



THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



For All Airborne Sappers - Service Not Self

<https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/> or <https://www.aea.org.uk>



The Airborne Engineer



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Publication of the December 2025 Edition of the Journal

It is our intention to publish the December 2025 Journal in a printed magazine format. Members submitting material for publication in the December 2025 edition are requested to submit it to us by Monday 17th November 2025. Please get in touch via any of the contact details listed above. Thank you
To ensure you receive the PDF eJournal and the printed version all members are once again urged to update postal and email addresses. Contact Dave Pace through any means including. Tel: 07977 282620 or Email: contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com

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President's Update

Strictly speaking, this isn't a traditional President's Report. As many of you know, Baz stepped down last year due to various other commitments. With continuing support from Baz and the National committee, I've taken up the reins temporarily to ensure continuity. Going forward, the President of the AEA, a National Branch of the REA, will be the Commanding Officer of 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, who happens to be "Bing's son." The Vice President's role will be filled by a volunteer veteran, and a formal vote for Baz's permanent replacement will take place at the Gala Dinner. I've thrown my hat into the ring but am just as happy to support anyone else who volunteers.

Setting the Scene: Jan–Jun Update

From January to June, the committee has met regularly to keep the merger on track. It's been a time-consuming task, and I want to especially thank our Secretary, **Mike Robertson BEM**, who's done a sterling job organising Zoom meetings, managing late changes, and keeping us all on course. A separate article in this journal outlines exactly where we are with the merger. It's vital that we remain a vibrant and self-sufficient association capable of standing on our own two feet but wise enough to ask for help when needed.

As **Joe Houlston**, AEA Member No.1, wisely put it: "We want their money and our independence" or, in simpler terms, *"cake and eat it."* That's the balance we're aiming for. There may be some bumps along the way, but rest assured, the committee and I are committed to grading them out or if I dare use a Combat Engineer term, *overbridging*.

Encouraging New Members

Our biggest challenge is encouraging more active membership. This isn't unique to us it's an issue across the entire veteran and volunteer community in the UK. To thrive, we must attract people willing to volunteer a bit of their time to coordinate branches, run accounts, or support events. I don't have a silver bullet (if I did, I'd be buying lottery tickets), but what I do know is this: if we always do what we've always done, we'll always get what we've always got.

The merger offers a real opportunity to change direction bring back lost call signs and attract new blood, especially from those who served in the '80s and are now retiring. They may be ready to re-engage socially with like-minded individuals.

Broadening Our Reach

As the Airborne Engineers have grown to regimental size, our Association has remained largely focused on 9 Para Sqn. For veterans from the pre 1976 the halcyon days of 9 Independent Para Sqn, that's understandable. But today, our Corps footprint is broader and more integrated than ever:

- 12 Parachute Headquarters and Support Squadron
- 9 Parachute Squadron
- 51 Parachute Squadron
- 70 Gurkha Parachute Squadron
- 299 Parachute Squadron (Army Reserve)

One of the few examples where hybridisation of Regular and Reserve has truly worked.

The merger gives us the opportunity to engage with a much larger group of para-trained veterans and serving personnel. A stronger link with the Regiment has already taken root - 14 AEA members attended the recent **VE Day celebrations**, thanks to an invite from the unit. The REA (A) generously donated £430 to cover costs for all veterans, a great gesture of support. While Woodbridge logistically isn't Aldershot, it shows what's possible when we build stronger connections.

Upcoming Social Events

Looking ahead, our calendar remains full:

- **September:** The **Yorkshire Branch** is leading a group of 16 on an Arnhem trip, Eurocamp booked last year. Why 16 places? it's perfectly sized for two minibuses. As ever, **Ed and Ton** will be "herding the cats" to points of interest. **Paul Moore** and the **Airborne Riders** will also be on site, so expect a lively bar!
- **October 18, 2025:** The **Gala Dinner** will be a highlight of the year. Many thanks in advance to **Mike Ellery** for the hard work he's putting in to make it a success.
- **September 28, 2025:** This marks the **50th anniversary of the Cromwell Lock tragedy**, where 10 Sappers from the Scottish Troop of 131 Independent Parachute Squadron RE (Volunteers) tragically drowned during a training exercise at Cromwell Weir, River Trent. This is an especially significant and solemn event. Much planning and funding have already gone into it, and our thanks go to **Olaf Dudley** (PSAO 131 Commando Sqn), **Tom Smith** (AEA Birmingham Branch), **Chris Shillito** (AEA 299 Association Hull) and others who are making it happen.

Final Thoughts

This year continues to present both challenges and opportunities. The merger, the increased engagement, and the commemorations ahead all point to an Association that's evolving while staying true to its roots. Denise and I are looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the Gala Dinner in October.

Airborne Engineers - past and present - remain a special breed. Let's continue to honour that legacy by strengthening our community and looking out for each other.

Ubique

Phil Taylor

Acting President, Airborne Engineers Association

Chairman's Update

Hi everyone and welcome to what is, sadly, my last chairman's update. I took the decision to stand down some time ago and announced my intention to do so at the last AGM. At the OGM in April Dave Leibrick was voted as the Chairman Elect and will officially take post as Chairman at the AGM in Scotland. I have known Dave for over 45 years and am confident that the Association will be in good hands under his leadership.

During my, nearly, 7 years as Chairman, the Association has undergone massive Change. The Journal has moved to an on-line publication and the shop has evolved to be on online platform that will soon partner with the Regimental PRI to provide both AEA and Regimental merchandise. This would not have been possible without the drive and commitment of Jon Nichols and Dave Pace, and I thank them both wholeheartedly for their efforts.

We have seen one new Branch formed to represent Wales and the West, we will, hopefully, see another new branch in Woodbridge, sadly, the Chatham Branch has closed. As with all branches the Chatham branch was very active until reducing numbers forced the remaining members to call it a day. Mel and I often visited as guests at the Branch Christmas function and their Flagship event the John Rock Dinner. The executive committee believe that the John Rock Dinner is too important to lose and have decided that the Gala Dinner at the AGM will henceforth be known as the John Rock Dinner in honour of the very first Airborne Engineer and the man whose vision did much to mould Airborne Forces at their inception.

Perhaps the biggest change is the decision, by an overwhelming majority, for the Association to merge with the Royal Engineers Association (Airborne) Branch to form 'The Airborne Engineers Association, a National Branch of the REA. Members of the National Committee have put in a tremendous amount of work to ensure that this merger maintains the unique identity of the AEA whilst giving us access to the resources of the REA and I must make special mention of Baz Bassett, Phil Taylor, and Mike Robertson for their efforts throughout this process. The merger will see the AEA as the largest National Branch within the REA.

During my time as Chairman, Mel and I have managed to visit every branch at least once, we have made many friends along the way, we will continue to be active members of the Association and hope to welcome you all to the 2026 AGM which will be held in Nottingham. We wish you all the best for the summer.

Steve

Shop Manager's Update

Shop Report as at 9th June 2025

Hello All

My shop report will highlight the following points:

1. Shop Stock update
2. Item Order dispatch update
3. 23 PRI online shop update
4. AEA shop moving forward in 2026

SHOP STOCK UPDATE: With the merger of the AEA and the REA (Airborne) association groups, any shop restock has been on hold for the past few months. What we don't wish to do is spend funds from the AEA bank account on new stock whilst negotiations are ongoing between the new association group committee and the REA group committee in relation to finance management. Once this has been finalised & the new AEA national branch is in an official existence, I will reach out to you all for your thoughts on what you may wish to see on your shop shelves.

ORDER DISPATCH UPDATE: Royal Mail do increase parcel costs every year and adding a few pennies to the P&P cost to oversee the cost of packaging, I think we can all agree, it is not cheap these days to pack and post a parcel. We must also consider the availability of a volunteer member of shop staff to interrupt their working & personal life to get these items into the postage system. To this we have undertaken the following changes. Firstly, all parcels will be sent 2nd Class to save on everyone's costs. Secondly, delivery time is now notified to customers as being, 3 to 5 days. This takes into consideration the 2nd Class postage but also gives the store staff a bit of leeway to undertake the dispatch process in a more reasonable time based on their other personal commitments.

NOTE*... if you need something asap, just get in comms on the website contact page.

<https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/contactus.html>

23 PRI SHOP: The 23 PRI online shop is almost complete and will be live soon. The link to shop online will be from the AEA website shop page. We apologise for any delay in this going live, but several factors to include,

- Software build time
- information gathering
- Agreements to AEA / Regt MoU
- MOD accounts requirements
- A full stock check requirement for stock levels

All of these issues have delayed this facility going live to all serving and veteran Airborne Engineers. Just a few more weeks please and we will endeavour to advise you all on various communications platforms with a **Charlie Charlie** Call to state **PRI ONLINE SHOP LIVE!!!!!!**

AEA SHOP MOVING FORWARD: On a personal note, I look with envy at some of our dear friends now retired and gallivanting around the globe, up to no good, you lucky buggers!!! Lol. To this, as a civil servant (too early to retire yet) I am thinking of taking an extended period of unpaid leave next year. This is so I may do a bit of gallivanting myself. *Adventure before Dementia* in my bus around Europe. To that, I am starting a conversation to all callsigns seeking a new shop manager. A little knowledge of Excel, ecommerce software would be useful, but a full handover with teachings will be undertaken for a smooth transfer of the shop infrastructure, stock and its functions.

So, if you would like to put in a shift to one AEA national branch positions and fancy this, please feel free to contact me.

