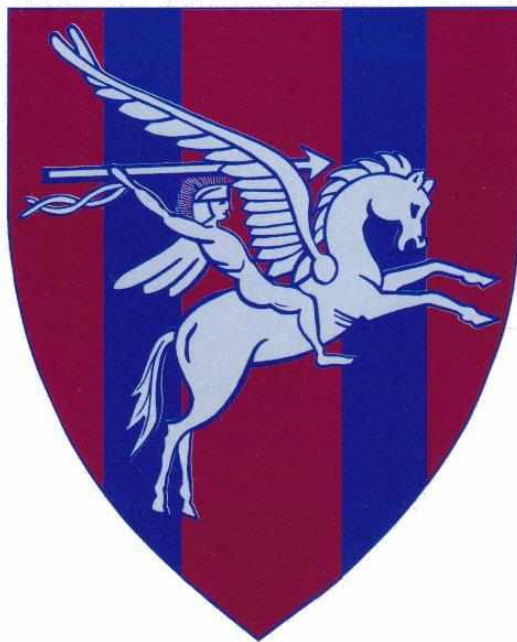




THE AIRBORNE ENGINEERS JOURNAL



**Airborne Engineers Association
Registered Charity No 1009201**





The Airborne Engineer

December 2008 Issue No. 26

**President**

Lt Col (retd) John Lee

Chairman

Joe Stoddart MBE

Editor

Dave Rutter

Membership Secretary

Steve (Billy) Morris

IT Member (Webmaster)

Dave Pace

Vice Presidents

Bunny Brown

Secretary

Major Geoff Howard

Treasurer

Major Dick Brown

Archivist

Fred Gray

Association Shop

Ray Coleman

Life Vice Presidents

Bob Ferguson, Tom Ormiston, Fred Gray, Ray Coleman, Dave Rutter,
Chris Chambers, Bob Jones, Bob Prosser BEM and Tom Carpenter

Publication Deadline - APRIL 2009 Edition

Members submitting material for publication in the **APRIL 2009** edition of the Journal are advised that the closing date will be **MONDAY 16th MARCH** Kindly ensure that you forward your articles direct to the editor - address as shown above.

Please - don't leave it until the last minute.

Contents

AEA President	4
Chairman's Report - AGM 2008	4
Chairman's Farewell.....	5
Rogues Gallery	6
Double Hills - Arnhem Memorial	7
The 2008 AGM & Reunion Weekend	8
Coventry Continued:	9
Coventry Continued.....	10
Still Coventry..	11
Last of Coventry.	12
Airborne Engineers Association - Financial Report	13
Statement of Financial Affairs as at 14th October 2008	13
Auditors Comments:	13
Minutes of AGM held at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry	14
Forgotten Heroines	16
The Glider Pilot Regiment	16
Can You Help?	17
As I Remember	17
"Flak and Silk"	19
Standing Order Payment - Identity HELP!	19
A Tribute to Neil Westbrook	19
A Salute to the Royal Engineers	21
Relax in the Algarve	21
The 'Fergie' Semple Golf Tournament	22
London to Brighton	24
Aldershot to Woodbridge Non Stop Challenge April	25
The "John Rock Bust"	26
Operation QQAB TSUKA (EAGLE'S SUMMIT)	27
Major Joe Fossey RE	27
Operation QQAB TSUKA (EAGLE'S SUMMIT)	29
My Diary - Operation QQAB TSUKA	30
News from the Branches	33
Aldershot	33
Chatham	34
Yorkshire	35
The John Rock Bust - Unveiling Ceremony	36
Membership Report.....	38
Acts of Remembrance Far and Wide	38
Obituaries	39
Association Shop.....	41

AEA President

Lt Col (Retd) John Lee

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the appointment as your President at the October 2008 AGM in Coventry, and I am looking forward to my term in office.

It is good that Airborne Sappers are now in the forefront and building on the traditions established by their forefathers. It seems only a few years ago that the Airborne were in decline and it is now very encouraging that we have Airborne Regiment and a TA Airborne Squadron as well.

For those who don't know me, I served with 131 Squadron for 17 years and later served with Engineer Branch (HQ) London District and with the London District Specialist Training Teams, all of which were very enjoyable appointments.

May I take this opportunity of wishing all members and their families a Very Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

Chairman's Report- AGM 2008

Mick Humphries

We have had a very good year as well as an active one.

The Branches in Birmingham, Aidershot, Chatham, Edinburgh and Yorkshire continue to flourish. This year we have had several things to focus the mind. Firstly we are all very glad to see the safe return of 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Asslt) from Afghanistan. We will be joining them for their medals parade on 21st November at Woodbridge.

After the medals parade we will be unveiling The John Rock Bust in The Garden of Reflection at Rock Barracks.

This project has taken 2 years to bring to fruition and would not have happened without the unstinting enthusiasm and quite often dammed stubborn persistence of Eric Blenkinsop. I congratulate Eric on achieving the finished article and I am sure you will all join me in offering him a huge vote of thanks.

The year has seen the usual round of parties and trips out.

I have not been able to attend as many functions as I would have liked, however speaking to the branch Chairmen they have all been very successful. The one event that I attended for the first time was the 1st Para Sqn dinner at Donington in September. It was very humbling to be amongst the old and bold who saw active service before I was born. At the dinner I was presented with a painting, drawn by Peter Stainforth depicting the drop at Primosole Bridge, Sicily on the 13th July 1943. I will be passing this on so that it can hang in a prominent position within 23 Engineer Regt (Air Asslt).

Early in the year Yorkshire Branch handed over £550 from the 2007 AGM to "Combat Stress" and we received a letter of appreciation from them. This year the committee decided that the recipient would be "Help for Heroes".

Wreaths from the Association have been laid at Arnhem,

Donington, Double Hills, Aidershot and on Remembrance Day at many other venues around the UK.

Membership applications are down a little this year, mainly due to the regiment being away on operations, however Billy has managed to entice a cheque from 18 people so far. Our membership now stands at 1344. Ray Coleman has had another successful year running the shop with the help of Pam, and once again has turned in a large profit.

Dave Rutter continues to do a sterling job as editor of the Journal, you will remember at last years AGM we agreed a subscription increase.

Over the year Dick Brown has been continuing to look after the association funds. There has been a slight reduction in the association funds this year. Excluding the money we have spent on the bust our expenditure has been similar to previous years. Generally however our funds have been reducing over the past few years and we need to rein in our spending to lift the funds back to a healthier position. Our liquid assets remain around £15,000. Our website, managed by Dave Pace is getting busier, however Dave does need your support, so please continue to use it and sign the guest book.

Lastly, I would like to give a big thank you to our outgoing President and Secretary, Bill Rudd and Mick Leather.

Without the assistance and support I have received from both of them during my tenure the association would have descended into chaos - thank you both.

We have had a good year and I look forward to our 20th Anniversary year in 2009.

Chairman's Farewell

Well that's me done! What a great three years you have given me as your chairman. When I took over from Bunny I had two objectives. The first was to have an outbreak of peace, and I think we have achieved this and it is good to see all airborne sappers friends again. Secondly I wanted to ensure that the association contributed to benevolence work. It is not possible for us to be directly involved in benevolence, however we can raise funds for those that are. I am pleased to say that during my tenure we have given over £5,000 to other military charities including the sum of £1500 that the Chatham branch raised at this years AGM.

On the less serious side I have had many beers with lots of you, and Chris and myself have thoroughly enjoyed all the parties we have attended - thank you all for your friendship and generosity.

Lastly, may I extend a most sincere thank you to Bill Rudd and Mick Leather for their help, advice and support without which I would probably not have survived these past 3 years. You have chosen a good man in Joe Stoddart to be your new Chairman, please give him all the support you can. I look forward to sitting in next years AGM at the back of the room with a stinking hangover.

Rogues Gallery



Ron Day, John Smith, Peter Wade, John Chapple, Col Dennis Eagan, John Elliott, Peter Myatt & Sir Donald Spiers - all were serving in 9 Sqn in 1954.
Photo taken at Harpenden August 2008



Wally Gee (on the right) in the warmer climate of Egypt-1954



Ken Mason, Bill Thompson, Derek Sowdon, Chris Reid, Colin Parker, George Murphy, (Kneeling): Taff McCleary & Tosh Byrne-Haig Lines 1968



Bing Crosby & Paul Dunkley- UNFICYP
1972



Sprs: Butch Glover, Mick Humphries and Kevin Borthwick (now Major and current Regt 2IC) - Bessbrook Mill search wing on Christmas day 1980



Troop Commanders of 9 Sqn in 1954 in the Canal Zone: Peter Wade 2 Tp, Dennis Eagan 3 Tp & John Chapple 1 Tp

Double Hills- Arnhem Memorial

JT Stoddart MBE



This year double hills was a special year of remembrance as two statues one of an Airborne Sapper the other of a Glider Pilot were presented and unveiled, thanks to the work of Roy Cleeves the creator of them who served in Germany 1953 - 1955 as a Sapper.

Prior to the service a fly past of historical aircraft from the Army Air Corps took place much to the delight of all concerned.

The ceremony was very dignified with input from Major Margaret Goulding Salvation Army, Arthur Underwood, Rev Guy Edwards, Rev Audrey Simpson, Father Michael Clothier and most of all the children, who, led by Bryony James performed the unveiling of the statues, then after Reveille they laid crosses and poppies supplied by the British Legion at the memorial. Bryony also recited the

'Double Hills Poem' on behalf of her grand mother who composed the poem for the soldiers she endeavoured to rescue after the crash. During the service our own piper Frank Menzies-Hearn, well up to his usual standard, played the 'pipes'.



Standards on Parade - Gerry Hicks carries the AEA standard (second bearer in nearest file.

After the ceremony it was back to the entrance where everyone concerned from the various units formed up for inspection. After inspection, units of 9 Para Sqn. RE and Army Air Corp led the parade through the village past the Dias where the Salute was taken by Major General Field CB, OBE, RE.

Then back to the village hall where we had tea and cake and met many old friends: Garth Hewish, Paddy Taggart, Major General Field, Mick Humphries, Eric Blenkinsop, John Lee, Roger Mockford, Bob Wardle and not forgetting our standard bearer Gerry Hicks; who did a really supreme job for the Association.



Brig Garth Hewish

It was a great day and another success for Peter Yeates who has been organising this event since its inception, that, in spite of being a matelot - he well deserves all the accolades given to him, as this event is growing and growing.

There are many others involved in the success of this event but are too many to mention though worthy of Praise. **A GREAT DAY**

The 2008 AGM & Reunion Weekend



Joe Stoddart MBE accepts the 'Chairman's Chain of Office' from Mick Humphries



Monty Wooley, John O'Connor, Don Lay & Bill Shields – Looks like a case of first out best dressed!



Tom Tuddenham & Bert Gregory - Don't look so worried Bert it's Tom round next!



