the lunches' organised by John and Glenda Smith which are held after our meetings, John and Glenda make sure that the places that are chosen provide excellent value for money, this way they are always well attended.

On the 2nd of June, members of the branch attended the funeral of a member of 2 Para who had, in the past, given many of members of the AEA a very hard time; but for the very best of reasons. It was "Smokey" Furness who ran "P" coy in the early days. "Smokey" died peacefully in his sleep on Friday 21st May. At the Aldershot Garrison Church our respects were paid and Chris Chambers carried the Association Standard.

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## Chatham

Eric Blenkinsop

The branch AGM took place at our April meeting.

Only one change was made as Chairman Arthur stepped down due to his commitments with other associations. He had of course served us well for several years and in recognition of this service our own John Stubbs produced a wall plaque of a sculptured head of a helmeted paratrooper in high relief, our President John Grosvenor presented this to him on the night.

The Arnhem Oak - This was a ceremony organised by Lt Col (Retd) Beaumont and the Sittingbourne branch of the PRA whereby an oak tree was brought over from Arnhem and ceremoniously planted in the Memorial Garden at Tonge Mill.

Representatives at the ceremony were 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment by Lt Col Beckett Capt Humm a contingent of 10 paratroopers and the pony mascot. From Holland was the Military Attache from the Dutch Embassy. Also present was the Chairman of the War Widows Association.

The Chatham branch was well represented and the Dedication Service was conducted by our branch Padre the Reverend Bernard Foulger. This was followed by a march through Sittingbourne behind the St John Ambulance Band, Sheppey, with the day culminating with a reception in the LTK Paper Club.

All in all a memorable and worthwhile occasion.

Normandy - Were we to give a detailed account of the 5th, 6th, 7th, June we would need at least four full pages and would soon run out of superlatives. Last year was memorable; this year was unforgettable and special. Special since so many Airborne Engineer Veterans who would not normally be able to make the annual pilgrimage; made the supreme effort to be there.



Names like Charlie Willbourne, Bill Dickson, Ben Jordan, Bill Irvine, Harry Knowles, Ken Mallet, George Hopkins, Dave Breese, George Franklin, and no doubt a few more that we have missed. These along with the Die Hards, John Shave & family, John Mason, Bob Sullivan & family, Pearl Saddler & family, Harry Mosley, Ron Gibson, Matt Newell, & exceptionally this year Mallory Hall, daughter of the late SSM Bob Barr with husband Mark. Special because the great man himself was there, Brigadier

James Hill DSO at 93 years; somewhat frail in stature but still powerful in voice. There to see his statue unveiled by HRH Prince Charles.

Special, because the local civilian population played such a significant part at Sannerville on the 6th and at Grangues on the 7th.

After dining with the villagers at Sannerville in the evening we walked through the village behind the Edmonton Police bagpipe band and as we preceded the doors opened and the procession swelled, it was just like the Pied Piper. This all led up to an impressive firework display at DZ K Touffreville.

Special because at Bur se Dives (Jukes Bridge) the children sang to us and handed out personal thank you notes to us.

Special, because although we laid 5 wreaths at various locations there were two elements this year, which brought the whole occasion to life. This was the presence of the children throughout and the mass parachute drop on the 5th.



Then came the icing on the cake but not on the Itinerary. Many of you 'oldies' will recall that epic wartime film, " Brief Encounter." Well our honorary member Nick Gibson had one with HRH Prince Charles when he handed him a personal copy of "Go To It."

#### Caen -Shipmates

Several of our members who shall be nameless made a habit of splicing the main brace at a local bistro with a few matelots. This resulted in us all being invited on board the Frigate HMS Campbeltown on the afternoon of the 6th for a tour of the ship followed by a gin & tonic. This was of course most unique given that the previous Campbeltown was used to blow up the dock gates at St Nazaire and Sgt Durrant RE was awarded a posthumous VC.

In conclusion we did present an AEA Plaque to each of the Mayors at Sannerville and Grangues.

Finally we believe that the following 'DEAR VETERAN' encapsulates the meaning and feeling of this very special occasion.