Well, that's all from me, thank you all for your support and patience with my methods of madness and look forward to seeing you all for a cold one in the future at some stage.

My very best regards to you all and your families

Jon Nichols

AEA Shop Manager

aeashopmanager@outlook.com

Airborne Sappers Update from the REA AGM in Gibraltar Jun 25

This year's REA Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place in Gibraltar, where over 300 Sappers descended on the Rock for what was by all accounts a memorable weekend. The event featured a Meet & Greet meal, a formal Gala Dinner, and a Sunday BBQ — complete with free beer — all for a ticket price of just £150.

Next year's event will follow a similar format and will be held from **12th to 14th June 2026**. Those interested are strongly encouraged to **book flights and accommodation early** to keep costs down.

Of note, **30 Green Berets** from the RE Commando National Branch were on parade this year. It would be fantastic to see **some maroon on parade** in 2026 — let's represent the Airborne Engineers!

Other Updates of Interest to Members:

- **Benevolence Support:**
The largest group requesting assistance from the Corps Benevolence Fund is the **40–49 age bracket**, with an increasing number of **serving soldiers** also seeking support.
- **Financial Overview:**
The Corps has over **£11 million invested** with BlackRock. Last year, over **£425k** was spent, including:
 - **£150k** in Unit and Branch Support Grants
 - The remainder distributed in benevolence grants and other charitable funds
- **Grants Available to Bid For:**
 - **The Gabriel Fund** – Retraining grants for injured veterans
 - **The Ballard Fund** – Support for extreme expeditions
 - **The Kitchener Fund** (now renamed **The Children's Charity Fund**) – Education support for children of Sapper families
 - **The McCabe Fund** – Unit and Branch Support Grants
- **Membership Statistics:**
 - The REA has **115 branches** with approximately **8,260 active members**
- **Corps Manning and Structure:**
 - The Corps is currently **established for 7,361 soldiers** but is manned at **7,850**, making it the **only Corps at full strength** across every rank.
 - **Recruitment remains strong**, but **retention continues to be a concern**.
- **Project Wavell:**
Be aware of **Project Wavell** – this is part of the broader Army restructure aimed at creating **two additional fighting divisions**.
- **Upcoming Events:**
 - **20 September** – Corps Memorial Weekend in **Chatham**

This update aims to keep the wider Airborne Sapper community informed, particularly those who don't always hear the latest from the mainstream Royal Engineers channels.

Ubique.

AEA & REA(A) Merger Progress Update – June 2025

Please note: This update is more recent than the merger update appended to the OGM minutes detailed later in this document

The committee has made solid progress on the upcoming merger between the AEA and REA(A). Here's an update on what's happening.

1. Constitution

The updated constitution is on track to be shared before the Gala Dinner and voted on at the AGM. John Lee is leading this work so far, no major issues have been found.

2. Financial Arrangements

There have been two productive meetings with the REA about finances. Here's key points:

- **Branch Accounts:** Branches can keep their current accounts or move funds to the REA's main account. If moved, the REA will manage the summaries, and branch treasurers just need to approve them.
 - **No Bank Fees:** The REA covers bank charges and earns a better interest rate. That interest is shared fairly.
 - **Annual Support:** The REA will provide £1,400 yearly to the AEA national account.
 - **Recruiting Grants:** Each branch will receive a Recruiting and Retention Grant before the merger. The amount will be voted on at the OGM in April 2025.
 - **Extra Help for Branch Events:** Branches can apply for grants to help with their own AGMs/OGMs. These are means-tested.
 - **Simpler Accounting:** After the merger, treasurers will submit an online balance sheet each year instead of a full audit. REA will provide Zoom training in November 2025 and has a treasurer's guide on their website.
 - **Final Accounts:** AEA accounts will close on 31 December 2025. Treasurers must submit annual summaries online by 31 January 2026.
-

3. Membership

Work is well underway to move members into the new structure:

- **Creating REA Profiles:** Out of 1,000 AEA members, 423 need REA profiles. Dave Pace will provide the list, and REA will create the profiles. REA have waved the requirement for photo or Army number.
 - **Joining the Right Branch:** The REA's on line joining platform will be amended to have have a dropdown menu for each AEA branches.
 - **Lost Touch?** Members can visit the AEA website and click "Join" to access the new REA form.
 - **Changeover Date:** The official transfer will happen at the October 2025 AGM. REA(A) members are welcome at the Gala Dinner.
-

4. New Leadership Structure

To manage the work, a temporary **Interim Council** has been formed. New executive members will be elected at the AGM.

Here's the proposed leadership:

- **President:** CO 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment
- **Vice Presidents:** Phil Taylor & Dave Brennan
- **Chairmen:** Steve Wallis (handover at Gala Dinner) & Dave Liebrick
- **REA Management Rep:** Paul Moore (taking over from Phil Taylor)
- **Secretary:** Mike Robertson
- **Treasurer:** Mark Dorkins (taking over from Bobby Mathews)
- **Membership Sec (Veterans):** Billy Morris
- **Membership Sec (Regular Soldiers):** RSM 23 Para Eng Regt (new RSM: Stef Gloyn from May)
- **Journal Editor/Webmaster:** Dave Pace (with support from Steve Wallis)
- **Media Officer:** IO 23 Para Eng Regt
- **Branch Reps:** Each branch can appoint a representative to the committee from October 2025.

5. New Opportunities

The merger opens doors for growth and development:

- **Welcome Brochure:** A new members' welcome booklet is being created. Steve Wallis is leading this.
- **Printed Journal:** REA will fund printing and distribution 500 printed copies of the Journal in dec. This edition will be a special Merger Issue.
- **Online Shop:** A platform will be set up to sell regimental and AEA items.
- **Greater Presence at 23 Para Engr Regt:** This has already started. Recently the RSM invited the committee to the WOs and Sgts Mess VE event. The REA(A) paid for the 14 veterans that made the trip to Woodbridge
- **New Woodbridge Branch:** Using the REA "social branch" model – no funds or minutes needed. A WhatsApp/Facebook group will share event info. Si Farmer is the local contact at:
simonfarmer6435@hotmail.co.uk

The Regimental contact will be SSM 51 Phil Askey.

In Summary

Everything is progressing smoothly. No major problems have come up, and cooperation between AEA and REA(A) has been strong and focused. The path to merger is clear, and everyone is working towards the same Goal.

AEA Reunion & Gala Dinner & Fergie Semple Golf Competition

Friday 17th – 19th October 2025

We look forward to seeing as many members as possible for our 1st reunion to be held in Scotland. So far we have 77 confirmed bookings - the maximum for the hotel is 100.

Inchyra Hotel & Spa, Falkirk is a 4 star hotel set in a traditional Scottish manor house within landscaped gardens. It also has a large car park. The hotel lies on the outskirts of Falkirk & Grangemouth, close to the Grangemouth Refinery. Those of you who feel energetic can visit the high-spec gym or have a swim in the 20 metre pool. There is also a contemporary spa where you can treat yourself to a relaxing massage etc. Hopefully some of you will visit the Falkirk Wheel & in Helix Park the Kelpies are a magnificent sight. There is also a visitor centre & cafe alongside. Those of you who wish to go further afield can catch a train from Polmont Station to Glasgow or Edinburgh. Stirling, with its magnificent castle is only 11 miles away & is accessible by train or bus if you don't drive.

We look forward to welcoming you in October – to 35th Anniversary Reunion.



INCHYRA HOTEL

Further information, including booking forms can be found on our website:

<https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/agm.html>

Gents, this year's **Fergie Semple Golf Competition** will be held at the Falkirk Golf Club, 136 Stirling Road, Falkirk, FK2 7YP on Friday 17th Oct 2025.

- Breakfast rolls and tea/coffee will be provided from 0900 hrs
- 18 Holes of golf- normal Stableford
- Cost per player cash on the day to me £37.
- First T Time 1005 hrs, We have 4 x 4 ball provisionally booked.
- If you want to hire a buggy its £40 please contact the general manager on 01324 611061.

Please contact me via email bsfm968@gmail.com to let me know if you are coming or not. I need to secure the numbers ASAP.

Please forward this email on to anyone you know who might want to come along and have a game with us.

From 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment

EX PUK PUK 25 – Deployment so far.

By Spr Parsons, 9 Para Sqn RE, 2 Tp.



When we deployed to Papua New Guinea we then had the opportunity to climatis and integrate with the PNGDF. At first this came across difficult as there were restrictions such as language barriers, however after a few days of working together and adapting to the challenging conditions of the environment we soon developed mutual respect and camaraderie with the PNGDF personnel, laying the foundations of a good work environment throughout.

Over the past week I have been working on upgrading a grandstand, working closely with the PNGDF and have been impressed with their professionalism and approachability. They are highly knowledgeable and bring great experience to the mission.

Prior to commencement of the RSOI package, we had the opportunity to spend time with personnel from the Australian Defence Force, New Zealand Defence Force, and Japan Self Defence Force. This period provided an excellent opportunity to begin building relationships and gaining a better understanding of our partners cultures before deploying on Ex PUK PUK.

The RSOI package itself was very useful in preparing us for the mission ahead. It gave us a clear understanding of the exercise intent, helped develop a shared operational picture, and laid a foundation for mission success through multinational cooperation. The package included a comprehensive range of briefs and training sessions, covering key areas such as: Tok Pisin language, Papua New Guinea's unique culture, and most importantly the role 23 Para Engr Regt would play in achieving the objective.