Phil 'Arthur' Askey, Mike 'Mikey La' Smith, Arun Cofax & Mark Gilley - Come on Arun where's your casual kit?



Geoff Barlow, Geoff Howard (the new AEA secretary) & Brian Spivey - Good luck to you and your family Geoff Barlow in your quest for a new life in New Zealand



Jase Wheeler & Marc 'Dorks' Dorking having a few quick warmers into the bank!

Coventry Continued:



George Barrett, Arun Cofax, Sid Warrilow, Ian 'Leemo' Leeming, & Joe Cook - the young and the not so young Some young, some old - but all bold!



John Chetwynd, Tom Dolan with Kelly & Colin Birkenshaw- Colin can be seen in a more relaxed mode in a later photograph!



Sally Myatt & Sally Wilson - in a quiet corner, putting the world to right.



Jan & Bunny Brown in relaxed mode having organised, together with the Birmingham branch members, a super weekend



Joe Stoddart (chairman elect), in Pensioner Eric Borlace & Mike Robertson



Anita & Dave Pearce with the future Chatham branch chairman Bob Matthews

Coventry Continued....



Tom Robertson & Ian Muirhed - doing their level best to improve the sales of Scotch Whiskey



Peter Smith & Yvonne Brinkman



Mike Smith, Phil Askey & Marc Dorking receiving silver service - just like in the FOBs or Camp Bastion!



Matt Newall, George & Elsie Barrett - Matt showed signs of withdraw! symptoms due to the absence of Bill & Dorothy Rudd



Arun Cofax, 'Myra' Hindley & Mark Gilley Myra receives first hand knowledge of the Afghan situation.



Eddie Roberts, Brian Spivey, Mick Mathis, Froth Beer & Derek Taylor - Where's your drink Derek?

Still Coventry..



Christine & Dave Grimbley - how do you keep your youthful looks Dave?



Marc Dorking, Jase (Little old wine drinker me) Wheeler & Ian 'Leemo' Leeming - don't worry lads he's just tasting it!



Guest of Honour, Brig D.R. Burns OBE signs the Official Guest's book.



Lt Col John Lee, the newly elected President of the Airborne Engineers Association signs in.



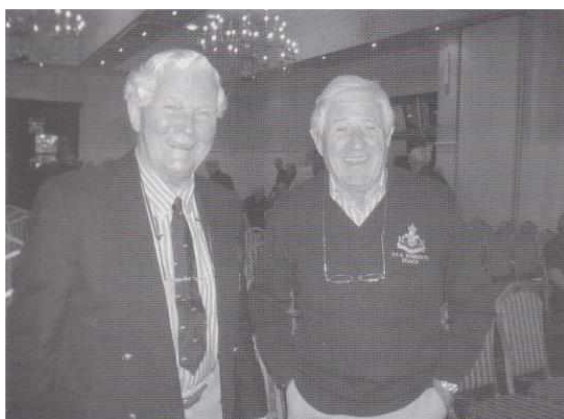
**L to R:
Tom Carpenter, Ivor Anderson,
Bill Perry, Charlie Barker, Bob Jones,
Sid Burrell, Joe Cook, Sid Warrilow,
Peter Smith, Bill Cox &
Eric "The General" Booth
A fine body of men!**



Ivor Anderson proudly displays the 591 Para Sqn emblem



Steve Brown & Brian Care - stalwarts of the Birmingham branch



Col Dennis Eagan & Brig John Hooper OBE - obviously enjoying the occasion



Derek Taylor & our treasurer Maj (soon to be promoted Lt Col) Dick Brown - drinking cups of tea!!



**By popular request for Brendan Snoddy - Louie Gallagher, Froth Beer, Tony Manley & Ken Turk
Viewers please note the new facial image of Louie!**



**Mewin Lane-Sansam (latest recruited member),
John Chetwynd & Dave Pearce**

Airborne Engineers Association- Financial Report

as at 14 October 2008

Audited by: Joe Stoddart MBE

Previous Period		Current Period
	FIXED ASSETS	
	Capital Property	
	Current Assets	
	Cash	
	Current Account	
	Deposit Account	
	Shop Stock	
	TOTAL ASSETS	
	LIABILITIES	
	Newsletter	
	Projects Fund	
	TOTAL LIABILITIES	
	TOTAL ASSETS MINUS LIABILITIES	
	GENERAL PURPOSE FUND	
	Balances as per last balance sheet	
	Deduct Excess of Expenditure	
	ACCUMULATED GENERAL PURPOSE FUND	

Statement of Financial Affairs as at 14th October 2008

Expenditure	Current Period	Previous Period	Income	Current Period	Previous Period
Stationary/Postage			Interest		
AGM 2006			Subscriptions		
Committee Curry			Donations		
Transfer to Newsletter			Shop Profit		
Spr Portrait			Auction Donation		
Wreaths			Refund		
Property Deprecation			Auction		
Standard Bearer			News Letter		
Presentation			John Rock Bust		
AEA Website			Projects Transfer		
Refund					
Donation					
AEA Guest Book					
John Rock Bust					
Total Expenditure			Total Income		
			Excess of expenditure		
GRAND TOTALS			GRAND TOTALS		

Auditors Comments:

The Treasurer is to be congratulated on a well presented and efficiently run account. My only comment is that the current account now has a large deposit and I believe a maximum of £3,000 is required for the day to day running of the account, the remainder should be transferred into the higher interest earning account.

Minutes of AGM held at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry

On Saturday 18 October 2008

Members Present 58 - Meeting Opened at 09:40 hrs

1. The Chairman's Address and Annual Report: The chairman thanked everyone for attending and after announcing the name of our guest of honour (Brig Burns OBE) for the Gala dinner, read his annual report on the Association. The Chairman also made special reference to the safe return of 23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt) from their operational tour in Afghanistan.

2. Silent Tributes: The Chairman asked all to stand for a minutes silence as a tribute to friends and colleagues who had passed away during the past year.

3. Apologies: Although the names of those who had submitted their apologies were not read out, two members of the committee who, due to changes of circumstances had resigned from the committee: Bill Rudd MBE as President for the past 3 years and Mick Leather, Secretary. The Chairman spoke very highly of the tremendous contribution and guidance he had received from them both and extended sincere thanks to them.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting: There were no matters arising from the previous meeting. Proposed by Harold Padfield and seconded by Sid Warrilow that the minutes be accepted: **Carried**

5. Treasurers Report: Dick Brown stated that the accounts had been audited and went on to explain that overall the funds were slightly down this year. This was due to financial support given to the "John Rock" bust project. He congratulated Ray Coleman in raising over £1,000 profit from the AEA shop sales, and due to the tenacity of Eric Blenkinsop the John Rock fund had obtained a grant from the REA. A sincere vote of thanks was offered to Eric and Ray for all their hard work. Proposed by Lt Col Bob Matthews and seconded by Eric Blenkinsop that the treasurer's report be accepted: **Carried**

6. Membership Secretary's Report: Billy Morris informed members that it had been a slow year for recruiting due mainly to 23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt) deployment on operations. However on a positive note, he has been recruiting from 299 Para Squadron. Total new members from Jan 2008 are 18 and the total membership to date is 1,401. Proposed by Harry Lockwood and seconded by Jack Braithwaite that the report be accepted: **Carried**

7. Airborne Engineers Journal: Dave Rutter spoke regarding the increase in cost of the annual journal subscription being raised from £6 to £8. He explained that this was due to the ever-increasing postal charges, which for UK postage now runs at 66 pence per copy. UK. Once again, Dave appealed for members to pay their subscriptions by standing.

Direct Debit he explained was a non-starter as banks only operate this system when dealing with thousands of customers. Members were once again reminded that the Journal was only as good as its contents and that a continuous supply of material for publication was essential. Proposed by Bill Shields and seconded by John Smith that the report be accepted: **Carried**

8. Election of Officers: As the President, Chairman and the Secretary had stood or were standing down due to various commitments e.g. end of term, work or family matters, it left these positions to be filled: **President:** Proposed by Joe Stoddart seconded by Dave Rutter that Lt Col John Lee be nominated and accepted as President of the association: **Carried**

Chairman: As from the 31 December 2008 it was proposed by Dave Rutter and Seconded by Dick Brown that Joe Stoddart MBE be elected as chairman of the association: **Carried** **Secretary:** As getting a volunteer was like getting blood from a stone the members were asked by the chairman if there was anyone willing to stand for the position, and much to everyone's surprise Major Geoff Howard, currently serving at Minley Manor, volunteered for the post.

Proposed by Dick Brown and seconded by Billy Morris that Geoff Howard is elected as secretary: **Carried**

Note: As the President and Secretary's positions are vacant, John and Geoff will assume these appointments immediately. The Chairman's position will change as per the constitution on 31st December 2008.

Welfare: The position of Welfare Advisor remains vacant.

9. Trustees: Currently there are 3 trustees: The Chairman + 2 Vice Presidents as one of the previous vice presidents was now elected as President it was proposed that the following be elected as the Association Trustees: Lt Col John Lee, Joe Stoddart MBE and Bunny Brown: **Carried**

10. Constitution: The chairman spoke about Col Dennis Eagan's proposal for the need for a disciplinary clause in the constitution with the opportunity of a right to appeal. Following a short debate it was decided that the proposal be put on hold and that a small committee headed by the newly elected President (John Lee) be set up to examine the proposal as well as looking at combining the two committees currently required by the constitution. John is to submit its findings to the Executive Committee summer 2009 to allow a firm proposal to be put to the 2009 AGM.

11. **Life Vice-President:** The highest accolade we can give a member is that of Life Vice President. In recognition for the work he has for the association, it was proposed by Joe Stoddart and seconded by Mick Leather that Dave Rutter be nominated as a Life Vice President. **Carried**

12: **Date and Venue of next AGM:** The next AGM will be held in the Britannia Hotel, Nottingham 3rd October 2009.

This will be the Association's 20th Anniversary. There being no further business, the Meeting closed at 10:25 Hrs.

OGM Held in Royal Court Hotel, Coventry 18 October 2008 - Meeting Opened 10:45Hrs

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting** - The minutes of the previous were discussed and with no matters arising from them it was proposed by John Smith and seconded by Eric Blenkinsop that they be accepted: **Carried**

2. **Archivists Report** - A discussion took place reference finding a safe haven for our artefacts. Meanwhile Property such as the 2 x Standard's, the Chairman's Medallion and Gavel should have a dedicated signature and held by the secretary for safekeeping. Nick Gibson, son of Smokey, has offered to keep a record of 23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt) history and the chairman offered to speak to the 2IC of the regiment on his behalf.

3. **Sport's Club** - Billy Morris explained how the introduction of a forum to discuss sporting activities on net would be helpful in promoting the club. Branches could discuss various sporting activities with a view to encouraging others to join up or to engage in friendly competition. Also if photographs of Branch sports activities were sent to Billy he would edit them and produce a Power point show at the next AGM/Reunion weekend.