Dear Veteran,

We are happy that you are here today for the 60th anniversary.

We thank you for protecting us.

It's thanks to you that we are still here today.

We understand the sacrifices that you made to liberate us. France and me will never forget it.

We send you a great big Thank you.

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## Edinburgh

Mick Walker

We have not reported for a while; this is down to your correspondent in Scotland rather than the editor, but hopefully this will bring readers up to date.

An obituary to Gibby Earl appears elsewhere in the Journal. It is worthy of note that John Donaldson, the first Chairman of the Branch and a long term friend of Gibby, travelled to Canada for the funeral where he organised the Branch's floral tribute. Brian McKean, our immediate past Chairman, had a stroke in February. Unfortunately on investigating and treating Brian for the stroke the medics discovered that he was suffering from renal cancer. He was looked after at home by his wife Vai and a team of visiting nursing staff but died in June. An obituary appears later in the Journal.

Still on the medical front, Tom Turner in Australia had been having some heart problems and had to resort to using a puffer. He was taken to hospital by arrangement and underwent treatment as a day patient. Both John Donaldson and Mick Walker spoke to him shortly after his return home and he is feeling very much better and has been cleared to resume working. Although he is still working Tom has suffered an allergic reaction to the medicine he is taking and this has hampered somewhat his return to full fitness.

Continuing on the medical theme, Jimmy Dunn's wife has not been well at all and our thoughts are with her and Jimmy.

In the absence of any other volunteer candidates the existing office bearers were re-elected at our AGM in November 2003. That means Ronnie Drummond continues as Chairman and will be supported by Dougie Archibald as Secretary and Mick Walker as Treasurer. Jim Simpson will continue, as Branch Auditor, to keep an eye on the Treasurer. Although it is not an elected position John Donaldson will, by common consent, remain as our IT expert.

On the social side a good number of us, accompanied by our better halves, attended the PRA 2003 Xmas dance where, as always, all had a good time.

Several of us connived with the family of Kim and Rose Panton and attended a surprise joint celebration for Rose's birthday - being gentlemen we will not mention which one - and their Ruby wedding anniversary. This was held in December at the Scottish Mining Museum at Newton grange and was exceptionally well hosted by their offspring and the AEA contingent and wives, other friends and relations all had a great time.

Willie Grant - he of Bren gun fame - made his most recent visit home from Thailand in February and March. Willie is well settled in Bangkok with four children, four grandchildren and a fifth on the way. He no longer has the need to earn a crust but is occasionally recalled to work in the guise of a consultant. Nice work if you can get it! There will be no consultancy work in August however as Willie is coming back to Edinburgh with his wife and some grandchildren when, amongst other things, they will attend the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Look forward to seeing you then, Willie.

In October and November '03 Mick Walker was in Australia for the Rugby World Cup and he met up with our Edinburgh Branch members there - Ally Burnett, Ian Davidson and Tom Turner. Ally arranged corporate hospitality - tickets and 2 nights hotel - for himself and Mick at one game and Tom and Anne Turner once again proved themselves to be super hosts on two separate occasions. Meals out with Ian were a pleasure and it did not seem as if it were thirty years since the two had last met. All in all a grand time was had - pity about Scotland's performance at the rugby!

Ally returned to Edinburgh in June '04 on a short holiday to attend to some family business. Short though his visit was he managed - surprise, surprise - to have a meal out with some of the guys and their wives and another night out with the lads. Also at that night was Bert Leslie, another 2 Troop, 300 Sqn RE (TA) member who left for Canada in 1967. Our Treasurer swiftly relieved Bert of his Branch subscription. OK, he is not yet an AEA member but if he does not follow it through we will consider his Branch subscription as a donation!

A dozen or so of us accepted the local PRA's invitation to attend a dinner to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the formation of that Association. This was held at the Garrison Sgts' Mess at Redford Barracks in May and once again, all had a grand time. It was particularly interesting to hear the views of Colonels of a TA Bn and a regular Bn, both in their after dinner speeches and in less formal circumstances over a drink. Equally interesting were the Mess prices and meeting the Para Regt guys with whom we shared planes in the 1960s.