When delays affected progress on the objective due to constraints such as equipment shortages, we were re directed to assist and repair the reconstruction of the camps rear perimeter fence. This task gave myself the opportunity to apply my skills as a Combat Engineer, recommend practical solutions, and collaborate it with multinational forces to overcome supply limitations. These challenges highlighted the Pegasus Ethos of 9 Para Sqn RE which is determination and always striving for the highest standards of achievement and working under pressure. Together with our partnering forces we planned and executed the rebuild successfully, with opportunities for shared learning and development.

Deploying with 19 British Personnel and having such a large footprint on the exercise has removed the feeling of being an attachment; and instead allowed us to truly integrate and work alongside the ADF. Overall, this experience so far has been very rewarding. Working on tasks that have tangible outcomes and visual rewards, this has resulted in motivation to conduct tasks. This exercise so far has not only tested my trade skills but also my ability to solve problems under pressure, manage resources effectively and learn from both successes and setbacks. I am looking forward to the rest of this exercise in this challenging environment. The problems that the team and I will face will develop us and allow the cohort to apply these as lessons for future operational deployments within 23 Para Engr Regt.

Here are examples of two things that are very important to us all, Memories and Friendship

Memories

Sent in by Roger Howles

3 Troop, 301 Squadron, 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment

April 1965 Dhala Road , Radfan , Yemen



301 Squadron, 131 Para Eng Regt.
Dhala Road, Aden, April 1965

Friendship

Below is a photograph of Alan Brough (left) and Roger Howles, celebrating 61 years friendship!

Alan and I did our pre-para selection course (today called P company,) at Aldershot February 1964, then RAF Abingdon (Number 1 Parachute Training School) in the April; with our first parachute descent (Balloon) Saturday morning on the 22nd at Western on the Green DZ , still only 17 years old. Happy days .

I feel privileged to have such a great friend , long may it last.

Roger.



An Award for Steve Brown

Steve Brown (right) being presented with a very well earned Pegasus by Tommy Smith (Chairman) for the amazing work he does for the Birmingham Branch . Highly thought of and greatly respected!



Memorial to Operation Freshman – Re-dedication Ceremony at RAF Skitten

By Dr Bruce Tocher

On Saturday the 12th of April, a ceremony was held at the former RAF Station at Skitten, Caithness, to re-dedicate the Memorial to the RAF aircrew, glider pilots and Airborne Royal Engineers who died during Operation Freshman, the daring but ill-fated mission to Norway aimed at destroying the Nazis' attempts to develop an atomic bomb.

The Wick, Canisbay and Latheron branch of the Royal British Legion Scotland arranged and financed the repair and refurbishment of the memorial (originally unveiled in 1992) together with donations from some of the Freshman families. Some corrections were also made to names that featured on the original plaque.

In addition to the Memorial, new information boards have also been erected, telling the story of Operation Freshman, and the important wartime role of Caithness.

More than 100 gathered at the memorial alongside the B876 Wick/Castletown Road, including representatives from the families of 8 of the men who took part in the raid. The ceremony featured a two-minute silence before Pipe Corporal Gordon Tait, of Wick RBLs Pipe Band, played the lament Flowers of the Forest.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Caithness, Lord Thurso, laid a wreath on behalf of the lieutenancy and gave a speech in which he described Operation Freshman as an "extraordinary endeavour." He told how Wick had been "one of the most important parts of the country in World War II." Lord Thurso also highlighted the key role played by the late Anderson Murray, an RAF veteran and later a Wick councillor, in getting the original memorial installed.

Wreaths were also laid by Isabel Zeiss, on behalf of the Glider Pilot Regiment Society, and Phil Falconer, both of whom lost uncles in the mission. A short service was conducted by the Rev John Nugent. Pipe band members also played A Scottish Soldier (Green Hills of Tyrol) and The Battle's O'er.

Lunch was laid on afterwards at Mackays Hotel in Wick, where Norway-based military historian Dr. Bruce A. Tocher gave an illustrated talk about his detailed research into Operation Freshman.

Speaking afterwards to journalist Alan Hendry of the John O'Groats Journal, Bruce commented that the re-dedication Ceremony was "a really fitting tribute" to the 41 men who lost their lives in Operation Freshman more than 80 years ago. "We were so lucky with the weather, it could not have been better, and we had a really nice crowd. Eight of the families were represented, and we had the young Air Cadets as well. It just gives everyone a feeling that the sacrifice wasn't forgotten. That's really the main thing. These were young men and they died in their prime. They deserve to be remembered."

Dr Tocher also praised the work of Alistair Jack as the driving force behind the Caithness At War heritage trail. Mr Jack, chief officer at Caithness Voluntary Group, was among those attending the event on Saturday. <https://caithnessatwar.com/site-7-raf-skitten/>

On Sunday, local historian Drew Guttridge, guided the Freshman family members round the former RAF Station, which has since been returned to farmland. The current landowners, kindly allowed special access for the occasion, provided transport, and refreshments for the families – a gesture which was most appreciated. Drew pointed out a number of the airfield buildings and features which were mentioned in the Operation Freshman archive documents and personal letters – making the occasion

even more poignant. However, nothing could measure with the moment when the families stood on one of the few remaining areas of the original airfield tarmac and thought back to that cold, wintery evening on the 19th of November 1942, when 48 young men left for Norway, most of them never to return!

Operation Freshman Memorial Photos 2025



Freshman families and myself (far right) on the runway at RAF Skitten



Freshman family members





The Lord-Lieutenant of Caithness, Lord Thurso



Information board at Skitten





LI. A. C. ALLEN	RE	Spr. J. G. V. HUNTER	RE
Spr. E. W. BAILEY	RE	L/Cpl. W. M. JACKSON	RE
Dvr. J. T. V. BELFIELD	RE	Spr. W. JACQUES	RE
Spr. H. BEVAN	RE	L/Sgt. G. KNOWLES	RE
Spr. J. F. BLACKBURN	RE	Spr. H. J. LEGATE	RE
Spr. F. BONNER	RE	L/Cpl. T. L. MASTERS	RE
L/Cpl. F. W. BRAY	RE	Lt. D. A. METHVEN	RE
Flt. Sgt. A. BUCKTON	RAFVR	Spr. R. NORMAN	RE
Cpl. J. D. CAIRNCROSS	RE	Flt/Lt. A. R. PARKINSON	RCAF
L/Cpl. A. CAMPBELL	RE	Dvr. E. PENDLEBURY	RE
PO N. A. DAVIES	RAAF	Dvr. O. SIMKINS	RE
Sgt. P. DOJO	GPR	Spr. L. SMALLMAN	RE
Flt. Sgt. G. M. EDWARDS	RAFVR	Spr. E. J. SMITH	RE
Sgt. J. FALCONER	RAF	Spr. J. M. STEPHEN	RE
Dvr. P. P. FARRELL	RE	S/Sgt. M. F. STRATHDEE	GPR
Spr. T. W. FAULKNER	RE	Cpl. J. G. L. THOMAS	RE
PO H. J. FRASER	RAAF	Flt/Lt. A. E. THOMAS	RAFVR
PO G. W. S. de GENCY	RAFVR	Spr. J. W. WALSH	RE
Spr. C. H. GRUNDY	RE	Spr. T. W. WHITE	RE
FO A. T. H. HAWARD	RAFVR	Spr. G. S. WILLIAMS	RE
L/Sgt. F. HEALEY	RE		



You can contact Bruce via email - batocher@outlook.com



Major Beazley, 9th (Airb) Fld Coy, RE

By Patrick Pronk

Basil Saunders Beazley was born in 1913 as the son of Walter and Ethel Maus Beazley of Horspath, Oxfordshire. Basil became a first class athlete and won the half-mile two years in succession. He was the 1st VIII cox in 1929, rowed in the VIII in 1931 and stroked it in 1932. When he left to go to Faraday House his success continued. Beazley rowed for many good London Rowing Club crews and was a member of the winning Head of the River crew in 1935. He was elected Vice Captain in 1936. On Committee 1937 and rowed in the Thames Cup 1933 and 1934 and in the Grand in 1935, 1936 and 1937. He was also a member of LRC coxed four which won at Figueira da Foz international regatta, Portugal in 1936. But perhaps his greatest achievement was winning a gold medal for the England VIII at the British Empire Games, Sydney, in 1938. After this he served an apprenticeship with the General Electric Company and when the war broke out he was employed by the same organization as a qualified engineer. After enlisting in the army as a Sapper, Basil Beazley went to the 141 Officer Cadet Training Unit and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant on the 30th of May 1940.



The War Diary of the 9th Field Company, RE which was part of the 48th (South Midland) Infantry Division had an entry on the 24th of June 1941 stating that a 2nd Lieutenant Beazley had joined the Company at Stanborough House, Ilminster and was temporarily attached to number 3 Section. On the 1st of September 1941 Beazley was sent to the Headquarters RE to attend an Officers course which lasted five days. At the end of that month, the 27th, 2nd Lieutenant Beazley was promoted to Captain, and took up the post as Second in Command of the 9th Field Company, RE. On the 5th of January 1942 Major White and Captain Beazley attended a Brigade T.E.W.T. (Tactical Exercise Without Troops).

The month of May 1942 brought a new chapter to the history of the Company as becoming part of the newly formed Airborne Forces. The Company would full fil the Engineers task for the newly created 1st Airlanding Brigade. [The 31st Independent Infantry Brigade was converted to the role of the 1st Airlanding Brigade Group, which included the 9th Field Company, R.E. on the 10th December 1941]

On the 3rd of May 1942 Captain Beazley proceeded to R.A.F. Ringway for a Parachute Course. This was Course number No 13, which ran from the 4th till the 13th of May. Beazley did two jumps from a balloon and five from a Whitley aircraft earning him the parachute qualification wings.