Col Dennis Eagan congratulated Billy on his fine achievement of running from London to Brighton and for raising £1,200 for the "Help for Hero's Charity. A sentiment warmly displayed by all members.

4. **Shop Report** - The chairman gave a report stating that Ray, ably supported by Pam, had worked extremely hard over the past 12 months banking £1073 profit for the Association. The announcement received a spontaneous applause from the members present.

5. **I.T Member's Report** - In the absence of Dave Pace (IT/Webmaster) the chairman reminded the members that the website can be used for all types of information regarding the Association, photographs can be sent and are indeed required from the Fifty's through to the Eighty's, absent friends and Flash update's. It was suggested that branch chairmen could send in details of shows, parades, demonstrations, sporting events etc. could be posted on the site. www.airbornesappers.org.uk REMEMBER we as an Association have to pay for the site so - Use it or lose it!

6. **John Rock Bust** - Eric Blenkinsop explained that the John Rock Temporary account was now closed and that the remaining funds would be returned to the treasurer.

7. **Annual Dinner 2008** - Eric Blenkinsop gave a word of thanks to Bunny Brown and the Birmingham branch for organising the 2008 function on their (Chatham branch) behalf.

8. **AGM/Reunion 2009** - Bunny Brown informed the meeting that the venue would be in the Britannia Hotel, Nottingham.

Full details and a booking form will be included in the April 2009 Journal.

9. **AGM/Reunion 2010** - Aidershot branch to organise.

10. **A.O.B.** - The Chairman requested that money currently in the Project fund be transferred back to GPF Proposed by Bob Matthews and seconded by Eric Blenkinsop: **Carried** John Smith spoke regarding the trip he was organising to Arnhem 17-21 September 2009 there are still seats available.

Cost of trip is £330 with a £100 deposit.

Eric Blenkinsop announced that he will be standing down as Chairman of the Chatham branch in April 2009 and that his replacement will be Lt Col Bob Matthews.

There being no further business the meeting closed 11:35 Hrs

Forgotten Heroines

Harry Barnsley

Why has it taken over sixty years to recognise and reward all those ladies who did such strenuous, and often dangerous jobs during WWII? I am referring to the belated awards to Land Girls, Lumber Girls and various others, not forgetting all those who worked in heavy industry as crane drivers etc., to replace the men who had been drafted into the fighting forces. Many of these ladies engaged in war work also had families to look after.

There were also many fit young girls who served in the armed forces such as Army, Navy and RAF, who may have qualified for medals but were kept in ignorance of that fact. When I was demobbed I received a pink slip informing me of what decorations I was allowed to wear.

Recently, after a rather lengthy stay in hospital I was discharged but I was asked to make weekly visits to a therapy centre for old people. We were all more or less candidates for the "Knackers Yard", both men and women, and one day I attended wearing my veterans' badge.

Eventually one of the women asked me what the badge was. After explaining to her she informed me that she had been a full corporal in the ATS and had served in the Royal Artillery on Ack Ack duty. I asked why she was not wearing her badge, whereupon she replied that women were not eligible! I told her how to apply and the following week she attended wearing it, together with rather a broad smile.

We had quite a few conversations after that and slowly it dawned on me that she might also be entitled to other medals. I asked her permission to apply, on her behalf, telling her that I had two medals in mind - the War Medal and the Defence Medal. She was rather sceptical; however I wrote off to the M.O.D. and after about a week I received a reply couched in the most polite and friendly terms saying that they could not award through a third party but they enclosed quite a simple form for her to complete, and later my enthusiasm was rewarded when she received the two medals mentioned.

So, for any lady out there who thinks she might qualify, the details are as follows: *Service No., Rank, Unit., Length of Service and Where Served. If single when serving give maiden name and married name.*

Send to:- Ministry of Defence Medal Office, Building 250, Innsworth Station, Gloucester GL3 1HW

The Glider Pilot Regiment

Brig JH Hooper OBE, OstJ, DL

I have recently returned from the annual Arnhem pilgrimage, which I attended courtesy of the Glider Pilot Regiment Association. It was a rather different event to the coach-load I organised in 2004 for airborne Sappers. (John Smith also organised a coach-load so we were well represented at the 60th Anniversary pilgrimage) It concentrated on remembering those GPR men who fell at Arnhem rather than the battlefield tour, which we experienced. The GPRA members were a great bunch in the highest traditions of Airborne Forces. One pilot had flown his glider in to Sicily but his wounds prevented him from taking part in the Normandy operation. He later flew

in to Arnhem and having escaped took part in the Rhine crossing. Another had taken part in the Normandy, Arnhem and Rhine operations.

These veterans were all full of fun and the energy of some had me knackered at the end of quite demanding days.

One of them is still regularly flying a light aircraft. The point of this is that these pilots, some of whom were previously Sappers had not gone through 'P' Company nor did they have wings on their right shoulders but they did wear their red berets with enormous pride. I suspect that most of them would have considered 'P' Company on a par with a gentle stroll in the country. Those who have erected barriers, on the grounds that some now wearing the red beret never went through 'P' Company and gained their parachute wings might bear this in mind. After five tours in Airborne postings I can assure you that I would rather jump out of a plane than abseil from a chopper or land in a glider any day.

Can You Help?

Sapper William John Jones 3915932-286 (Airborne) Field Park Company Killed in Operation Varsity - 24 March 1945 On Operation Varsity, from RAF Woodbridge, in Suffolk, two Hamilcar gliders (numbers 285 and 286) each carried a bulldozer and two sappers. My uncle was first pilot in number 286 and, when he landed his glider near Hamminkeln, in Germany, sapper Jones was killed by enemy gunfire. My uncle and the other pilot, and probably the other sapper, became POWs. Sapper Jones is buried in Reichswald War Cemetery. No other sapper from 286 (Airborne) Field Park Company is buried in this cemetery, which suggests that the one who survived this landing, and the two from the other glider, survived the war. I have traced relatives of sapper Jones, one of whom told me he remembered "a soldier visiting the house in 1945 who was with him in action," which corroborates my deduction and who was, perhaps, one of these three. I shall appreciate it if anyone can help me trace one or all of these three sappers.

Dennis Moyse 63, Oriel Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO2 9EG Telephone 07810 494 630 E-mail: horsahamilcar@yahoo.co.uk

As I Remember

Don Shaw Ex 299 & 9 Para Sqn 1956-62

The news at the time seemed concerned about one, President Nasser of Egypt. The pictures showed troop activity and the loading of warships, also mentioning paratroops, with scenes of them training and seeing advertisement posters declaring "Your Twice The Citizen If You Join The Territorial Army!" I was told that a TA Parachute troop was at Middleton Barracks, Calvert Lane.

So I went along and was introduced to a Corporal George Desforges who told me I could join, but couldn't parachute, as I was too young. I signed on the dotted line with Captain Joe Rouse present, it was; as I recall early November. Drill nights were Tuesdays and Thursdays, the rest of my week was taken up with night school at the High School for Building, Mondays, Wednesdays. & Fridays.

It was here at 1 Troop, 299 Para Engr Sqn that I met men like Dodger Green, Don Ball, Busty Shearer, and of course QM Busty Marriot, all ex Arnhem and D Day Veterans.

They began to teach me about the weapons of the day, the 303 rifle, Stengun, Brengun and practise drill that went with them (but still with no uniform!) Timber Woods had just left and SSM Eddie Edwards was to take his place - it was he and Sgt Ernie Venus that organised the Shinty matches which got rougher the longer they lasted, you could not escape being bruised and battered. There was also judo training with Norman Sangwin.

It was here that I met Pete Pickard, Ron Jennings and later Dave Walker and Eddie Pickard (who eventually ended up as Sgt in 22 SAS). We all played a big part in 299 and became lifelong friends.

We spent many marvellous nights at Middleton Barracks, Pete, Eddie and myself would walk nearly five miles to the barracks and the same home again after a full days work.

Training Exercises at weekend became the norm for me for four years. I passed training as best recruit. The troop would visit Rolston ranges for weapon training at weekends, catch trams to Scotland and back for exercises, and always back to work on a Monday morning.

We would visit the Doncaster troop, staying at Scarborough Barracks. Shinty and football matches brought out the serious rivalry between the troops, but it was all great fun and we had some great times.

I went to Abingdon in 1957 to earn my wings, jumping from a balloon and Valletta and Hastings aircraft. We had camps at Thetford, Rochester and bridging camp at Wyke Regis. It was here that Cpl Mal Scott, Capt Joe Rouse, and myself made the first night jump from a balloon, we were told it was a first, so if anybody can tell me if they know of it having been done before I would like to know. I can still remember the view of Weymouth bay all lit up below us.



Stan Robbie, Buster Shearer (kneeling), Don Ball, Don Shaw & Don Lydon - 299 Para Sqn Rochester 1959

National Service came along and I had to report to 3 Training Regt, Royal Engineers, Cove, Farnborough.

Training went well and I was asked if would take an NCOs cadre and stay as a training Cpl. This I declined as I had already put my name forward for 'P' Company.

Eventually a pre-para course came up and I reported to Morval Barracks, Cove Farnborough, where a few more and I were to be put through it. It was here I met Paddy Hewitt who gave us all a right hammering and

towards the end of six weeks there were just three of us left, John Smee, Derek Ibbotson and myself. We went onto 'P' Company at Airborne Forces Depot and were billeted in barracks on Gun Hill.

Maj Wade was then in charge with and another old-timer, Smokey Furnace. CSM Issett took us all through to the end, it was non-stop and hard but we eventually passed out and found myself back at No 1 Parachute School to earn my wings again.

The three of us rejoined 9 Sqn again in November 1960. I settled in 8 Section with Cpl Dave Edmonds, Buster Shaw and Bill Rudd, Frank Richardson, Fred Pinkney and struck up a friendship and had many a laugh arguing about everything from sport to politics. Frank Richardson and John Smee both came to stay at our house in Hull and thoroughly enjoyed it. SSM Conway was there then but was to leave shortly and Ned Parker took over.

Exercises followed in quick succession; then one morning parade SSgt Don Newman asked if anybody was interested in doing a job for the Ordnance Survey who were about to start re-mapping Scotland, so Paddy Byrne, Scarra Burwood, SSgt Don Newman and myself went off to the highlands for a few weeks whitewashing summit cairns.



Don Newman giving the cairn a coat of Snowcem

Back to Morval barracks and onto Old Serum along with Fred Pinkney, Dave Oliver and some I cannot remember, for a heavy drop course. The course was taken by "Half Mark Johnson" of the Para Regt. The drop was done at Watchfield.

From Old Serum it was off to the warmth of Cyprus and "Operation Fabulist". We flew out in a Beverly aircraft taking three days to reach our destination. (Now it takes four hours). Time was spent acclimatising and training and finally a night drop in the Morphou desert followed by marching and running around the Troodos mountains.