While we will continue to submit articles such as this for publication the more IT literate of the readership may like to know we now have a website with John Donaldson overseeing and updating it. This is:

[www. edinburgh-branch-airborne-engineers-association.co.uk](http://www.edinburgh-branch-airborne-engineers-association.co.uk) and all should feel free to access it. We do appreciate that many members do not have IT facilities or like to have, as I do, a hard copy of things and as noted above will summarise all matters of interest in future editions of the Journal.

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## Yorkshire Branch

Bill Rudd

Hello again to all our Airborne Family from the Yorkshire boys. Yes we are still alive and kicking, up in the warm North, yes I think the climate is changing? The Branch continues to move along in the right direction, meetings every two-month with a monthly lunch in between. We cover a very large catchment area and several members have at least a 100-mile return trip, well-done lads keep it up.

Our last Sunday lunch was very well attended, and it was most rewarding to see so many of the younger age group in attendance, no offence against the Golden Oldies, that includes me? Nice to see Dave Ruddick with his young bride Jacqueline, Sean McCargo from Baghdad, Bob Clow with his first wife Susan; I did not ask any questions on that one! Most important we recruited a new member in Harry Huggins and his wife Jean, we hope to see much more of them in the future, he also joined the Association, Chris Chambers please note! It was also nice to see Lorraine Dunk who continues to support the Branch.

Ripon Veterans Weekend (REA) was well attended by members and wives with a record number of red berets on the Sunday morning parade. We all felt quite proud to be marching alongside the now newly formed 51 Air Assault Sqn who are stationed in Ripon with 38 Engr Regt, they will move down to Cambridge along with 9 Sqn when their accommodation is completed.

Our trip to Arnhem is now booked for September, although I have my reservations on the camping aspect? And the master chef Yorkie Davies, and his 2ic being Davie Grimbley, Help!

Lastly Bob Prosser has asked me to mention a planned trip to Crete in May 2005, details to date are: We would like to thank Frank Menzies-Hearn for again going to Crete for the Chania memorial Service where he played his Pipes, while the wreathes were being laid and thanks to Stan Marley who laid the wreath on behalf of the Royal Engineers.

Next year we hope Sid Burrell and his wife Celia will attend the Memorial Service with Sid laying the wreath. Those of us that attend will be wearing our berets and medals, giving Sid our full support on the parade, also at several functions, which will be arranged by the Crete Veterans Association. For those who are not aware Sid was captured in Crete and taken prisoner in 1941 and spent the rest of the war as a POW, with numerous escape attempts. Any of Sid's friends who would like to support him, please come along and enjoy the party. I have the details on a 5 star hotel and Bob Prosser has details of self-catering villas. The date is the 16th May 2005 and we are going for two weeks, one week can be booked. To date we have at least 12 confirmed bookings. Any members interested please contact either Bob Prosser or myself.

Looking forward to meeting everybody at the Coventry AGM in October.

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## Parachute Course Reports

Copies of personal course reports for the period 1941 - 1959 can be obtained at a cost of £5 per copy by applying to: Airborne Forces Museum, Browning Barracks, Aldershot, GU11 2BU (Tel: 01252 349619)

Information required is your regimental number, rank, name and date of the course.

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## 150 years of the British Army in Aldershot

Editor



**Led by Major Paul Fountaine (OC) 9 Para Sqn march towards the saluting dais**

The cheerful bunting and Union flags fluttering around the town gave a splash of colour to the otherwise damp and grey dawn of the army's 150th anniversary celebrations on Friday 30 April. It was a year in the planning, every minute detail was looked at and schedules were drawn up - unfortunately someone forgot to organise some decent weather! However, in true British tradition, come hail, rain or shine, with stiff upper lips, the troops of Aldershot, past and present, commenced the celebrations in pouring rain.

Troops returning to Aldershot joined in with the resident units setting out displays and laid out regimental silver in the marquees ready for the visit from the Princess Royal.