On the 13th of September 1942 the War Diary of the 9th (Airb) Fld Coy, RE had the entry that Captain B.S. Beazley assumed the appointment as the Officer Commanding the Company with the acting rank of Major and Lieutenant R. McNeile took over the duties as the 2nd i/c with the acting rank of Captain. Under the command of Major Beazley Lieutenant Methven and 19 other ranks proceeded on the operation known as the 'Washington Cup' later to be known as Operation Freshman.

The first month of the new year 1943 began for the Company with several exercises involving loading and unloading Horsa gliders with different units like the Reconnaissance Squadron and the 2nd Battalion, the South Staffordshire Regiment. The month of February the Company taught other units how to work with mines, lay minefields and building Bailey bridges. On the 6th of March the Company was warned to be prepared to mobilise for service overseas and during the coming weeks the Company moved to North Africa to prepare for the invasion of Sicily.

Operation Ladbroke :

The War Diary of the Company has the following entry on 10 June 1943 - 0500 hrs - Major Beazley, comd 9 Fd Coy R.E. fought his way through to the bridge with 15 O.Rs. and immediately completed the dismantling of the demolition charges.

The Waco glider Beazley boarded that morning with chalk number 38 was flown by Lieutenant Dale and Sergeant Baker and took off from Tiersville aerodrome. The glider contained one m/c combination, being a Norton Big 4 motorcycle and one Holman Compressor, as well as Corporal E.J. Oliver, Sapper Oakley and Driver H. Stokes (the Major's batman). Major Beazley and his men were in support of the 2nd Battalion, the South Staffordshire Regiment with objective River crossing PONTE GRANDE, Syracuse Sicily which they reached six hours after landing.

The Major's 2 i/c, Captain J.N. Holmes with Number 3 Section was also in support of the South Staffs and their role included the destruction of a coastal battery (codenamed Mosquito), dismantling charges in (Waterloo (the Ponte Grande bridge) and Putney bridges) and establishing a water point for the Brigade as an extreme shortage of water was expected.

The glider containing Major Beazley landed in a tomato plantation and the crew succeeded in unloading the combination, but were at once forced to abandon it as they came under fire. They then made it along the road leading to in a Northwards direction and met Col. Walsh and his party. They all then continued northwards arriving at "Waterloo" at 0500 hrs, where Major Beazley and his men stripped the charges, which were wrapped in raffia material, from the bridge. They then joined in the defence of the bridge while the enemy, a combined force of Germans and Italians were holding the high grounds. The fighting continued and casualties mounted. During the fire fight Major Beazley and his batman Driver Harry Stokes took cover in a ditch beside the bridge and while peaking over the top of the ditch the Major was shot and died instantly. After running out of ammo the Airborne men were taken PoW but not for long after being relieved by a Royal Navy patrol. Major Beazley would later be given a field burial by Sappers of number 3 Platoon. The remainder of the glider load (the motor cycle and compressor) were captured by the Italians and later released by the 8th Army.



Recent photos of the bridges





For his actions during Operation Ladbroke Major Beazley posthumously received a Mention in Despatches. His name is also mentioned on the Burford War Memorial.

GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM Sh.1.

Report No. 1898/FH/11. Schedule No. _____

Place of Burial **BRITISH WAR CEMETERY, SYRACUSE.** *consulted file 122 13/4/43* Map. Reference **J.1186.5165.**

The following are buried here *Italy 1/25,000, Sh.274-11 S.E.*

REGIMENT	ARMY NO.	NAME AND INITIALS	RANK	DATE OF DEATH	PREVIOUSLY BURIED AT	RE-BURIED AT	DATE OF RE-BURIAL	PLOT	ROW	GRAVE
	5186771.	Goldstein		10.7.45	GR18/209	As Above	8.11.45.8	A	2.	
		Benjamin		12.7.45	"	"	"	A	4.	
<i>R.E. (40000)</i>	<i>12133</i>	Beazley	MAJOR	10.7.45	"	"	"	A	6.	
	4806817	Wilson	C.N.	"	GR18/188	"	"	2	A	10.
<i>4 Seaforth.</i>	<i>1 of 2nd Gen.</i>	Prater	H.G.	Sigm.	20.7.48	GR18/203	"	2	A	12.
<i>Wof Sigs.</i>	2879854	Buah.	Pte.	10.7.45	GR18/2001	"	"	2	A	14.
<i>1/I & L.</i>	4740670	Powell.	Pte.	"	GR18/429	"	"	2	A	18.
<i>2 S. Staffs.</i>	4813869	Timmins.	A.N.	Pte.	"	"	"	2	B	1.
<i>1/4th Buffs</i>	4847101	Pooley	D	"	"	"	"	2	B	3.
<i>1/4th Buffs</i>	4817045	Poxon	W.	Sgt.	"	"	"	2	B	5.
<i>1/4th Buffs</i>	4817060	Thompson	A.	Sgt.	GR18/225	"	"	2	B	7.

Certified as PAR ORDER CARRIER IN LETTER 24/5/43

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission field burial report of 8 November 1943, Major B.S. Beazley was moved to Syracuse War Cemetery and now lies at rest in plot 2.A.6.



Info from : londonrc.org.uk, radleyarchives.co.uk, assaultglidertrust.co.uk, pegasusarchive.org, cwgc.org, operation-ladbroke.com, Mike Beazley, Ian Murray,

French Contact for D Day Commemorations

The following message was received via email, Xavier may be a useful contact for any future D Day commemorations. You can contact Xavier via email xpradelles@gmail.com

"Dear Airborne Engineer Association,

I am a French volunteer who has been supporting the families of veterans from the 249th Field Company, Royal Engineers, 6th Airborne Division, who served during World War II.

This unit landed in Normandy on D-Day, partly by boat and partly by glider. They fought alongside Major Howard in the capture of the bridges — Pegasus and Horsa.

I regularly travel to Normandy to meet with the families who come to visit and to honor their ancestors.

This year, I found a poppy wreath from your association at the Robehomme Bridge over the Dives River — the target of the 3rd Parachute Squadron on D-Day — and I was wondering why there wasn't a wreath at Pegasus or Horsa Bridges (or perhaps I missed it?)

I am a volunteer and work alone, with no other motive than passion. It's not easy for me to afford poppy wreaths and official remembrance crosses due to taxes and shipping costs.

If you have a team coming to France for the next D-Day anniversary, I would be happy to help place wreaths or crosses on behalf of the 249th veterans' families.

Ubique !!
Kind regards,
Xavier Pradelles"

We contacted Xavier by email to thank him for getting in touch, we received the following reply:

"Hi Dave,
To begin, let me thank you for your support.

The families of the 249th (around thirty) that I represent will be really delighted to know that the AEA could support us in the future.

I am attaching some photos from this last anniversary of D-Day. [below]

As you can see, I do my best with self-prepared frames.

The emphasis on Sapper Shorey's diary, the first testimony of a soldier who participated in the assault on the bridges, would perhaps have required greater emphasis.

I am in contact with the sapper Shorey's family if you are interested in knowing more.

Kind regards,
Xavier Pradelles"

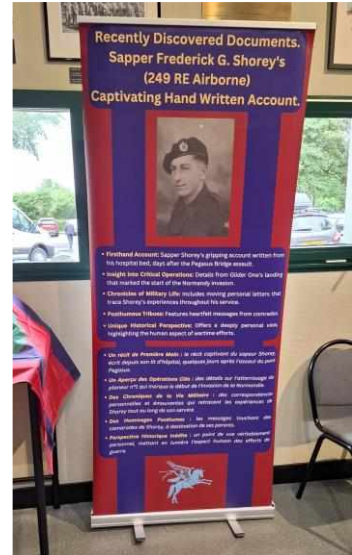
We have contacted Xavier again to see if he can provide more information on the great work he has done



Major Howard Steele
(Pegasus Bridge)



Spr McCullough
(Ranville Cemetery)



Shorey Handbook Memorial
(Pegasus Museum)



THE YORKSHIRE BRANCH
AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION

President:	George Anderson 07526206000
Chairman:	Phil Taylor 07904953995
Secretary:	Phil Taylor
Treasurer:	Phil Taylor
Welfare:	Dave Grimbley 07843686277
Membership Secretary:	Syd Hoyle



Yorkshire Branch Minutes Bridlington 14 Jun 25

Opening Address

The President opened the meeting with a one-minute silence in memory of:

- **Dave Mellors**
- **Frank Small**
- **Sheila Prosser**

Tommo and Baz shared a few stories in remembrance of Dave and Frank.

*"They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them."*

Members Present

John Thomo, Phil Taylor, Denise Cohen-Brown, Mick Mathis, George Anderson, Dave and Christine Grimbley, Baz Henderson, Syd, Pete, Steve, Dale Mossley, Marie.

Apologies

Frank, Steve and Debbie Waite, Vince May, Debbie May (Bar Manager), Bob Prosser, John Parker, Ron Hadden, Syd Hoyle, Joe Houlston, "Heppy" Alan Wilde, Yorkie Davies, Mick Wallace, Barney Rooney, Geoff Strickleton, Dave Edmunds, Ron Richardson, John Robinson, John Houston (Geordies - Transport), Philip Poulton, Tom Bridges, Charlie McColgan, Paul Moore, Barney Barnwell, Paul Murray, John Robertson, Adam Frame, John Jinxs.