Ned Parker was the SSM now and took us over crags and hills of Kyrenia until we arrived in Kyrenia itself. The scents of lemon, orange and eucalyptus filled the air and Cyprus was not yet commercialised.

We returned to England and straight on to Otterburn for 3.5 rocket launcher training and clearing an Artillery range of unexploded shells. Around this time SSM Geordie Ramsey took over from Ned Parker. Any one remember Geordie Ramsey's Dice? Around this time Iraq started a flap by moving its troops to the border of Kuwait, so 2 Troop were rushed out to join 2 Para and we dug in on the Iraq border. At the same time 3 Troop were rushed back from Scotland to fill in Sqn duties until the flap was over.

We were soon back on Exercise again, dropping on Stanford PTA with the Anglian Regt as our enemy. We ran around for forty-eight hours, made a runway for a Beverly aircraft to land and also saw the heavy drop of the Sqn bulldozer whistled in. Anyone remember that incident?

The Exercise finished and the OC Maj Ian Wilson ordered us to march back to Aidershot some 150 miles with an occasional lift from a Land Rover. I remember passing through Piccadilly Circus in London in single file with everybody in full kit with rifles, Stirlings, Bren guns, and Rocket Launchers. The whole squadron doubled into Morval Barracks at the end of that one.

We were Grenade training, I think it was Ash ranges - I remember throwing my grenade and it landed on the window sill of this dummy house, Ginge McCairns was supervising at the time, he stood up picked it up and threw it, sat down and off it went. Cool customer Ginge!

I remember us putting a bridge across a river one day; I'm up to my neck in it, holding a pin in position when Lcpl Kavanagh brought a sledgehammer crashing down on my thumb, light duties followed for awhile!

Winter 1961, I was involved in the Sqn cross country team alongside Johnny Johnson, Chilvers, Mick "Paddy" Turner and Roy Gambrill - we won a few events and later, Johnny Johnson and I went on to represent the 'paras' in the Army championships, which we won. So the 'paras' team was picked lock stock and barrel to represent the Army in the Inter Services championships, which again we won.

Late 1961 or early 1962 the Beverly and Hastings aircraft were about to be replaced. The Argosy and Hercules were being considered, so HQ troop was sent to Old Serum and then to Boscombe Down Experimental Station to test the Argosy for parachuting capabilities. It was a Turbo prop and we soon found out the X type could not cope with the slipstream. A new parachute was to come, but not in my time.

The Brigade was trying out freefall parachuting for the first time and I remember Paddy Turner and Freddy Fox were soon into it. The army was changing and National service was being phased out and I was about to enter Civvy Street, with plenty of warnings from Scouse Lewis and Fred Pinckney not to leave 9 Sqn.

We had plenty of laughs and fun, with singsongs in the NAAFI club with Bill Rudd, Ben Guest, Buster Shaw, Frank Richardson, Fred Pinckney, Nogger Morris, Scouse Lewis, Bernie Baldwin, Ivor Slane, Tom Downie, Fred Robson, Geordie McCarthy, Jimmy Ridley, Bob Vary and many more great characters.

These were some of the best years of my life.

“Flak and Silk”



A sketch named “*Flak and Silk*” drawn by Peter Stainforth to record his impressions of his parachute descent immediately before the assault on the Primosole Bridge, Sicily on the 13th of July 1943 was handed to the Association chairman at the 2008 1 Para Sqn reunion. It depicts the impression of chaos and confusion, which confronted him as he exited the aircraft, into a sky filled with other parachutists and enemy fire. In the fly-in his aircraft had been hit by cannon fire and two 88mm anti-aircraft shells. His deft crayons convey, simultaneously, the utter relief at departing a wounded aircraft only to enter a cauldron of fire, fear and the unknown. Seconds later he, and hundreds of other paratroopers hit the ground to discover that their ordeal had barely begun.

Lieutenant Peter Stainforth was a Troop Commander in 1st Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers.

With the Squadron he arrived in Sicily after nine months of fighting with the 1st Parachute Brigade in North Africa. During this time Peter and his troop had provided close support for 2 PARA, operating as Sappers and as Infantry. They dropped with the Battalion at Depienne for the battles at Oudna, Sidi Bou Hadjeba, El Fedja and the exhausting but successful fighting withdrawal to Medjez-El-Bab. After fighting in Sicily and Italy the 1st Parachute Brigade was withdrawn to England in November 1943. In September 1944, with the 1st Parachute Squadron still in support, the Brigade was decimated in the battle for the Arnhem Bridge. Many of those who had trained and fought together for more than four years were killed. Peter was wounded and he spent the remainder of the war as a POW. In 1952 he published his experiences of his time in 1st Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers in *Wings of the Wind*, as a tribute to those with whom he served and fought. Of him and his troop Lt Col John Frost, the Commanding Officer of 2 PARA said, famously, “my Sappers were the best Infantry I ever had.” Modest, chivalrous and understating of his contribution to that battalion’s fine reputation, Peter merely contented himself with knowing that he had lived up to his ancient family’s motto: *Not Found Wanting*.

Standing Order Payment- Identity HELP!

A journal subscription payment has been credited to the AEA account - but we have no idea who the payee is. The name shown on the bank statement is: Mrs Patricia MJM.

Would the payee please contact the editor to ensure that the correct members Journal account is credited. (Tel: 01252 326140)

A Tribute to Neil Westbrook

Tom Downie

When asked to write a bit about Neil Westbrook I thought where do I start and I think it best if I give you some background.

I arrived at 9 Indep Para Sqn RE at the same time as another great mate Fred Robson. Fred was a big charismatic guy who people took to. I had already played football for an East African Army Team and was a L/cpl (which I had to relinquish when I joined the Sqn).

Fred and I went through Pre-Para and Parachute Training together and after completion of the course we joined 1 Troop (shiny one). We had made it-we were in! We were made men, as they say in the Sopranos, but the Sqn. was full of characters that treated us like the sproggs we were.

It must have been a year or more before we were actually accepted as being a part of the Sqn, and that was the norm, I know because that’s how we treated later arrivals.

Then two years later, into the Sqn arrived a Legend, Neil Westbrook. Of course we didn’t know that at the time, to us he was just a young naive guy who was too good looking to be a paratrooper, and looked good in anything he wore, which was a bonus for Neil because what he wore didn’t always come from his own locker. I was fortunate; my kit was either too short in the leg or too big round the waist. Fred was the opposite, too long in the leg and too skinny round the waist, so we never had to search his locker for something of our own to wear.

I can’t remember a single member of the Troop who could stay mad at Neil for any length of time, even when he borrowed items that they were just about to wear, although the angry cry of ‘Westbrook’ was quite a common sound in the billet.

In fact Neil had an effect on all facets of Sqn life, good and bad, depended on what rank you held or what Troop you were in.



Neil, Fred & Tom on the occasion of Neil's wedding

Neil served 18 years in the Army, and did a number of different jobs, including doing the Commando Course and serving with 59 Commando, of which he was justifiably proud. But if asked, he would always say 'I was in the Sqn' and no matter the job, whether part of a Section or part of a Troop, he did the job to the best of his ability, and in times of intense pressure or stress, Neil was the guy you wanted by your side.

Now you would think that being a good soldier and always doing a good job, and looking the part, would bring the reward of promotion, and it should, and does on most occasions. But Neil had a quirk, he couldn't handle down time, of which, as you know in the Army there are lots. He was like one of those hyper active kids, who at the first chance, starts looking about to see what he do next.

Of all the Sqn guys I know, I'd bet each and every one has a favourite Westbrook story, and we wouldn't repeat ourselves. To be fair to Neil, he never did any of his deeds out of greed, envy or spite or any of those negative feelings, it was sheer devilment, or just to see if he could.

You know he made more nocturnal visits to the NAAFI than Marie, his wife, did during opening hours. Big Fred always reckoned Neil should have been paid by the NAAFI for consultancy work, because after a visit from Neil they always upgraded their security systems.

Don't think this was a one man operation by any means, Big Fred and I were on a lot of his visits, in fact, prior to Neil joining the Sqn, Big Fred was classed as public enemy No. 1 by the Sqn Sergeant Major.

I was playing football for the Sqn and the Corps by this time, and it was OK for me to be their pal, as I was a good influence on them. HA!

Neil loved telling the story of the day he arrived straight from Abingdon to the Sqn. As he got off one 4-tonner another was leaving with two guys in the back, and a crowd cheering and waving it off. He thought they were going on demob, but it was Big Fred and me going to do 7 days in the RHA nick. I don't suppose he realised what was ahead of him, or me for that matter. I vowed never to get caught again.

Neil was no saint by any means, but he got blamed for far more than he ever did. He was always the first to be questioned when something happened, but to be fair to him, he never cried foul, he just laughed that dopey laugh of his and let it go right over his head. I must hold my hand up and say sometimes I thought he was guilty as charged, but I didn't pursue it because he was my pal.

Neil had another side to him, one that drove you crackers.

I would have hated to share a house with him with only one bathroom. He took longer to do his ablutions than any two women I know. Shave up/shave down/lotion here/lotion there. Shower, shampoo, shave, and everything else that starts with a SH. I wouldn't mind, but he came out looking exactly the same as he went in. Smooth and looking good.

We used to tell Neil we were getting the 6 o'clock bus to town just to be sure of getting the 7 o'clock one. He was also a futterer. After a week of sharing a two-man bivvy with him, you would be cutting your wrists. Then again he

was a bit of a hypochondriac. He had more pills and potions than Boots the chemist, he loved taking his pills. If you didn't love him you would hate him.

Having said all that, he was my pal and I loved him. Neil was young and naive when he first joined the Sqn, but when he met Marie, boy were those two made for each other. He used to pinch a 4-tonner and drive to Marie's and take her out for the evening, and she thought this was normal. But they did look good together, and produced three terrific kids and a grandson that he doted on.

Latterly I always maintained that you could tell exactly where you were in the Sqn, even with your eyes closed, just by the way his name was spoken: Westbrook: With a touch of reverence. I wish I had done that: The "AVIARY"

Westbrook: Generally accompanied with spittle and bulging veins in the neck: Sgts Mess /SSMs Office.

Westbrook: With weary resignation, what has he done this time: Officers Mess.

Sometimes Neil and I went long periods of not seeing (or speaking) to each other, but once together it was like we had spoken yesterday. I'd like to think it was being in and a part of the Sqn that cemented our relationship, or maybe we three, Me, Big Fred and Neil just clicked. The phrase 'thick as thieves' springs to mind, very apt when you think of our later escapades. Kind of ironic when you think his son is the Old Bill, and is as good at his job as Neil was at his.

You know, when Big Fred passed away earlier this year, Neil broke his heart, but the two of them are up there together again, can you imagine the conversation. 'Well what do you think Fred, shall we go and do God's NAAFI?