**The OC introduces HRH to members of the Sqn**

The town of Aldershot owes its very existence to the British Army. If Prince Albert and the military higher echelon had not chosen the barren stretch of heathland, strategically placed half-way between the capital city and Portsmouth naval base as the best place to train the Empire's troops then Aldershot would be little more than a small village. Over the decades the town has changed beyond recognition. Gone are many of the Victorian buildings, flattened in the sixties to make way for cheap buildings that are already derelict. A classic example of this is

Montgomery Lines, which is earmarked for demolition in the not too distant future.



With bands playing, troops marching with bayonets fixed, the 1,500 soldiers and veterans made their way from Montgomery Lines down past the saluting dais located outside of the Princess Hall.

**Princess Anne chatting to WOII (SSM) Al Pearson and the Sqn 2IC Capt David Croall**



Units taking part in the parade included:

7 Royal Horse Artillery, Colours of the Parachute Regiment, 9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers, 27 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps, Canadian Regular army, 10 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps, Royal Army Medical Corps, Army Physical Training Corps, Royal Military Police, Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps - providing the music for the parade were the bands of the Royal Artillery, Corps of Royal Engineers, Royal Logistic Corps and the band from the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Cadet Force.



Various Veteran Associations were represented, which included:

Royal Artillery, Airborne Engineers Association, the Royal Engineers Association, the Parachute Regiment Association, Army Catering Corps, Canadian Veterans, Royal British Legion, Normandy Veterans and the Royal Logistic Corps.

**HRH meets some of the Sqn members**

Our own AEA contingent totalled 42 members, some of whom had travelled some considerable distance for the occasion. It was nice to see John Elliott and

Bill Shield on parade having travelled up from Kent, and a fleeting glimpse of Snowy Adams among the sea of spectator faces.

With the 'march past' completed the focal point turned to Montgomery Square where numerous marquees had been erected, each sporting a bar and food servers. We took the opportunity to wet our insides with a few pints of alcohol - well we were wet on the outside, so we had to balance things up! This was one of the occasions when you really needed a hot curry and the chefs and caterers didn't let us down. The buffet was excellent and plentiful.

It was great to see 'Red Berets' marching through Aldershot again, but have we witnessed it for the last time?

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## Incidents from Abroad

Peter Twelftree

I am holidaying with my wife in the Philippines until September, re-uniting with her family and friends after a two-year absence. We will also be carrying out maintenance on our house and enjoying the pleasures of beach, warm sea and Filipino friendship and hospitality.

Coinciding with our visit is that of a Norwegian friend of ours with his local wife, also visiting on a similar mission. He and his twin brother have both parachuted in Norway many years ago, and the other evening he related two incidents to me. I have never found Alf to be a 'tall story' teller. Strange and amazing things have happened on occasion and I have no reason to believe that the following are other than true. You may find them interesting, and with your magical editing you might feel they are worthy of print.

The first concerns his twin brother on his first descent. This was from 2,000 feet, his main canopy didn't develop, and he was candling. He deployed his reserve, which entered into the main and so also failed to fully arrest his descent. He was aware that he was dropping on to high-tension overhead electricity cables and by holding himself rigidly to attention he passed safely between and through them. He then fell into deeply heaped snow, which had been cleared from a nearby road, landed with no injury, and was able to walk away. He wanted to jump again straight away but was not permitted to do so until the following spring. During that intervening winter he developed many nervous afflictions, which fortunately disappeared after making his next descent.

The second concerns another "candle" where the Para miraculously passed through a small window in a hanger roof, with inches to spare all around. The canopy caught on the roof of the hanger, leaving him suspended just two feet from the ground. He released himself and walked away unscathed."

I don't think the day-to-day pleasures of living a more simple, less sophisticated life here are of general interest for journal publication. If anything does strike me as worthy of note I will drop you a line. I will continue to collect mail from my Spanish Wanadoo email address, once the telephone connection lost in the recent typhoon is restored. Two and a half weeks so far and all I can get are sweet words from a charming sounding female telephone voice, assuring me that the technical department are aware of my problem and that my telephone will shortly be reconnected.