Review of Previous Minutes & Actions

- £225 was allocated at the March meeting towards the Bridlington weekend. The Buffet for 13 member cost £128-00 after 20% Forces Discount. Big thank you to Baz for booking venues and funding refreshments at the evening meal.
- Thanks extended to Tommo for arranging the standards and Facebook post for Dave Mellors' service.

Branch Polo Shirts Tomo briefed the meeting after discussion the following was agreed :

- Design: Blue shirt with light blue Pegasus logo. "AEA" above and "Yorkshire Branch" below.
- Cost: Not to exceed £20.
- If a recruiting/retention fund is created post-merger, 20 shirts will be purchased and given to members attending events. Advice from Jon at AEA shop required.

Minutes

- Minutes will be available on the AEA website.
 - For login issues, contact the webmaster at: contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com
 - **Proposed by:** Tommo
 - **Seconded by:** Mick
-

Treasurer's Report

- Virgin Bank failed to process the previous mandate; a new mandate was signed at the meeting.
- Current online access limited to balance viewing by Phil.

Balance Update

- Current Balance: **£2,397.00**
- Previous Balance: £2,264.00

Expenditures Approved

- £250.00 for Christmas Dinner
- £100.00 for Buffet at November Meeting
- £27 for wreath to be laid on the 11 Nov 25 at Monkton
- A collection and Auction of Picture donated by Baz raised £150 which was paid to "Cluffy Race For Life" in aid of Cancer Research UK.

Reminder

- **Subs for due: 1st July 25 for 25/26**
- Recommended method: **Annual Direct Debit**

Payment Details

- **Payee:** Yorks Branch Airborne Engineers
- **Sort Code:** 05-07-17
- **Account No:** 35731973
- **Amount:** £20.00 Country members who can't attend often due to distance £10-00

Motion

- **Proposed by:** Mick
 - **Seconded by:** Baz
 - **Carried**
-

Membership Report

- Warm welcome to **Dale and Marie** and **Steve**
 - REA members' transition to AEA National Branch expected to be straightforward; challenge lies in engagement.
 - Syd provided an up-to-date members list.
-

Welfare

- Tommo continues contact with **John Parker**.
-

Entertainment / Events

Walking Group

- **POC:** Dave Grimbley – 07843 686277
 - Alternate: Phil Poulton – 07788 582565 / pltonp@aol.com
-

Future Events

Bridlington Weekend Meeting decided to come to | Bridlington next year.

- **Date:** 6 June 2026
 - 8 rooms reserved at **Seacourt Hotel (YO15 3NS)**:
 - 4 Doubles: £120 each
 - 1 Family Room: £175
 - 1 Twin: £175
 - 1 Twin (Non-Sea View): £125
 - 1 Double: £155
 - £100 deposit paid
 - **Deadline for room booking:** 31 Dec 2025
 - **Alternative accommodation in Bridlington** mid way between Sea Court and Telegraph in South Dean Hotel 94 Horsforth AV YO 15 3DF 01262609145 07834197502- Emma Clacher On Booking .Com
-

81st Anniversary of Arnhem – 17–21 September 2025

- Bid of **£750** approved and received
- All accommodation and transport now paid for 16 attendees
- **€250** allocated to ED for fuel and team BBQ – receipts to be submitted by Dave

Outline Itinerary

- **Wed 17 Sep:** Hull Ferry check-in (foot passengers) – 18:00
- **Thurs:** Arrival at Rotterdam Europort – 08:00, Christine, Dave, Syd, George collected by ED in a Mini Bus.
- Others flying in to be picked up from Arnhem Rail Station (Contact: Dave Grimbley – 07843 686277)

Events

- **Fri:** Lunch in Oosterbeek + guided walk
 - **Sat:**
 - 09:00 – Group photo
 - Visit Ginkel Heath, then Engineers Monument at Driel
 - AEA wreath laid by Yorkshire Branch President
 - Evening: Group meal/BBQ
 - **Sun:**
 - 09:00 – Leave for Oosterbeek Cemetery
 - 11:00 – Attend service, after service lay poppy cross for:
 - **Harry Padfield at 2141624 Spr Norman Butterworth Grave .**
 - Return to Rotterdam Europort (possible stop in Nijmegen – TBC)
-

Gala Dinner 2025

- **Venue:** Inchyra Hotel, Grangemouth
 - **Date:** Sat, 18 October 2025
 - Book early to avoid disappointment.
 - Aims to coincide with merger completion.
-

Cromwell Lock – 28 September 2025

- Marks the 50th anniversary
 - Yorkshire Branch to support to the best of its ability
-

Christmas Social 2025

- 299 Para Sqn extended an invite to their Hull-based function however members prefer a more central location like Wakefield.
 - **Tommo** to investigate alternatives book it and report back at the November meeting
-

20-Year Formation of 299 Para Sqn

- **Date:** 6 June 2026
-

New Members

- November meeting to include a buffet lunch and overnight stay in **Wakefield**
 - Opportunity to encourage new membership and attendance
-

AOB I have Tried a new layout and more succinct notes any feedback happy to receive

Date of Next Meeting

- **Date:** 1 November 2025
 - **Location:** Wakefield
 - **RV:** 12:30
 - **Meeting Time:** 13:30 – 14:30
-



Minutes of the AEA OGM



Airborne Engineers Association

Registered Charity Number: 1009201

~

President: Vacant

Chairman: Steve Wallis

Tel: 07757 115681

Email: Stephen.wallis57@ntlworld.com

Secretary: Mike Robertson BEM

Tel: 07958 650592

Email: Michaelj.robertson@outlook.com



MINUTES OF THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING 30 April 2025

1. Opening.

1.1. Prelims and Members Present

Members present; Steve Wallis (National Chairman), Phil Taylor (National Vice President- Designated), Mike Robertson BEM (National Secretary), John Lee (National Vice President) Dave Pace (Journal Editor and Webmaster), Jon Nichols (Shop Manager), Tim van der Kraan, Mick Walker (Scotland Branch), Dave Ford (Aldershot Branch), Craig Gadd (299 Branch)

Apologies received

Steve Morris (National Membership Sec), Bob Matthews (National Treasurer), Birmingham Branch Rep. Baz Bassett (National President), Paul Moore (Welfare Liaison.)

1.2. Opening address

The Chairman gave the exaltation and led the 2-minute silence in memory of fallen comrades.

The Chairman welcomed all those attending and opened the meeting at 18:32.

2. Minutes of the AGM 2024

The minutes of the AGM have been produced, circulated and included on the website.

There were no comments from the floor the Chairman asked for a proposer and seconder that the minutes as recorded be accepted.

Proposer: Dave Pace **Seconder:** Dave Ford **Vote:** Carried

3. AEA/REA Merger Update

Phil Taylor presented the update based on the latest Merger Update dated No 2 dated 14 April 2025. Additional key points include.

- Constitution
 - The merger of the respective charities is in hand and progressing
 - John Lee will review the revised constitution before it is finalised.

- Commendation – Both REA and AEA have separate schemes. It is agreed that both schemes will be retained and included in the revised constitution.
- Financial arrangements
 - REA(A) have around £11k in their funds.
 - Branch accounts will remain in place but will require slight changes to accounting practice to align with REA. Account summaries will be submitted online direct to REA once internal accounting and auditing processes have been completed.
 - Shop accounts will be included in the National Branch summary as is current practice.
- Membership
 - Membership lists are being merged. There are 3 membership groups. a.
 - REA(A) - serving. b. REA(A) – Veterans, and 3. Current AEA members as recorded on the database managed by Dave Pace. There are currently 518 with valid email addresses, 95 of which are already members of the REA(A), The other 423 AEA members are to be merged into the REA list of members by the REA.
 - REA normally require member profiles that include a photo and Army number, but this has been waived on this occasion.
 - Dave Pace will continue to get contact details updated. These members will be able to update their detail on the REA website when they are able to.
 - New joiners will be able to join via the REA website and specify what branches and sub-branches they wish to be part of.
 - Membership badges will be issued to new members. This will be led by the branches, supported by Billy Morris.
 - REA membership cards will also be issued to new registrations with the REA as part of the merger process.
- Structure
 - As per the merger update, but with the addition of Paul Moore as the REA Management Board Representative representing the AEA.
- Exploitation of opportunities
 - The REA has agreed to fund the distribution of hard copies of the journal. There will be a virtual version produced in June with a hard copy produced and distributed in December following many of the key AEA events.
 - **All members are once again urged to update postal and email address. Contact Dave Pace through any means including. Tel: 07977 282620 or Email: contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com**

A copy of the Merger Update produced on 14 April 2025 is appended to these minutes.

4. Treasurers Report & Applications for Funding.

4.1 Treasures Report - The associations treasurer Bob Matthews provided a written summary of accounts. This report read out by the National Secretary is appended to these minutes.

- Total Assets: £22,197.08
- Liabilities: Nil

The Chairman noted that £7,500 will be transferred from REA to the AEA account once the merger is complete.

Jon Nichols notes that that shop stock is the lowest for some time and that depreciation of shop stock in not applied due to all items being sold as new.

Notwithstanding this, some old stock is sometimes discounted.

The Chairman requested a proposer and seconder that the Treasurers Report

Proposer: Phil Taylor **Secunder:** Jon Nichols **Vote:** Carried.