Nah lets wait for Tommy.

A Salute to the Royal Engineers

Now it's very well to fly through the air, Or to humour a gun or to ride in tanks, Through the ranks of the crushed Hun, And it's nice to think, when the U-boats sink, Of the glory that outlives the years, But whoever heard one vaunting a word for the Royal Engineers?

Now you mustn't feel, when you read this spiel, That the engineer is a jealous knave, That he joined the ranks for a vote of thanks, In search of a hero's grave.

No, your mechanised cavalry's quite all right And your Tommy has few peers, But where would the lot of them be without the Royal Engineers?

Some look like tramps but they build your camps And sometimes, lead the advance, And they sweat red blood to bridge the flood, To give you a fighting chance.

Who stays behind, when it gets too hot, To blow up the roads in the rear?

You can tell your wife that you owe your life to some muddy old engineer.

'Honi soit qui mai pense' is a gruesome sort of phrase, But their modest claim to fame Has probably reached your ears, The first to arrive and the last to leave Are The Royal Engineers

Ubique' Anon

Relax in the Algarve

Dave Grimbley

This year the family and me decided to have a change from France and opted for Portugal where none of us had been before. So, after seeing Bob Ferguson's advertisement in the journal I thought I'd give him a ring and booked it for 10 days in July.

It was the most relaxing holiday I've ever had. The town of Tavira with its laid back atmosphere was a blessing in disguise. No worries about letting the girls walk about on their own, no lager louts, just sheer heaven with Portuguese friendliness. Another bonus, all the entertainment was free with local folk themes and performances.

The accommodation was out of this world; the girls had a room each with en suite shower, bath and toilet. Our room led on to the balcony with a barbecue, sun loungers and brollies, which came in very handy in the 30 to 35 degrees sun everyday. The pool was great and well maintained.

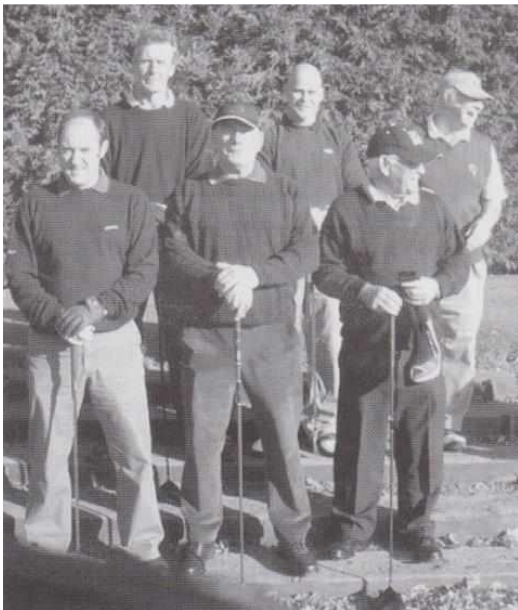
Bob and Eileen were extremely helpful showing us all the best places to shop and restaurants to eat. I strongly recommend this part of Portugal but most of all "Fergie's Villa."



Bill Thompson, Yorkie Davies, Barney Rooney, Bof Harrap, Dave Davies & Jeff Langford - September 2008

The 'Fergie' Semple Golf Tournament

Dave Rutter



With the sun cracking the pavements, the budding Tiger Woods and hackers arrived at Whitefields Golf Club on Friday 17 October to compete for the 'Fergie' Semple Golf Trophy.

Numbers were disappointingly low with only eight players competing. Unfortunately, Alex Smith who had travelled down from across the border was unable to participate using some feeble excuse of having two cracked ribs!

Having consumed our bacon rolls amply washed down with mugs of steaming coffee it was time for action. The competition rules agreed between the competitors it was time to tee off.

There were the customary photo shoots but unfortunately the budding 'photographer of the year' failed to fully depress the camera shutter during the 8-player pose.

**Billy Morris, Geoff Barlow, Tom Dolan,
Myra Hindley, John Hughes & Harry Lockwood**

It had been agreed that we'd have prizes for nearest the pin in 2 on the 7th green, longest drive on the 18th a booby prize for the lowest score and the Fergie Semple trophy awarded to the highest score. Alas the nearest the pin prize had to be carried forward to the 16th as none of us managed to get on the 7th green in two.



Alex Smith acted as ball spotter for the first 4-ball party as well as offering sound advice, like, "don't give up the day job or have you really played golf before?"

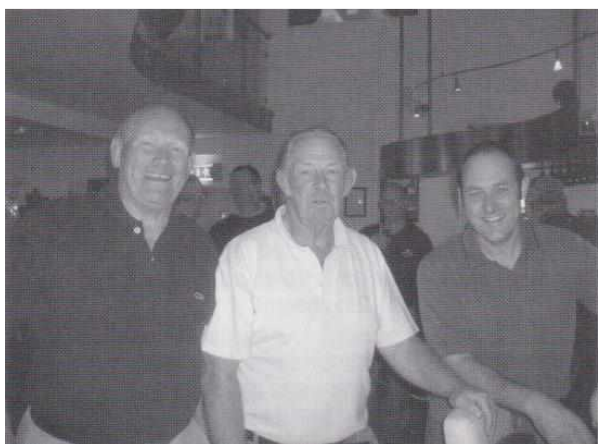
Alex Smith & Geoff Barlow back at the 19th

With perfect weather and a very well presented golf course, some, including myself, found it difficult to explain some rather wayward play. As part of the 2nd 4-ball it was quite easy to see that Geoff Barlow and Tom Dolan were getting to grips with their game, while Myra Hindley who was accompanying them appeared to be constantly looking for his ball in the rough!

We were expecting Harry Lockwood to be among the leading contenders but he too was having an off day, possibly suffering from the affects of laughter and banter among those of us in the trailing group. Ken Mason would have us gasping at his tee shots as he smacked his ball straight down the fairways,

but too often failed to capitalise on it with proceeding strokes.

Billy Morris was taking things seriously and played some reasonable golf throughout the round. And my game, well let's say it was the pressure of organising the event that probably resulted in me finishing with the next to lowest score!



Nearest the pin on the 16th looked rather formidable and not to put names to players, several balls were lost with the tee shots (I lost two!) John Hughes in the leading group had an unfair advantage, he'd played the course before, was travelling in a buggy and accompanied by Alex Smith was receiving private coaching tuition. Even so, he too was struggling to find his form.

Ken Mason, Harry Lockwood & Billy Morris at the 19th

Still in warm sunshine under a clear blue sky we reached the 18th and the longest drive attempt. The group in front having completed their round were standing just off the tee watching our approach.

The best drive in our group came from Ken Mason, he really creamed his

drive leaving us in no doubt that he'd easily achieved the longest drive.

How wrong we were, Tom Dolan's marker was at least 15 yards in front of Ken's.

Back to the 19th (Clubhouse) and the scorecards checked the declared winner of the trophy for 2008 was Tom Dolan with a Stableford score of 37 points and nearest the pin was awarded to Geoff Barlow.

Myra Hindley thought it appropriate to give his wife a quick phone call and during his brief chat informed her that he'd had a great day and had actually won a prize - full of admiration his wife congratulated him saying he must have had a brilliant round of golf. Not so, he explained, "I got the booby prize for the lowest score!"



Due to the absence of the 'Fergie' Semple trophy, Tom Dolan receives a pint of Guinness at the Gala dinner from our President John Lee

All players and agreed, it had been a great day out - lots of laughs and banter - several lost golf balls, but an enjoyable way to start the reunion weekend in Coventry.

Next year we are planning to play for the trophy at Beeston Fields Golf Club located just outside Nottingham, the city of the 2009 AGM/Reunion. We need more competitors so why not join us? Further details will be published in the April 2009 journal.

London to Brighton

56 Mile Multi Terrain Race Sunday 5 October 2008

Billy Morris

Bob Chatterton and I had decided to enter this ultra marathon as an end of the year blow out. But, due to Bob's new venture opening his own running shop in Basingstoke and the pressure of the grand opening etc. his training suffered with the lack of mileage in the legs and he had withdraw his entry. He was gutted not being able to compete in the run with me, but maybe next year!

With Bob out of the run I had to find a new support team.

Bob's wife Sandra had done an outstanding job earlier in the year on the Tring to Town 40 miler but was now unavailable to provide the required support. I called Dave Rutter, and briefly explained what his duties would be; I think Dave said yes just to get rid of me as he was just about to leave for his holiday in Canada with Jeannette. On his return and a couple of e-mails we formulated the plan.

Dave collected me with all my gear on Saturday afternoon; the plan was an overnight stop over at Paddy Boyce's pub in Woolwich, which was a stones throw from the start of the race on Sunday morning. This is where the fun started.

Paddy said that Dave could park his car in his garage. It's the only garage I know with carpet on the floor! As Paddy lifted the door, I looked at Dave, Dave look at me; I read his mind, "how the hell will my car fit in there?" If you could imagine an Aladdin's cave of gas bottles, old barbecue stands, fitters tool chests, wheels, spare tyres and pub furniture. Put it this way, after 20 minutes of Paddy and me re arranging his complete garage, Dave managed to squeeze his car in. Paddy later explained that, "it's not my gear, I'm just looking after it for some one!" Paddy gave us a full tour of the Pub, and made us comfortable in our rooms. I was privileged to have the 'Gallagher VIP suite', complete with maroon carpet. We met Paddy in the bar later, I was on pre race coke, but Dave was being more sociable with pints of lager. A carry on from an earlier christening party was in full swing resulting in a right old London knees up! Paddy then pulled

out all the stops, and brought to the bar a massive platter of spaghetti bolognaise with garlic bread. It was superb, just the sort of pre-race food intake I needed, loads of pasta and meat. Our intended early night was soon forgotten and it was fast approaching midnight before we finally turned in.

Paddy had promised a full 'fat boys' breakfast at 0530 hrs the next morning but the alarm clock fell on deaf ears, so we sorted ourselves out and gave Paddy the usual stick about 'slop jockeys' not getting up etc. Apart from the missed 'fat boy's breakfast', thanks for a great night Paddy.



After booking in at Race HQ at Greenwich Park in the pouring rain, I said farewell to Dave, who would meet me again at Checkpoint 1 at Keston Common, a distance of some 10 miles away. At least that's what I thought. The race started at 0700 hrs and after about 4 miles teamed up with a bloke from South Africa who had travelled to compete in the race, however, due to too much waffling we missed a turn on the dedicated route and ended up running an extra 5 miles to reach the first checkpoint.

I was really cheesed off with my lack of concentration regarding to my map reading error, and decided to ditch my South African friend. The course was now cross country, and I was now in my comfort zone, reaching checkpoint 2 near Chart. Along the way I had teamed up another runner, an ex Gunner crap hat. But he withdrew at CP2.