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John Mason in Normandy for the 60th Anniversary of D-Day

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## Double Hills Memorial Service – 2004

Peter Yeates

Date and Timings:- Sunday September 26th 2004 Assemble: 1400 Hours Tennis court Road, Paulton, Nr Bristol

Latest update on the forthcoming Double Hills Memorial Service is that planning and organisation is well under way. Thanks to generous donations from the AEA and other agencies we shall be able to adequately fund the 60th Anniversary of the Double Hills Glider crash September 1944 and the 60th Anniversary of Operation Market Garden.

And moreover, for a few years or more after the 60th, that is provided we can keep doing what we are doing.

I now have the help of the Bristol Branch REA and as an Honorary Member there we are able to get the branch to take responsibility for the event with their legal connections. In every other respect all remains the same including the Double Hills Bank Account.

This year's Reviewing Officers will be Brigadier Ian McGill CBE and the Director of Army Aviation, Brigadier Richard Folkes.

9 Squadron have promised to attend (subject to operational commitments) in full force and the Army Air Corps -Middle Wallop likewise.

We do expect all AEA members attending to take part ( ACTIVELY) in the 60th Inspection and Parade past our distinguished Reviewing Officers. Hopefully we shall have the Historic Air Force from Middle Wallop for the traditional Flypast which will commence the service in the field.

Plan B (if it rains really hard) will be the Paulton Parish Church (as in 2001)

Would wreath layers please inform Peter Yeates well beforehand so that we can plan the announcements and seating.

I shall be trying to ensure that the Distinguished Very Old and The Very Bold, that is the Wartime 9th, 261 and Glider Pilots, are together in a group for Inspection and Attendance.

9 Para Sqn are undertaking to renovate the Memorial in early September; for which we are very grateful. This is essentially ground works not the structure itself. However it is now some 25 years since the Memorial was built.

Our usual volunteers are required to help out on the day. Parking information for those not familiar with the routine, which never varies, needs to be provided. Many ask, " what happens where and when, what happens next ? " - Those who know make sure others are kept informed. Routine is always the same.

So come on the day and bring a raffle prize (Jan Chambers is in charge of this with her team). If you can help any assistance offered will be greatly appreciated. Our biggest challenge is getting the older veterans across to the Memorial site, but we are working on this-

Any further details, Peter Yeates always available:



Tel: [redacted] or Mobile [redacted] e-mail: [redacted]

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## Operation FRESHMAN HEROS Skillen Memorial Completed



Caithness based members of the royal British Legion Scotland, Wick and the Aircrew Association HB, who served on "Operation FRESHMAN Skillen Memorial Project Committee," have now, as promised expended remaining project funds on the large plaque which lists the 42 names of those who lost their lives in "Operation FRESHMAN". The completed plaque was installed in time for the Remembrance Sunday 2003, and a poppy wreath was laid on the Memorial.



## Commemorating Their Names

Harold Padfield

I was very interested to read the article by Tom Carpenter in the April edition of the journal, especially with reference to the plaque unveiled in the Eusibius Grote Church, in memory of the Sappers of 9th Company Airborne RE, killed at Arnhem and having no known graves.

When I first visited the cemetery at Groesbeek, I noticed that a number of the first squadron killed at Arnhem were buried at the Groesbeek Canadian Cemetery. It wasn't until 1994 that I was able to go to Groesbeek in search of these graves, but there were none. I eventually found their names commemorated on the memorial wall, just inside tile entrance (gate on the left hand side). I also found the names of eight members of the 9th Field Company Airborne, (6 of whom are mentioned by Tom) the others being Captain Binjon and Spr Lawson and five members of 4 Para Squadron.

I took note of all the relevant details, dates killed or died of wounds later; and wrote to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission asking if they would consider having their names inscribed on an oak panel or panels and put in the Oosterbeek Cemetery. I explained that there was a shelter halfway down, on either side of the cemetery where they could be placed, because I consider that they and their families deserve this honour and knowing at first-hand how difficult it is for families to get to Groesbeek. The reply I received from the War Graves Commission was as follows: -

'The Cemetery at Arnhem is purely a cemetery, there is no memorial there and we would not erect a separate memorial for a section you mention, as it would mean that they were commemorated twice.

I am sorry that we are not able to agree to your request, but you can rest assured that your comrades will not be forgotten.