4.2 Applications for Funding

- Yorkshire Branch application for £750.00 for Arnhem trip 2025 – Unanimously agreed and approved
- 299 Sqn (Craig Gadd) application for £1000.00 for Cromwell Lock 50th Anniversary – Unanimously agreed and approved. Mick Walker requested further funding of £200.00 for the Scotland Branch. However, it appears to be for those same reasons as the 299 Sqn application, So Mick withdrew the application. The Chairman advised that the two branches liaise on this matter, then if there is a shortfall, a further application can then be made.
- Proposal by the Merger Committee to agree a Recruiting and Merger grant of £1,000-2,000 to all 6 formal AEA branches. This was unanimously supported; however, it was also agreed that the amount and overall agreement will be put to a vote at the AGM in October.

5. Association Shop Report.

The Association shop report was presented by Jon Nicols (Shop Manager). Key points are:

- Shop Stock Value - as per Finance Summary
- Sales have been lower than normal
- Work on merging the AEA Shop and Regt PRI continues, with JBN meeting the Regimental team to further progress. The benefits will include that all veterans and serving members will have access to a greater range of products.
- JBN retires from work in 3 years' time and is planning to stand down in the role as shop manager and will make suitable arrangements to ensure that the merged shop/PRI continues to be appropriately managed.
- The attendees agreed that JBN is managing and developing the shop and the associated merger extremely well and he was thanked by the Chairman.

6. Webmasters and Journal Report.

Dave Pace presented his update report which is appended to these minutes.

7. Membership Report.

The membership report was prepared by Steve (Billy) Morris and is appended to these minutes.

8. Welfare Liaison Officer's Report.

Paul Moore could not attend the meeting and sent his apologies.

The Chairman asked the attendees if they were aware of any welfare issues across the associated. There were none.

9. Presidents Awards/Commendations.

- There is currently one nomination for the President Award along with a citation.
- The Chairman advised the 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment's C.O. or his representative will be asked to present the awards at the Gala Dinner. The Citations will be made available to him well before the dinner. · John Lee agreed to continue producing the certificates. The national Secretary will send him the names of any nomination well in advance of the dinner.
- The Chairman noted that the criteria for such nomination are detailed in the Constitution

10. Election of Officers

The Chairman stated that the merged organisation will be voted on during the AGM.

As Steve Wallis is standing down as Chairman, Dave Leibrick has put himself forward to take up the role. There are no other volunteers. Dave's nomination was voted on by the attendees and unanimously passed. Dave Leibrick is now the "Chairman Elect" and

with take up the role during the AGM weekend. Steve Wallis will be working with Dave to ensure a smooth handover.

11. Branch Reports.

The following Branch Reports were made available prior to the meeting, these reports will be appended to these minutes, they are as follows.

- 299 Association Branch
- Aldershot Branch
- Birmingham Branch
- Yorkshire Branch
- Scotland Branch
- Wales and West

The Chairman raised the question whether we need to provide more details on how "Social Branches" are run and suggested that during the review of the constitution, that some further guidance is included. After some discussion, both John Lee and Phil Taylor agreed to consider appropriate wording and include it in the constitution review.

12. Matter Arising from Previous Minutes

No comments

13. Item from Members

- 13.1.1 WO1 Stef Gloyn takes post as RSM of 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment on 5 May 2025.
- 13.1.2 The national Secretary noted that one of the branches distributed a "Unit Update - 23 Para Engr Regt" and went on to suggest that we include this as an agenda item in future meetings. This was agreed and will be included going forward.
- 13.1.3 JBN stated that whilst at Woodbridge during the regimental VE day cocktail party, he will ask the Regimental 2 i/c to sign the Shop/PRI MOU and it be signed by Phil Taylor on behalf of the AEA. He will then scan it and send it to the National Secretary. This was agreed by those present.

14. Remembrance Events and Services.

14.1 The following major events have been attended by members of our Association since the AGM in October 2024 (The look back):

- National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph Sunday 10th November 2024.

14.2 The following major events (Look Forward) will be attended by members of our Association between now and the AGM in October.

- VE day celebration at 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment at Woodbridge - 8 May 2025
- Falklands Service of Remembrance, The Falklands Chapel, Pangbourne School - Sunday 15 June 2025
- Squadron Falklands wreath laying at Aldershot 14 June 2025 at Aldershot Military Cemetery.
- Hardwick Hall Saturday -10 May 2025
- Falklands Ride of Respect 7/8 June 2025
- Double Hills Sunday 7 Sept 2025.
- Cromwell Lock the weekend of 28 Sept at Cromwell Lock (50th Anniversary). RV at the car parking area to the north of the memorial on Lock Road at 10.30.
- 1st Parachute Squadron RE Remembrance Service – Donnington – 28 Sept 2025.
- National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph Sunday 9 November 2025. 42 places have been applied for. Places will be allocated on first come-first serve basis with 4 places allocated to each formal branch. Steve Wallis will not be attending this year and will ask Dave Leibrick if he will be the parade marshal on this occasion.

15. AGM and GALA Ball/John Rock Dinner.

- The Executive Committee has decided that the Gala Ball will now be renamed “The John Rock Dinner”. · The AGM and John Rock Dinner will be held on the weekend 17-19 October 2025 at the MacDonald Inchyra Hotel & Spa Falkirk.
- All booking forms are available at <https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/agm.html>
- The Chairman stated that he is currently working with Dave Raes to organise the 2026 AGM and John Rock Dinner near Nottingham.

16. Any Other Business

Tim van der Kraan asked that as the Chatham branch has now folded, could he be the point of contact for former members of the Chatham branch. This was agreed.

17. National Chairman's Points

None

18. Next Meeting National Meeting is the AGM on 18 October 2025 hosted by the Scotland Branch

The meeting was closed in good order at 20.17 hrs.

Attachments to OGM Minutes

AEA/REA Merger Update as at 14 April 2025



Dear AEA Member,

This note will give you an update of the progress the committee is making on the Merger.

1. Constitution - The updated constitution is on track to be circulated prior to The gala dinner and voted on at the AGM. John Lee is lead the REA are presently updating the constitution and a draft will be available in May for John to review alongside our constitution. On Johns' initial review there are no major issues.

2. Financial arrangements - Two positive meetings have been had with the REA and the situation is:

- a. Branch accounts can remain as is but will have the option to transfer funds to the main REA account under their own line (i.e. funds are for branch use only and cannot be touched unless authorised) If Branches choose to transfer to the REA account, financial summaries are completed by the REA accountants and Treasurers just confirm it is correct and approve.
- b. Funds held by the REA do not have bank charges. REA pays this and receive an higher rate of interest which is divided on a pro rata basis.
- c. The REA will provide an annual of £1,400 to our national account can be spent on the AGM.
- d. It is intended to provide all Branches with an Recruiting and Retention Grant prior to the Merger the amount will be voted on at the OGM in April 25.
- e. Branches can also apply to the REA for a grant towards their own AGM/OGM but this is means tested.
- f. Presently branch funds under rule 12 of our constitution are to be presented for audit each June and a balance sheet produced. This will be simplified on merging to each branch producing an Online balance sheet. The Charity Commission auditors may call for an account to complete their audit. The online summery sheet will be new to some treasurers. REA will carry out annual training on zoom in Nov 25, there is also a comprehensive treasurers guide on the REA web site.
- g. In line with REA accounts AEA accounts will shut as at 31 Dec 25 and then by 31 of Jan 26. Branch treasurers are responsible for submitting the annual online financial summaries via the REA online portal.

3. Membership - Two meetings have been held to discuss membership transfer of REA(A) members and AEA members to the AEA a National branch of the REA. The Summery is:

- a. As the AEA have over a thousand members on our data base, there are only 518 AEA members with working E mail address of which 95 are also in REA(A) and have an REA profile.

Therefore 423 AEA members need an REA profile. Dave Pace will provide an extract of the 423 members that will transfer to National Branch and the REA will create all the new member profiles. A Photo and Army number is required however the REA have waived this requirement for the initial setup. REA will amend their joining site to enable drop down menu with AEA – Hull, AEA Scotland, AEA Central, AEA Aldershot, AEA Yorkshire. AEA Wales and west AEA Birmingham.

- b. For those AEA members who have lost touch and details are out of date they can log into the AEA web site click on join that will take them to REA joining form that will have drop down menu to join the relevant AEA branch
- c. We have still to work out the resources to allocate the AEA (A) members an AEA branch.
- d. Change over date for REA(A) to AEA a national branch of the REA is The October AGM. It was confirmed by committee that REA(A) members are welcome to attend the Gala dinner.

4. Structure - No Change from last update repeated here for ease: To complete the amount of work required the Executive committee has formed an Interim council which will facilitate the merger. This interim Council is provisional and “all new executive committee members” will be voted on at the AGM. This transition structure is as follows:

- President: CO 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment
- Vice president: Phil Taylor
- Vice president: Dave Brennan
- Chairmen: Steve Wallis, Dave Leibrick attending meetings and will take over at Gala Dinner.
- REA Management Board Representative: Presently Phil Taylor, Paul Moore has agreed to take on role.
- Secretary: Mike Robertson
- Treasurer: Bobby Mathews handing over to Mark Dorkins.
- Membership Secretary Veterans: Billy Morris
- Membership Secretary Regular Soldiers: RSM 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment, (tied to post) New RSM is Stef Gloyn taking over from Axel in May.
- Journal editor and Webmaster Dave Pace: (Steve Wallis will be assisting Dave once he steps down from Chairman)
- Media Officer: IO 23 Parachute Engineer Regt, role is to provide media information to Dave Pace.
- From the AGM in October 2025, each Branch will have the option to provide a member on the Executive Committee.