A quick refill of isotonic drink for my backpack, and pork pie's and plenty of encouragement from Dave, I set off on my own. The rain was still coming down in buckets, and the conditions underfoot were horrendous.

Coming up the rise into CP3 at Hammer wood, I started to receive verbal encouragement and good old airborne spirit banter from some bloke in a green parka jacket, keeping him self very warm and dry in the hedge line. I thought to myself who the hell is this? Getting closer I recognised Tony Manley, who had travelled up for the day to offer encouragement and to assist Dave at the checkpoints.

Now with the dynamic duo as my support team, things were on the up. The weather was still crap, and the next CP just slightly north of Horsted Keynes, was just under the 40-mile point. The weather conditions were beginning to sap my energy and due to my wet kit rubbing I was getting a savage dose of nappy rash between my legs.

Vaseline was applied by the bucket full, which helped ease my discomfort.

By CP5 I was hanging in there with the thought of the sponsor money over my head, and the fact that I only had a half marathon left to the finish. The airborne ethos kicked in and what brought a massive smile on my face was the fact that unbeknown to me; Bob and Sandra Chatterton had driven down from Basingstoke, they appeared from behind a bush to give me more vocal support. Bob had his track suit on and started to strip off, "Come on Billy, I'll run to the finish with you". What a morale booster, my own pace man. Bob was a massive asset by his encouragement and helping me over what seemed like 500 styles and gates that we encountered during the last leg. The weather was still diabolical and made it extremely hard going over Ditchling Beacon with the visibility down to 10 yards. With the fog and wind chill it was freezing on top and getting off the top of the beacon as quickly as possible was a priority. Once over the summit



it was a pretty straight forward run to the finish, crossing the line on the green beside the Royal Pavilion, in 14 hours and 2 minutes having covered 62.3 miles.

After a quick change of clothes and bidding farewell to Tony Manley, we decided that before heading back to the Aidershot, Dave, Bob, Sandra and I would indulge in a well deserved beer and Indian curry. My only concern now was the dreaded thought of having to go to work the next day!

All I can say, "What a day, what support", and I extend a massive thank you to Dave Rutter, Tony Manley, Paddy Boyce and to Bob and Sandra Chatterton.

Just to keep you updated, the total money raised for "Help the Heroes" charity now stands at £1,388.50. Thank you to all who donated.

Aldershot to Woodbridge Non Stop Challenge April

2009. Bob Chatterton and Billy Morris are planning to run from Rhine Barracks to Rock Barracks over a weekend.

This will be a charity event, so please put a fiver aside for next year and watch this space for more information.

The “John Rock Bust”

The Long Haul-A Touch of Robert The Bruce.
Eric Blenkinsop

Events in Chronological Order.

The OGM Southampton 2006. A suggestion was put forward that the Association should endeavour to procure a bronze bust of Lt Col John F Rock RE. There was a “a deathly hush “ in the hall that day as, from the ground work that had already been done, a sum of £6,000 plus VAT was required which would be a big drain on the Associations finances.

The magnificent pictorial portfolio of the selected sculptor Vivien Mallock ARBS was put on display. There was an immediate strong gesture of response as Joe Stoddart proposed the project, which was then seconded by Col Dennis Eagan. After much further deliberation the proposal was accepted on the basis of £4,000 from the AEA central fund and £2,000 being raised from the European football cup draw.

So the project to procure the John Rock Bust was inaugurated there and then on the understanding that if possible it should be displayed out of doors for all to see.

The Chatham branch was entrusted to carry out the project

Further discussions with the sculptor revealed that if the bust were to be displayed out of doors then it would need to be 1.25 size and would cost £7,500 plus VAT.

We received the nod to proceed with Plan A, which was to provide the bust, the pedestal and base the plaque and all necessary transport.

So we decided to go for a Lottery Bid.

We then formed a branch sub committee comprising myself, Bob Seaman and Jim Rogers. On the 9 November 2006 we submitted a lottery bid to “ Awards for All “some 20 pages of detail in triplicate and finally received a definitive **NO!** on 27 February 2007.

On the 23 April 2007 we wrote to the Airborne Forces Security Fund asking for some financial support. Our heads dropped a little at this stage but spurred on by Beccy (my wife), we decided to launch another bid for lottery funds through “Your Heritage”. So a bid was submitted on 9 June 2007 another massive fully detailed document. Sadly we received yet another NO! on 10 July 2007.

We had been reluctant to approach the Corps for funds, as they had been so generous with funding the portraits for the Regiment. However, given the parlous state of our financial support we wrote to the Regimental Colonel on the 21 July 2007 seeking financial support.

On 1 August 2007 in order to trim our costs we decided to apply Plan B. So we wrote to the Adj of 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) requesting that they undertake the provision of the pedestal and base, which would then leave us with funding the bust and the plaque at an all up cost including VAT of £10,000.

Throughout this period we had received unsolicited donations from Tom Sherwood, John Waite and Col Dennis Eagan.

Some joy at last with a cheque from the Airborne Forces Security Fund in the sum of £1,000. More joy on receiving a letter from the CO of 23 Regiment confirming that they would undertake the construction of the pedestal and that it would be located in a memorial garden that they were in the process of designing.

The Harrogate AGM dinner provided the opportunity for a detailed discussion with our guest of honour Lt Col D Wilson RE MBE regarding the bust and the Garden of Reflection. At the OGM we received the committee agreement to continue as we were looking forward to some positive funding from the Corps. However on the 19 November 2007 we received a **NO!** from the Corps.

At the next branch meeting we agreed that with commodity prices of copper continuing to rocket; we decided that we must push ahead or we could be priced out of the market.

So it was agreed that we should go out with the begging bowl for a £250 donation from four of our five AEA branches starting there and then with our own. Received a phone call from the Anonymous donor pledging £1,000 but only as a last resort. The response from the branches was immediate and magnanimous.

Throughout this long period the AEA Executive Committee and the Chatham branch members had been most staunch. On the 5th December we entered into a commission with the sculptor Vivien Mallock ARBS to create the bust and we were very grateful that it was agreed at the price quoted at the start of the year.

On the 16th January 2008 we placed an order with Doves Memorials for the bronze plaque to be mounted on the pedestal. Whilst we now had sufficient funds to go it alone it was going to leave the Association with a large black hole in its central fund as the football draw had not taken place.

It was a blessing when help came in the form of a cheque for £5,000 from the REA via the Regiment, which is of course the REA Airborne Branch.

So this was a memorable display of Airborne Engineer Teamwork.

It was possible now to reveal our anonymous donor (the Gibson family) and refund their donation.

UBIQUE UNIQUE UNITED

Operation OQAB TSUKA (EAGLE'S SUMMIT)

Commanding Officer - 23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt)

At approximately 0230 hrs on 2 September 2008, 16 Air Assault Brigade successfully delivered a new turbine to the Kajaki Hydroelectric dam in Northern Helmand. The operation (OQAB TSUKA or EAGLES SUMMIT) was large, complicated and the whole of 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) was critical to its success. It certainly captured the eye of the international media who reported that the mission was 'the most significant route clearance operation since the Second World War, with Sappers removing mines and improvised bombs'. It is also the biggest operation carried out since the British entered Helmand two years ago.

An awful lot of hard work, planning and preparation went in to this operation. Two months to plan and two weeks to execute, this was a superb piece of determined regimental teamwork. 23 Engineer Regiment was involved in all parts of the operation. The CO remarked that sappers attached to the Pathfinders found and confirmed an unexpected alternative route (Route Harriet) through to Kajaki; the Geographic Section mapped the route; Royal Engineer Search Advisors and Teams found a number of sophisticated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams cleared them; the Squadron plant operators and field sections upgraded over 100 kms of road out of nothing; Recce Troop, 51 and 9 Para Squadron sections helped 3 Para, 2 Para and the Afghan National Army Companies fight to secure Kajaki town and 61 Field Support Squadron had to work doubly hard to keep all the normal engineer work going while the Brigade focus was on the convoy.

That we successfully proved, cleared and upgraded the route and brought everybody home is testament to the skill, dedication and professionalism of all those that either helped or participated in Operation OQAB TSUKA.

Major Joe Fossey RE

OC 9 Parachute Squadron

9 Parachute Squadron was intimately involved in the Combat Logistic Patrol - the patrol was the element of the Brigade that had been specifically given the job of transporting the turbine and all its ancillary equipment from

Kandahar Airfield to Kajaki. The Combat Logistic Patrol contained two separate entities: the first was the Engineer Group (the nucleus of which was formed around the Squadron) and its role was to prove, clear and upgrade the route; the second part of the patrol was the main Logistic Group (provided by 15 Air Assault Close Support Squadron) - their job was to transport the 220 tonnes of turbine and other heavy loads on large 36 wheel equipment transporters. The operation lasted a total of eleven days, covered 320 km and has shown the locals here in Helmand that the Taliban are becoming irrelevant; they have been outwitted, tactically beaten and have been shown to be standing in the way of progress. Operation OQAB TSUKA also proved that allied forces can conduct complicated operations right in the heart of Taliban territory; it brings renewed hope that the tide is now turning and that the allies can offer a demonstrably better life to the people whose territory they occupy. Let's hope that the ordinary Afghan realises this and tacit support for the Taliban decreases with the renewed hope of



further, longer-term prosperity and development. After all, the resulting increase in light and heat will make a substantial and visible difference to their daily lives.

As for the convoy and our part in it, imagine a long, winding Gypsy's caravan slinking its way across mountains and open desert and you start to get a feel for the size and composition of the Engineer Group. At times the convoy covered up to 2 km in length with American, Dutch, Canadian and British attack helicopters buzzing overhead like angry wasps. The radio net was buzzing, alive with weird and wonderful call signs such as 'Banshee', 'Dude' and 'Broadsword'. The Engineer call sign is 'Steel' - it sounds rather like a much loved but long forgotten 1980's Private Investigator but it was steel that was demonstrated in abundance throughout these eleven days and by all who took part in the operation. Everyone had to endure overpowering heat, discomfort and more than a few bottom-clenching moments when the enemy decided to take action.

Rather than report a blow-by-blow account (that will follow when we all get back to Woodbridge), some of the more memorable moments during Operation OQAB TSUKA were as follows:

Cpl Tony Hunnisett, our redoubtable crane operator, managing to 'pull a wheelie' in a civilian crane whilst undergoing trials in Kandahar.

The OC's vehicle breaking down 22 minutes into the operation. Jinxed, I think. What followed was a panic fuelled transfer of key radio equipment into another vehicle (in the pitch black of night), trying not to worry unduly about missing the window of opportunity through the key town of Gereshk.

The unarmoured Medium Wheeled Tractor (driven by LCpl Matt Dalton) digging up a fairly sizeable IED. Sgt Joe McMahon acting as his dismounted banksman and thanking his luck stars that the battery pack wasn't attached.