Since submitting my article for typing, I heard on the TV that a casualty of the conflict had been found in Holland and was given a ceremonial burial even though he was named on a memorial, which makes nonsense on the reply I received from the War Graves Commission. Whilst I am pleased for the family, I feel a little aggrieved that we couldn't put two plaques in the Oosterbeek Cemetery - but that's life I suppose. Some win, others lose. I will just have to be satisfied that I at least tried and lost.

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## Arnhem Memorial Service

Dave Lincoln

It is proposed that a memorial service to honour servicemen who were on Operation Market Garden will be held at Thorpe Camp Visitors Centre, Tattershall Thorpe, Nr Woodhall Spa on Sunday 12th September.

Thorpe Camp is a Museum and is now exhibiting Airborne items both from Fulbeck Hall and other sources; it is situated on the B1192 midway between Coningsby and Woodall Spa.

The thought behind the service has been prompted by a possible need for an opportunity for those who cannot attend the 60th Anniversary in Arnhem to be able to show their respect for those brave Airborne Warriors and Aircrew at Arnhem. Dress code will be appreciated with red berets.

Arrangements are now under way for the service and to help with an approximation of numbers attending, please phone and confirm of your intention, [REDACTED] as Thorpe Camp has limited refreshment toilet facilities etc. and an idea of numbers expected would be appreciated.

The service will be taken by Padre Alan Cobain (Airborne) and commences at 1230 hours. The ATC Band from Ringway will be providing the music and the D-Day Dakota will fly past at approx. 1420 hours.

An oak tree is to be planted beside the area of the present RAF Memorial and a commemorative plaque will also be installed for the occasion.

Funding will be required for this event and to this end we will hopefully approach Airborne units for the donations towards the costing of this memorial service.

British Legion, Regimental Associations and cadet forces standard bearers will be most welcome.

It is not intended that a parade take place rather more an assembly of those wishing to pay respect to Airborne Forces.

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## Right to Reply

Gus Woods

I cannot agree with Steve Briggs view of the postal vote (April edition 2004).

I joined the Royal Engineers in May 1943. I do not consider that changing my mode of transport from land (or sea) to air in order to reach the job site in anyway changes my basic function as a Sapper.

As Sappers I believe we should be affiliated to the Royal Engineers Association.

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## Daily Part One Orders

By

Major RM MERRELL MBE RE OC 9 Indep Para Sqn RE

Orders for Saturday 23 April 1960

889. NAAFI Club - Aldershot. Complaints are made by the ladies attending NAAFI Club Dances of the "Frequently ludicrous and sometimes revolting" dress of soldiers in civilian clothing at these dances. It has been decided by the dance committee that the best remedy is for ladies to refuse to dance with those wearing outlandish dress or clothes in any offensive to them.

**Those were the days'**

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## World Championships Triathlon Long Distance

Sater, Sweden

Graham Sheward

Saturday 3rd July 2004 - On the morning of the race I lined up with all the other athletes over 60 to start the Championships. At 0812 hours we dived in just behind the ladies to swim the 4000 metres. My swim went very well and as far as I could make out I came out in 1h 34m in second place.

We then went on to do the 120 km bike ride which was made up of three laps each time going through the start I finish and several storms. This I did in 4h 15m where I thought, (wrongly) I was now in first position. We now had the 30 km run the Dane who I passed in the transition caught me on the run and we ran together for some of the way. He was of the opinion that we might run in together in first place, however he was going just a touch too fast for me so I let him go.

For the next three laps of the 7.5 km I was just behind him when going through the start/finish for the last time (I was still on track for my target time of 9 hours.) I heard that the first 65 year had just finished, I was amazed as far as the Dane and I were aware we were the Dane had been first, then just a little later we heard that the second 65 year had finished, there had been two athletes ahead of us so this put me in fourth place in 9 hours 30 minutes. Although I had not made the first three I was well pleased to be in the top 10 in the world, but more important my wife Anne and myself had had a wonderful time in this beautiful country in this very fine sport, and met new friends and enjoyed the company of old acquaintances.