5. Exploitation of Opportunities - With the merger there are areas we can develop and the following is a snapshot of some of the areas that are being worked on:

- a. A welcome brochure for all new members from REA(A) outlining details of branches REA have agreed to reproduce Steve Walis is lead.
- b. Looking at funding to print the Journal and send out to all members once a year. REA have agreed to fund 500 copies in Sept which will be a merger Special.
- c. Our shop platform selling Regt PRI which this will happen a meeting has been held at Regt to confirm feasibility.
- d. Increased presence amongst serving soldiers, RSM has invited committee members to next WO and SGTs Mess function.
- e. Woodbridge Branch Initially we will use the REA model of a social Branch. No funds are held, and minutes are not required. One person sets up a FB page /WhatsApp group and sends out RV details. Volunteer at Woodbridge is Si Farmer. Members with contact details of AEA REA(A) in Woodbridge area to forward to Si Farmer Simonfarmer6435@hotmail.co.uk RSM will nominate SSM 51 Phil Askey as Regt POC.

SUMMARY

There are still no significant hurdles foreseen, and we have a lot more clarity on the key issues and all sides are working well towards the same goal.

Treasures Report

AIRBORNE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

AS AT 22 APRIL 2025

ASSETS

Cash in Hand	Nil
Cash at Bank	£ 3962.49
Deposit Account	£13199.45
Shop Stock	£5035.14

TOTAL ASSETS **£22197.08**

LIABILITIES

Nil

TOTAL LIABILITIES **Nil**

WORKING CAPITAL

Assets	£Nil
Minus Liabilities	£0.00

TOTAL WORKING CAPITAL **£22197.08**

Points:

Audit completed on the 22 April 2025

Note:

Transferred £2000.00 from the Deposit account into the Treasures account to give a better flexible working capital.

R J Matthews
Treasurer

Membership Report

The merger of the two membership data bases is progressing, as with all data bases the information held is only as good as the input and update from members. Between Dave Pace and me we have been in communications with Ann who runs the REA membership data base for all Sappers and is helping in this process.

At present we The AEA can account for as a true record a total number of members who we have valid postal and email address = 532.

Of that a total of 97 are both members of the REA and AEA (Airborne) branches.

I discussed with Phil Taylor recently about membership badges, car stickers and membership cards that the current veterans get when they join through me.

It was decided that any new members who migrate over from the RAE Airborne to the new AEA National Branch would only get a pin badge and car sticker when and if they joined a local AEA branch.

Each branch would hold a quantity of both to hand out to the new members.

Dave Pace received an email from Phil Taylor outlining that Ken Kirk and Ann would be in touch with him regarding the membership data base merger/way forward, this is still to happen.

I am hoping to be able at the AGM/OGM in Falkirk to present a factual account of the whole process and the way forward.

I would like to thank personally Dave Pace for his time and energy so far during this process.

Regards

Billy Morris MSM

Membership Secretary AEA (Veterans)

Branch Reports

299 Association Update - April 2025

Since the AGM, we attended the remembrance parade in Hull with a great attendance as usual.

Then we had our Christmas meeting, which is usually an informal meeting, as last one of the year. No meeting in January, however we attended a couple of funerals Olie Nelson Girtchens who was the master chef at 131 and Dave Harvey. Dave never served but his father was a founder member of 131 back in the day and continued to attend and support the Association after his fathers passing some years ago.

A recce was attended in March by myself, PSAO 131 Capt Dudley, SSGT Barlow (PSI) 301 Tp and the military lead for the Cromwell Anniversary event in September along with Eamon Smythe. Plan are going ahead nicely with both OC's from 131 Cdo Sqn RE and 299 Para Sqn RE onboard.

Earlier this month we updated our web site and Friday is our AGM which is our biggest meeting of the year.

Craig Gadd

Vice Chairman & Acting Secretary 299 Association

REA (A) Aldershot Branch Branch/Officers Report April 2025

1. The Branch continues to have a healthy membership of 28. Unfortunately, not all members are able to attend the Branch meetings, but all remain committed to supporting the Branch whenever possible.
2. The Branch unfortunately said goodbye to Ray Coleman who passed away earlier in the year and who was a loyal supporter of the Association.
3. A spring lunch was held in February at the Bush Hotel in Farnham. This is proving to be a very popular event, organised, and generously supported, by Chris Davies. The provisionally date for next year is Saturday 21st February 2026.
4. Tony Manley has recently become an "in pensioner" at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. He is still awaiting his scarlet jacket but is already enjoying the benefits of being a Chelsea Pensioner!
5. The South Coast Ramblers continue with their monthly walks with a hard core of walkers and small number of lunch "guests" attending.
6. An election of officers was held in early April with Sir Donald Spiers and Dick Brown agreeing to continue in the roles as President and Chairman respectively. Dave Rutter decided to step down as Secretary/Treasurer. Dave Ford was elected as the new Secretary/Treasurer. A sincere vote of thanks was extended to Dave Rutter for his long and extensive service to the Aldershot Branch.
7. A service will take place on Sunday 28th September to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Cromwell Lock disaster. John Lee will be attending.
8. The annual service at the Aldershot military cemetery, organised by Chris Davies, to remember those who lost their lives during the Falklands war will take place at 11:00 hrs Saturday 14th June.
9. The Branch is looking to organise a visit to the Aldershot Military Museum following a successful visit to the Farnborough Air Science Trust Museum last year.

AEA Birmingham Branch Report, April 2025

The branch is still maintaining in the region of 18 to 21 members attending monthly meeting.

The branch, over the winter period with darker evenings held lunch time meetings with the option of a pre-meeting breakfast. These meetings have again proved popular and gave a chance for members who are reluctant to drive in the darker months a chance to attend meetings. The branch has now re-started the evening meeting times.

The meeting venue is always welcoming and will allow the branch to try different timings to try and retain members which is obviously our prime concern.

The branch will continue to hold a breakfast meet up. on a social basis, as it proved popular.

The branch also enjoys regular meet ups for restaurant meals and social meets for a drink and banter.

The Branch held its Christmas Dinner on the 7th December 2024 which was again a success but with a few complaints due to this the branch received a partial refund. A very good singer was the main entertainment.

The Branch held the branch AGM at the beginning of April which was well attended and with the existing branch committee staying in post except for the post of Vice Chairman for which Tom Dunne was voted in. The branch secretary, Steve Brown, was due to stand down but as there were no nominations forth coming, he remains in post on a temporary basis. The PRA representative post, which has had little activity for some time, was dispensed with and voted not to continue. Some of the current committee still hold several posts on the committee which is not ideal and puts pressure on individuals.

The Welfare member continues to keep the branch updated on members.

The branch funds remain healthy at present.

Branch members continue to support Airborne and PRA events and Services and members will be attending Hardwick Hall in May, PRA service at NMA in July, Double Hills and Cromwell Lock, which this year will be the 50th Anniversary, services in September.

Members will also be attending the AGM and Gala Dinner in Falkirk.

The Birmingham branch and 299 Association are organising the 50th Anniversary of the tragic disaster at Cromwell Lock in 1975 and planning for this is ongoing. Both branches continue to maintain the garden and memorial at Cromwell Lock and have carried out some major works which were needed in preparation for the 50th Anniversary.

Some of our members will be attending Arnhem again this year.

The sad news is that the branch has lost 2 of our branch members Gordon Page and Brian Fosbury and also Mike Colemans wife Dorothy. R.I.P.

The branch has also supported funerals of ex-service personnel in the area.

Steve Brown

Birmingham Branch Temporary Secretary.

Yorkshire Branch OGM 30 Apr 25

We are maintaining our new format of 3 meetings a year March, June, and November.

We are expecting a good turnout at the Gala dinner in Scotland and we are supporting Cromwell Lock.

Arnhem trip this year is full with 16 deposits paid all branches where invited and we have a mix of members from Yorkshire branch and Birmingham branch.

We had a good march meeting which co-incided with 299 Para Sqn training weekend this is good progress in our attempt to forge a better link with 299 soldiers.

Ron our treasurer has retired we don't have a volunteer to take over the post.

That concludes my report

OGM Scotland Branch Update - April 2025

We met earlier this month to commemorate the exact anniversary of WWII John Lonergan's death in action in 1965 in what was then Aden. There are still a few of us left who were there and remain active in the AEA and we were joined by other Branch members in raising a glass or two.

IMPORTANT On leaving the venue our stalwart member Gil Nicol suffered a fall - nothing to do with the drink, more a child capering about - and had another one on board the bus to Glasgow. He was escorted to the taxi rank and spent the night at home. He was subsequently admitted to hospital and remained there for a week or so with complications and his wife was resigned to not seeing him again. He is however now released and at home. Gil has already apologised for missing our next meeting on 18 May - I think he got a real fright and has realised he is not indestructible.

We will gather in June to mark the death of Scott Wilson in the Falklands due to Argentine action. His plot is part of the family's at the cemetery At Easter Road and we are occasionally joined by family members.

In September we will have a service and parade in Grangemouth to mark the tragedy at Cromwell Lock fifty years ago. This conflicts with the memorial ceremony to be held at the Lock itself but is very well attended. I look forward to taking those willing to attend to the memorial in Grangemouth where the deceased were based when we have the AGM there.