A Self-loading dump truck (driven by LCpl Gaz Burns and the now increasingly unlucky, Sgt McMahon) partially initiating an antipersonnel mine in a small wadi. Luckily for them and the vehicle, the accompanying main charge decided not to play that day.



Major Fossey gives his briefing at the half way point

The SSM, WO2 Paddy Beattie, reporting back to the OC that Route Harriet had "vanished". The OC told the SSM that he 'must be mistaken' and to 'find me a route'. Much to the SSM's amusement and the OC's dismay, the route had indeed taken a turn for the worst and so began an all night plant operation to build nearly 2000m of new road. Whilst the rest of the convoy slept, 9 Parachute Squadron seized the moment and produced a simply outstanding achievement - 2000m of new road in 6 hours. A truly awesome effort by all concerned.

Sam Kiley, the intrepid Brigade book writer attached to the Squadron for the operation, scuttling around the compounds of southern Kajaki Sofia stumbling across a pretty healthy local supply of marijuana - he proudly brought it back to the OC's vehicle for further examination, not testing I might add!



Route Harriet

During the route back home to Bastion, the mine rollers attached to the SSM's lead vehicle did their job and were hit by a mine - luckily there was only minimal damage but both the SSM and Sgt Jones enjoyed a 'condor' moment before the enemy decided to spice up the afternoon. That is another story and definitely one for the bar.



Mastiff vehicle fitted with mine rollers

I'll let you come to your own conclusions with the Kajaki Squadron Photo. Let's just say that the SSM thinks he can dive like an Olympian...

Operation QQAB TSUKA was a historic moment. A moment where 23 Engineer Regiment and 9 Parachute Squadron played a significant part in one of the most complex and daring operations since the Second World War: outfoxing the Taliban to deliver a new turbine to the Kajaki hydroelectric dam in the southern Afghan province of Helmand. In doing so this could mark a real breakthrough in the battle to develop this region of one of the poorest countries in the world.

Operation QQAB TSUKA (EAGLE'S SUMMIT)

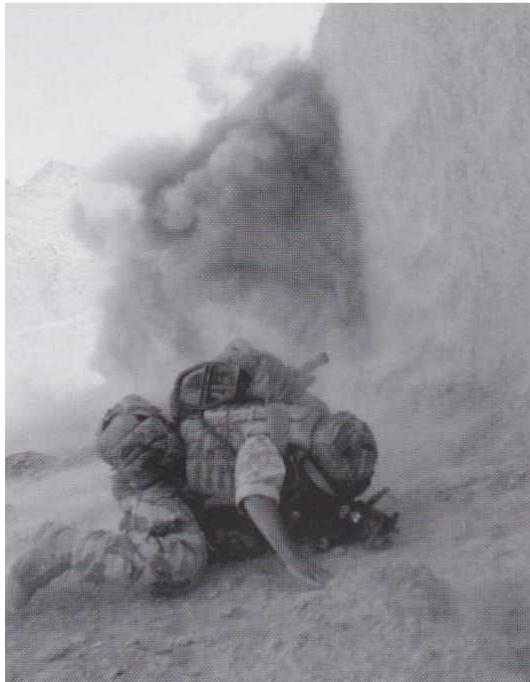
Lt Atkinson 2 Troop, 51 Para Sqn

Between the 22nd and 24th August 2008, 2 Troop 51 Para Sqn deployed with 3 PARA Battle Group to Kajaki in Helmand Province in support of Operation QQAB TSUKA.

The largest and most complex operation 16 Air Assault Brigade has completed to date.

With space limited in FOB (Forward Operation Base) Zeebrugge, the 3 PARA Company Group moved out to a series of compounds previously recced by X Coy 2 PARA.

The companies would remain in these compounds until the start of the clearance operation for route 611. The blokes were split



into two sections to support A and B Coy 3 PARA (as has been the case throughout the tour) with a demolitions expert in each, SSgt Callaghan and Sgt Bateson. I was attached to the JFEOD route clearance package. This allowed me to recce the 8.5 km route before the arrival of 9 Para Sqn with the main convoy. The first real tasks involved the blokes making the compounds firstly defensible and secondly liveable. This involved clearing arcs for sentry positions and the glamorous job of building toilets.

With D Day for the operation planned for 27th August and the blokes occupying their respective compounds from the 23rd August, the Company Commanders allowed the Platoons to return to FOB Zeebrugge every couple of days for a dip in the Dam. I have to say this was absolutely amazing, taking our minds completely out of Afghanistan for a few minutes at least.

Explosive entry into the compounds



On D Day+2 the clearance down route 611 began. The Main Effort initially lay with the ANA Battalion. They had the task of taking the two pre identified enemy positions.

This all went remarkably well with no friendly casualties being taken. This was probably due to the amount of ordnance dropped in the area over the previous few days.

As the convoy moved closer to our area the British Company Groups started moving down route 611. The first to move forward, through the ANA, was D Coy 2 PARA who had 4 Sappers attached for Close Support (2 from 51 Sqn and 2 from 9 Sqn). Then B Coy 3 PARA moved through and finally A Coy, securing the co-ordination point on Route Harriet.

Culvert clearance

On D+2 the focus for the Engineers became more kinetic, shifting away from their survivability role and moving into one of mobility, providing explosive entry to compounds that required clearing, denial of enemy firing points and bunker positions as well as a basic search capability. By the end of the 7 day Operation, the Engineers had located and destroyed over 25 bunkers, cleared more than 50 compounds and used a substantial

amount of explosives, including 50 barmines, nearly 60 cartridges of plastic explosive and more than six boxes of slab plastic explosive, thank Allah we had our ear defenders!

Operation QQAB TSUKA was a complete success in all aspects of Combat Engineering. The Sappers in support of the Company Groups denied multiple firing points and bunkers. The EOD, with a section of 2 PARA, cleared the Route 611, including 6 culverts, and the exploitation of 11 IEDs; the largest of which had 20 kg of explosives. All this work allowed the convoy to get through safely. 9 Para Sqn provided mobility and clearance to the convoy along the entire route.

With the third turbine delivered to the Kajaki dam successfully, it won't be long before the people of Afghanistan are seeing the real benefits that Operation QQAB TSUKA has enabled. Ubique!

My Diary- Operation QQAB TSUKA

Spr Wayne Smith 61 Fd Sp Sqn, 23 Engr Regt (Air Asslt)



It's the evening of the 27th August. One last kit check before I make my way to the transport to meet the rest of the crew. We were driven to a secure compound where the vehicles for the operation had been kept overnight. Like a game of Tetris, kit, stores and personnel were packed into every available bit of space. With enough equipment to last ten days there was time for one last inspection before making our way to the briefing shelter.

Final orders delivered - no move for a further two hours - more waiting around - you could see the frustration on people's faces - we just wanted to get going. To soften the blow tea and biscuits were offered but before we could devour the delights the Padre took centre stage with a rendition of the Lord's Prayer. This intensified the mood and wished us all well before the insane dash for the cookhouse. Two hours passed and five cups of tea later it was time to return to the vehicles.

Mount up is called and within seconds engines start to bellow. I take the opportunity to shift some of the tea - it may be hours before we stop again. I clamber aboard the Vector vehicle and take my designated seat - time for a nap if I can manoeuvre my body parts around all the kit.

The sound of squeaks and air pistons ring out into the night sky as the fifty-six strong vehicle convoy departs.

The operation had begun and the back of the vehicle turned into Ladbrokes as bets were taken on the duration of the operation.

10 minutes into the move and the stiff seats and oven like temperatures were already becoming unbearable. The vehicle comes to an abrupt halt - What's happened? The back doors are flung open to reveal the secure compound.

Why have we come back? I emerge from the back of the vehicle as a crowd starts to gather. The ripping of Velcro straps echoes around the closely parked vehicles as body armour is loosened. The vehicle commander informs us we have just completed a lap of Bastion to get the vehicles in the correct order of march. We would soon depart for real.

It had been only half an hour since we had left Camp Bastion. My limbs placed at varied angles, constantly readjusting to find a comfortable position to sleep. It was a losing battle against the vehicles sharp fixtures and fittings.

A voice from the front says, "It's your turn to drive mate". I look at my watch and discover six hours had passed; I must have fallen asleep. I grab my helmet and a bottle of warm water before assuming the driver's position. The vehicle commander gives me an update. The OC's Mastiff had broken down a few hours earlier that had hindered progress a little; we had just passed the town of Gereshk and were about to break free from the pothole ridden roads and head into the desert. Somewhere in the distance we would meet the turbine element of the convoy.

The logistics vehicles were waiting for us at the RV and we were soon on our way. I had been driving in the dust of the desert for many hours and although progress was slow there had been no major incidents.

The volume of radio traffic began to increase as the route narrowed. Plant was required at the front of the convoy to widen the route for the larger vehicles. I take the chance to relax and tilt the seat back. I see the plant return. It had only been 5 minutes - Is the task complete already? I start to engage the drive gear in the semi-automatic vehicle and prepare to move. Then the armoured variant of the same piece of plant races past to the task site followed by an intense rate of radio traffic. The soft skinned plant had scooped up an IED. Reality struck home immediately.

The EOD team disposed of the device and the plant continued to upgrade the route.

The convoy soon settled into the routine of stop and start as route repairs were completed and vulnerable points were searched for devices. I used the wheel ruts of the vehicle to my front not wishing to disturb any extra ground.

Then a small explosion caused me to halt instantly. It wasn't loud enough to be near me. It turned out to be the Self Loading Dump Truck behind me. The driver had activated an anti-vehicle mine but luckily for him it had only partially exploded. As the driver wiped the sweat from his forehead the EOD team completed a controlled explosion.

It turned out six vehicles had passed over the mine; luck was on our side. Every driver's eyes were now focussed on the wheels ruts to their front.



Desert leaguer

After 30 hours fatigue had begun to take hold, a real danger in this environment. A decision was made to leaguer up in the middle of the desert. An eerie silence descends as the hundred plus convoy switch off their engines. I take the mine detector and began to sweep the ground clearing enough space for five people to sleep. To our flanks the force protection provides security forming a box around the now static convoy. I get into my sleeping bag and think, "Is this a safe place to stay? We are such a large target; it could prove the ideal opportunity for the enemy to attack. Would they take the chance? I drifted off to sleep.

I wake to a red filtered light reflecting off my retinas. I stand up and wipe away the layer of dust that has settled on my eyelids. We are moving in thirty minutes. The temperature has dropped and the sun is far from rising. Engines start to echo off the mountains creating the sound of a thousand vehicles. If the enemy are close that should scare them. I wash down my omelette, sausage and beans with a big mouthful of tea and prepare to move. I release the hand brake and drive into the ball of dust created by the vehicle in front of me. This would be our routine for the next two days.