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## Blazer Badges

Harry Barnsley

Greetings from the cockle beds of Wales, and the muttering multitude at Mumbles, and felicitations from the Society of Swansea Virgins.



Lt Col (retd) John Humphries who is also a member of the Swansea branch of the FRA, recently put me in touch with a gentleman who could produce personalised Blazer Badges. I duly got in touch with the gentleman and placed an order for one; and was delighted with the results. As it takes time an effort to set up the machine, he does not normally offer to produce one off's, preferring instead to do them in bundles of ten or more. The design in the main is standard, but the wording on the scroll are to your choice. Perhaps some of the branches would be interested in ordering a few.

Details of contact as follows:

Mr Bill Whyte, 2, Glenavon Place, Brightons, Falkirk, SK2  
OTA (Tel: After 8 p.m. 01324 716144)

Reference my first letter to our Journal, somebody who prefers anonymity answered it and mentioned the Canadian Engineers? I made no mention of them in it, I think I wrote that the Canadians offered us Infantry Support, but in the chaos of time they failed to show up, probably dropped in the wrong DZ. To the author of that letter might I suggest that in future he refrains from reading the Journal on the toilet, it affects ones concentration - and what the hell has my subscription got to do with it?

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## Cannon Ball- Historical Information

In the heyday of sailing ships, all war ships and many freighters carried iron cannons. Those cannons fired round iron cannon balls. It was necessary to keep a good supply near the cannon.

But how to prevent them rolling about the deck?

The best method devised was a square based pyramid with one ball on top, resting on four resting on nine which rested on sixteen. Thus a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon.

There was only one problem- how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding/rolling from under the others. The solution was a metal plate called a "Monkey" with 16 round indentations. But if this plate was made of iron, the iron balls would quickly rust to it. The solution to the rusting problem was to make "Brass Monkeys."

Few landlubbers realise that brass contracts much more and much faster than iron when chilled. Consequently, when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the iron cannon balls would come right off the monkey. Thus, it was quite literally, "Cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey"!

(And all this time you thought that was an improper expression, didn't you?)

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## Membership Report

Chris Chambers

Since my last report, a further 11 members have joined our ranks

|                        |                                      |                      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| James Tamblin          | 9 Para Sqn / 51 Fd Sqn (Air Assault) | 2003 - still serving |
| Robert Dear            | 2 Para Sqn /1 AB Sqn RE/249 Fd Coy   | 1945- 1948           |
| Reginald Parsons       | 9 Indep AB Sqn RE                    | 1954- 1956           |
| Andrew Weller          | 9 Para Sqn RE                        | still serving        |
| Gary Devlin            | 9 Para Sqn RE                        | 1993-2000            |
| Kelvin Newton          | 131 Para Engr Regt/10 Bn Para Regt   | 1960- 1976           |
| Terry Aimes            | 9 Indep Para Sqn RE                  | 1964-1971            |
| John (Paddy) Moorhouse | 9 Indep Para Sqn/9 Para Sqn          | 1972-1981            |
| Martin McKenzie        | 9 Para Sqn/ 51 Fd Sqn (Air Assault)  | 1998 - still serving |
| Ian Worland            | 9 Para Sqn RE                        | 1992 - still serving |
| Chris (Harry) Huggins  | 9 Indep Para Sqn RE                  | 1965-1978            |

"Gentlemen, Welcome to the Airborne Engineers Association"

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## Association Shop

| Description   | Price  | P& P UK Post Rate) |
|---|--------|--------------------|
| Association Ties (Pegasus logo)   | £13.00 | £1.00              |
| Association Blazer Badges   | £14.00 | £1.00              |
| Association Jumpers (sizes 38-48) Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo embroidered 'Airborne Engineers' | £25.00 | £3.10              |
| Association Sweatshirts Maroon or blue logo - Medium/Large or X Large                               | £16.50 | £3.10              |
| Association Polo Shirts - Fred Perry Style Maroon or blue logo Medium/Large or X Large              | £15.50 | £2.50              |
| Association 'T' Shirts - Maroon only - Large or X Large only  | £9.00  | £1.80              |
| Association Shields   | £18.00 | £3.30              |
| A Memoir of 9 Para Sqn 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              |
| 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)                        | £7.00  | £3.80              |
| Bow Ties (silk woven bow ties with Wings & Pegasus logo)  | £9.50  | £1.00              |