Malcolm (Mick) Walker
Secretary, AEA Scotland

Branch Members - 73 on the books.

- a. Many of those shown on the database do not respond to emails, letters or attend meetings (No change from Last Year)

Meetings:

- a. Meetings are taking place on a quarterly basis subject to availability
- b. The last meeting was held on 24 February with 10 in attendance
- c. The next meeting will be held on 27 April 24.

Charity:

- a. The current branch charity is the Herefordshire Veterans support Centre.
- b. £2000.00 was raised for them at the AGM in Malvern
- c. The branch has a whip round after each meeting which they use to buy refreshments for veterans who visit the centre.

Welfare:

- a. Sam Hesketh Passed away on 18 September 2023. Sam was given a fitting send off on 13 October 2023 with many members of 9 Sqn past and present in addition to many other sappers.
- b. Clive Lee underwent Hip Replacement surgery in July 2023. Clive had a fall just before Christmas which set him back for a while. He is now well on the road to recovery.

AGM:

- a. The AGM was held on 13-15 October at Great Malvern. The Event was a great success with lots of positive feedback

Everest Base Camp Trek

- a. Kez Watters and his daughter Ellie successfully completed a trek to Everest (Not the Indian in north Camp) Base Camp in November 2023.
- b. They raised £1830.00 for the charity 'A Taste For Adventure', which helps disadvantaged children and was founded by former SAS soldier Brummie Stokes MBE who summited Mt Everest in 1976 alongside Bronco Lane.

Regimental Update

UNIT UPDATE - 23 PARA ENGR REGT

16 Air Assault Brigade is now resubordinated to 1 Division as the UK's light and airborne division, holding over 75% of High Readiness commitments. It is important to UK's contribution to NATO as a ready, adaptable and lethal option to the nation, offering reach, scale. 23 Para Engr Regt has five subunits that are well placed to contribute to this capability.

Comd 16 Bde has challenged the Regiment to learn the lessons from Ukraine, modernise and adapt at a rate faster than that of the remainder of the Field Army. In this regard, the Bde is currently the Fd Army lead on exploiting drones and 'First Person View' technology and the Regt is working hard to develop its ability to Live, Move and Fight. The Regiment remains early theatre entry specialists for global crisis, but this is now nested in a very real counter-Russian threat, and therefore must "adapt on the march."

Operations and Commitments 23 Regt currently has Sappers deployed across Asia, the Middle East, North and Central America and throughout Europe, including a sustained presence forward in Eastern Europe.

51 Para Sqn. A recent deployment to Louisiana with 2 PARA under US 82 AB Div. demonstrated its airdrop capability on a demanding War Fighting exercise. Having recently supported the Foreign Office in the relocation of Afghan 'Entitled Persons' from Pakistan, it now assumes a High Readiness standby role from May 25. 9 Para Sqn.

9 Para Sqn The Squadron has been held at High Readiness throughout the year including Caribbean humanitarian relief, Middle East and global crisis response. It has had troops recently deployed in Japan, Africa & Eastern Europe and soon in Jordan, the Falklands and Papua New Guinea and looks forward to a Sqn deployment to Belize.

70 Para Sqn. The Gurkha Kaida is well set in the fabric of the Regiment. Having completed their first stint at High Readiness, they deployed to Cyprus and now go into their Training Year.

RHQ/Regt CO 23 Regt was really pleased with the unit's insertion into Estonia last year as part of the Brigade, demonstrating the unit's unique parachute and airland capabilities.

The Regiment was honoured to commemorate the 80th anniversaries of D Day and Op Market Garden in Arnhem.

The Regiment remains full of talented motivated people, driven fierce sense of pride with common purpose, underpinned by tough physical training. In the past three of four years the unit has had the top JNCO in Corps; the top Sapper on every promotion course and a multitude of top SNCOs. It consistently has the highest pass rate on P Coy. Elsewhere, it competes at Army level across Cycling, running, football, rugby league and badminton.

AEA Webmaster/Journal Report

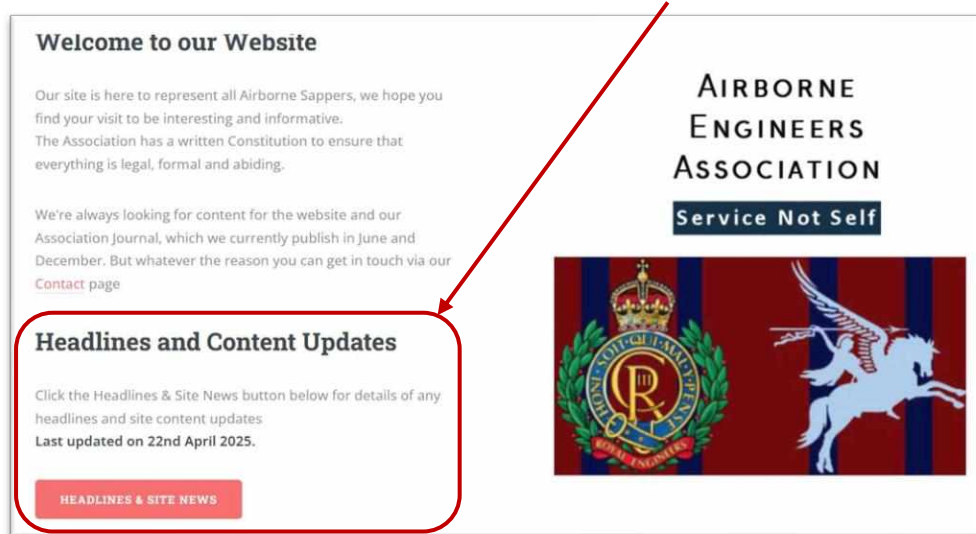
Report for OGM Dated 30th April 2025

By Dave Pace

AEA Web Site

The redesigned AEA website is now live, though there is still some content to add. Ongoing updates will be made to the photo albums and Roll of Honour pages, as well as incorporating our own shop and the 23 Para Engr Regt PRI Shop, more on that from Jon Nichols. The aim of this redesign was mainly to create a responsive site, that is it will automatically adjust to the device it's being viewed on, be it monitor, tablet or phone.

The site Home page includes a date of the latest content update, and a button to visit the "Headlines & Site News" page, always a good starting point when you visit the site.



As ever all feedback is welcome, as is any content we can add to the site.

<https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/>

AEA Journal

From the AEA website:

"For many years, the Journal has been a great source of information and a means to keep in touch, as well as providing an extensive archive of what we've been up to. Let's keep it going." It is still our intention to get all printed versions of the Journal digitised and added to the AEA website. Work has been started, which you can view here <https://www.airbornesappers.org.uk/journal/journalindex.html> where you see a PDF icon on the Journal index page that issue has been digitised.

The next issue of the eJournal is due to be distributed via email over the weekend of 14th/15th June.

We are planning to send the December 2025 issue in printed format!

With that in mind we would like to ensure we have your correct postal address on file. Please get in touch as follows to confirm your contact details, in this case particularly your postal address.

Contact Dave Pace, AEA Webmaster Phone 07977 282620

Email contactaeawebmaster@gmail.com

Post 169 College Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6BX Please use the same contact details to send in or contact us about any articles or other content for inclusion in the Journal

Obituaries

Maj (Retd) Peter Johnson BEM

1926 – 18th August 2024



Peter joined the army as a sapper in Oct 1944, first with 1st Parachute Sqn, (then part of 1st Airborne Division) serving in UK and as part of the liberation of Norway. He then transferred in 1945 to 9 Airborne Sqn where he served in Palestine up to 1948, meeting his future wife from the ATS along the way.



He went on to join 68 Sqn Gurkha Engineers (then part of 50 Field Engineer Regiment), travelling out to Hong Kong in 1952 and on to Malaya in 1954. He remained with 68 Sqn until 1957 gaining promotion to Staff Sergeant. Following UK leave, he was then a founder member of 69 Sqn Gurkha Engineers in 1961. In Nov 62, he moved with 69 Sqn to Borneo and the uprising in neighbouring Brunei.

Peter subsequently completed tours in Junior Leaders, 25 Regiment, was commissioned SSC 1967 in 2 Div Engineers, 16 Field Sqn Osnabruck and was 2IC of 1 Fortress Sqn Gibraltar. His final tour was as SO2 in the Zaire training team.

Having moved 34 times in his army career, he finally retired in 1974 with the rank of Major, taking up a role as an Office Manager and Recruitment head for a leading accountancy company in Manchester. He remained intensely proud of his many years with the Royal Engineers and is survived by two sons Mike & Terry.

WO2 (SSM) Retd David Mellors

29th August 1932 – 18 April 2025



David Mellors passed away in his sleep on Good Friday 18th April 2025 aged 92. Born and raised in the Derbyshire area he started his working life as a coal miner aged 16 years old but would later join the regular Army and in particular 9 Indep Parachute Field Squadron RE and served in Cyprus and an Operational deployment Op Musketeer, Egypt during the 1956 Suez Canal crisis.

After six years' service he left the Army and settled in the village of Whitwell with his wife Grace and their 4 children.

David joined the Territorial Army and served with 575 (SF) FD SQN RE and became the Sqn SSM before finally retiring.

David was an avid military historian and researched the history of the Parachute Regiment training at Hardwick Hall in the early years of WW2. He was also a keen supporter of the Yorkshire Branch AEA and the Parachute Regiment Association

Chesterfield. Members of both associations attended the funeral service at Babworth Crematorium, Retford on Tuesday 13th May 2025.