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:

Jan Chambers

My thanks for your continued support,

Jan

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## Directions to the Royal Court Hotel- AGM/Reunion

29th October - 1st November 2004

From the North (M1) Leave the M1 at junction 21 on to the M69. Take the M6 North to Junction 3 exiting onto the A444 towards Coventry; follow the dual carriageway with Macro to your left hand side. At the first roundabout turn right and take the first left slip road, sign posted Holbrook's passing through the traffic lights under the bridge. Follow on to the first set of traffic lights go over the first set of traffic lights, and at the T Junction turn left into Parkville Highway.

At the second set of traffic lights turn right into Parkgate Road, follow this to the next T Junction and turn left into Bennett's Road South. At third set of traffic lights by the Save Garage, turn right into Sandpits Lane.

Follow on to the next T Junction turn right the Hotel is located 100 yards on the right hand side.

From the North West (M6) Leave the M6 at Junction 3 down to roundabout follow signs for A444 Coventry follow the dual carriageway with Macro to your left hand side. At the first roundabout turn right and take the first left slip road sign posted Holbrook's; passing through the traffic lights under the bridge. Follow on to the first set of traffic lights; go over the first set of traffic lights and at the junction turn left into Parkville Highway. At the second set of traffic lights turn right into Parkgate Road, follow this to the next T Junction and turn left into Bennett's Road South. At third set of traffic lights by Save Garage turn right into Sandpits Lane. Follow onto next T Junction turn right the Hotel is located 100 yards on the right hand side.

From the South West (M 5/M42) Leave the M42 at Junction 6 onto the A45 towards Coventry. Take the slip road exit for Coventry A4114 (Just after Coventry Hill Hotel on the left hand side). At the roundabout take the second exit sign posted City Centre, Allesley, Jaguar Assembly Plant & Brownhill Green. At the next roundabout take the 2nd Exit sign posted Browns Lane Plant & Keresley. Follow onto next roundabout straight across (Jaguar on your left hand side). At next roundabout straight across (Garden Centre on your right hand side). Follow onto T Junction; at T Junction turn right, Hotel is located 100 yards on your left.

From the South (M 40) Leave the M40 at Junction 15 onto the A46 towards Coventry. Then turn left onto the A45 towards Birmingham. Go straight across at the 1st roundabout following the A45 towards Birmingham. Go straight across at a number of traffic lights and straight across at the next roundabout. There are several more sets of traffic lights so continue straight across these remaining on the A45. Take the exit sign posted A4114 City Centre, Allesley, Jaguar assembly Plant & Brownhill Green. At the roundabout take the fourth exit sign posted City Centre, Allesley, Jaguar Assembly Plant & Brownhill Green. At the next roundabout take the 2nd Exit sign posted Browns Lane Plant & Keresley. Follow onto next roundabout straight across (Jaguar on your left hand side). At next roundabout straight across (Garden Centre on your right hand side). Follow onto T Junction; at T Junction turn right Hotel is located 100 yards on your left.

From the South (M1) Leave the M 1 at Junction 17 onto the M45/A45 to Coventry. Continue along the A45 towards Birmingham over several roundabouts and traffic lights. Take the exit sign posted A4114 Allesley, Jaguar assembly Plant & Brownhill Green. At the roundabout take the fourth exit sign posted City Centre, Allesley, Jaguar Assembly Plant & Brownhill Green. At the next roundabout take the 2nd Exit sign posted Browns Lane Plant & Keresley. Follow onto next roundabout straight across (Jaguar on your left hand side). At the next roundabout go straight across. (Garden Centre is on your right hand side). Follow onto T Junction; at T Junction turn right Hotel is located 100 yards on your left.

To our Scottish members, please be advised to check out the low cost airline flights into Birmingham airport. The airport is only a few miles from the Royal Court Hotel and the total cost could be considerably less than driving South to the venue.

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