We finally reach the secured location of the Final RV with air support circling above us and the Viking Groups

protecting the flanks. Protection and security of the convoy was paramount. This was Taliban country and with elements having to remain in place for up to 72 hours we would dig in. Using the vehicles pick and shovels we battle our way through the bedrock. Many hours later we are satisfied with the depth and protection from mortar attacks.

The turbine convoy made the onward journey to the Kajaki Dam.

By the time they returned the operation was on day seven and we still had the return journey to do. We assumed position and waited for first light.

After good progress the convoy steadied to a halt when the EOD identified a suspect device. Top cover was raised to provide protection. A dicker was spotted and our GPMGs were cocked ready for any enemy intervention. The convoy was in a vulnerable position and began to bypass the device. The EOD had identified an anti-vehicle mine that would have to be blown - the convoy would be stationary for some time. I stepped out of the vehicle, checked the area for anything suspicious when the familiar 'Crack and Thud' passed my ear. We used the vehicle as cover and the force

protection moved the .50 calibre weapons into position. RPGs were raining in but falling short. With the target 800m away my personal weapon would be no good. Then an explosion as a force protection vehicle hits a mine. My name is shouted. They needed resupplying so I grabbed 600 link rounds and my weapon and ran across the open desert. I made the delivery and started the return journey. Someone screamed "Fast air in 30 seconds". I arrived safely at my vehicle with seconds to spare as the 5001b lit up the night sky. The EOD team destroyed the mine and the convoy hastily pushed forward.



The delay had caused us to miss our window to pass through Gereshk. We could only move during the town's curfew due to the high suicide bomber threat. A suitable leaguer was established and we made ourselves comfortable until dusk. I wake to the sound of "Incoming!" but there's nothing we can do until nightfall.

We depart the leaguer under the cover of darkness. The hardest part of the route is behind us and the metal road is in sight. Only 20 km and we would be home. We pass through Gereshk during curfew without incident and finally roll through the gates of Camp Bastion. The operation is complete - duration ten days!

News from the Branches

Aldershot

Betty Gray

The period August to November has been a very busy time for members of the branch. We held our BBQ early this year to accommodate those members who had holidays booked during September and October. Fifty-five members and friends attended the function, which turned out to be the best yet. Tony Manly ably assisted by Dave Rutter cooked the food whilst the donated raffle prizes raised £242 for the "Combat Stress" charity. The weather did give us concern early in the week but on the day a window of glorious sunshine shone down making for a superb day.

Running and swimming for charity seemed to be the theme for the month of October. Maggie Stephenson and her team of ladies from Durrington swam a mile each to raise just under £6,000. Maggie's daughter Jo was also running in a separate event and raised £600 with a few more donations to come. Billy Morris decided to run from London to Brighton, a distance of 56 miles, much of it across country. He ended up doing 62 miles in fourteen hours - a tremendous feat. Both swimmers and runners are donating their sponsorship money to the "Help for Heroes" charity. Congratulation to the three of them for such a superb effort.

Funerals have also been a feature of the period. A good number of branch members including Mick Humphries carrying the standard, attended the funeral of Harold Mosley, formally of 3 Squadron RE, whose funeral was held in Bournemouth. Harold was wartime Airborne Sapper. The funeral of Pte Peter Cowton of 2 Para was held in the Garrison Church Aldershot during September.

The branch turnout was excellent with Gerry Hicks carrying our standard, one of eighteen on parade. The Chairman of the branch made the long journey to York to attend the funeral of the very popular Neil Westbrook. Neil was a member of 9 Indep Para Sqn (1960/70 period).

Fred and Betty Gray with Paddy Padfield, Harold Covington and grandson Peter Gray made the journey to Donington in Lincolnshire for the annual reunion of the 1st Parachute Squadron. Both Paddy and Harold were wartime members of the Squadron. It was Harold Covington's first time and he was able to meet up with the very few members of that gallant band of men that are able to attend. Mick Humphries was the guest of honour and

during his after dinner speech was able to bring those attending (only ten veterans) up to date on what is happening with the Airborne Sappers of today. He was also able to meet up with Colonel Chris Davies who was Mick's OC during the Falklands War.



1st Para Sqn veterans: Tom Hicks, Harold Covington, Harold Padfield, Bob Jones, Peter Stainforth, Norman Swift, Tony Jones, Tom Carpenter, Eric Booth seated is Jack Hobbs

The annual reunion of the AEA at Coventry was well attended by branch members with twenty-eight making the journey for what turned out to be a very enjoyable weekend.

Planning for the Arnhem 2009 trip is well advanced but there are still a number of seats available for the 65th Anniversary of the Battle. John Smith is the organiser and can be contacted on 01252 326100.

The period since our last newsletter has been quiet in terms of branch events but we have nevertheless been busy supplying Shoe Box Parcels for the lads in Afghanistan.

The letters of appreciation from them truly warm the heart and highlight the value of this support.

We were able also to provide a bonus to each of the Sqns by way of a portable DVD player, one to each of them. They came via Nick Gibson courtesy of his employers Tubelines Ltd.

As I write this part we are all heartened by the good news from the High Courts concerning the Ghurkhas and their right for residence in the UK, at long last some signs of loyalty! Here in Maidstone several of us were able to attend the unveiling ceremony of the statue of the Ghurkha Engineer Sgt - so a good week altogether for our Ghurkha colleagues. The donations for the statue were exceeded by the sum of £5,000, which will be paid into the Ghurkha Welfare Trust.

We worked diligently toward the Grand Raffle at the AGM in Coventry and the results from that weekend reflected our success. Alas, our main raffle organiser Pam Seaman became very poorly was hospitalised and unable to attend the weekend. This was most unfortunate, as she had worked tirelessly with other branch ladies for several months drumming up funds for some of the Star Prizes and many smaller prizes. So, on the day, it was all hands to the pumps and our ladies were selling tickets from Friday afternoon to Saturday evening in order to maximise the

funds for charity. Two of the Star Prizes eventually went for auction by our outgoing chairman. He did a magnificent job and would not have looked out of place on "Flog It". The winning bids were from John Phillips and our new President John Lee. We are grateful to our members Ray and Angela Ogden who donated the Glider Flight. Following a recount we can reveal that we raised £1,123.00. An anonymous donation of £400 was later received boosting the raffle proceeds and ensured that we achieved the target set by the Association of £1,523. A special vote of thanks is extended to the anonymous donors.

Finally a big thank you to Bunny Brown and the Birmingham Branch members for organising the weekend, so superbly on our behalf.

Yes, the busy season is upon us, so it's 'eyes down look in'.

Our members have said how enjoyable the AGM/Reunion weekend at Coventry was, well-done Bunny Brown and the Birmingham branch members for organising the event.

Praise also to the Chatham Branch for running a most successful raffle the proceeds of which are to be donated to our chosen charity. We now look forward with great expectation to our 20th anniversary in Nottingham next year.



Twenty members and their wives returned from Hebburn after our annual pilgrimage for Remembrance Day. As normal a very enjoyable two days. The Mayor and councillors of South Tyneside were our hosts and after the parade and march-past we were invited to the Mayors Parlour for drinks and lunch.

They commented to me that the parade and March past would not be the same without the 'RED BERETS' on show. The AEA standard led the parade, thanks to John Parker; and we were delighted to have Harold Padfield and Louie Gallagher with us as guests. Louie promises to send some photographs to our editor! Harold and Bob Prosser laid wreaths at the memorial on behalf of the AEA.

The branch visit to Bridlington in September 2008, which was sponsored by the British Legion, was a tremendous success. Members and wives enjoyed the two days, many thanks to Baz Henderson for the organisation.



Harold Padfield & Bob Prosser at the Monkton Cenotaph

Our Xmas Dinner is now confirmed for Saturday 20th December and will be held at the Unicorn Hotel in Ripon, where we look forward to a most enjoyable lunch.

Our planned visit to Normandy in June 2009 is well in hand with our normal stop over in Chatham accommodated in Kitchener barracks before moving to Dover next morning.

Arnhem 2009 is also well in hand and any members of the Association wishing to join the trip please contact Dave Grimbley or myself. We will move from Hull to Rotterdam on the night of the 16th September 2009.

Lastly as I write this newsletter our trip to Woodbridge for the medals parade and the unveiling of the John Rock Bust will have happened. I am sure it will be a weekend to remember. Yes, we have a very busy 12-month ahead.

The Yorkshire Branch members and their wives you all **"A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR."**

The John Rock Bust- Unveiling Ceremony

Eric Blenkinsop

The Creation

A truly memorable occasion and a tremendous achievement by all of those involved.

With the Regiment home safely from Afghanistan, the opening of the Garden of Reflection, and the unveiling of the John Rock Bust on the pedestal at long last.

Altogether a magical day, but here I wish to focus on just one of these elements, that being the Sculptor Vivien Mallock ARBS and her magnificent creation the bronze bust.

There is no doubt that from the few photographs that were available she has created a fabulous facial likeness and more than that she has managed to capture a great deal of his character in the countenance.

To understand this remarkable achievement you need to know a little more about the sculptor.

For example. Her response to my initial enquiry on 5th October 2006 was I quote, "The prospect of some permanent depiction of John Rock is very exciting and I would be delighted to be involved in such a project " WHY.?

I quote. "Vivien Mallocks career as a sculptor began at the Museum of Army Flying at Middle Wallop in Hampshire. To give her work a personal touch she sculpted portraits of individual aircrew including John Cunningham and other celebrated fighter pilots who flew from Middle Wallop in 1940 as part of an exhibition to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain".

Her husband Col Ross Mallock AFC was the Commandant of the AAC at that time and of course John Rock was the first Commandant of the Glider Pilot Regiment at the time of his death in 1942.

So you see, she and her family have a strong affinity with John Rock, much like ours. So thank you Vivien.



Eric Blenkinsop, after 2 years of endeavour, bears witness to the unveiling of the Lt Col John Rock bust at Rock Barracks on Friday 21st November 2008



The 'bust' unveiling followed the Op HERRICK 8 Medals Parade and the opening of the 'Garden of Reflection'. The inspecting officer for the occasion was Maj Gen K. Cima CB, Governor of the Tower of London. During the medals presentation Maj Gen Cima CB took time to speak personally to each and every soldier on parade.

The John Rock bust forms the centrepiece of the Garden of Reflection, which had been a joint venture between the Regimental Rear Party during Op HERRICK 8 and the onsite SKANSKA compliance team. The Garden of Reflection has given the Regiment a magnificent and beautiful feature and a focal point to remember those members of the Regiment, past and present that have given their lives or have been wounded in the course of their duty serving their country.



Lt Col (retd) John Lee, President of the Airborne Engineers Association, lays a Poppy wreath and pays tribute to Lt Col John Rock RE.



Maj Gen K. Cima CB accepts the Peter Stainforth picture from our Chairman, Mick Humphries at the Rock Barracks Officers Mess following the Regimental Medal parade and John Rock bust unveiling.



23 Engineer Regiment (Air Asslt) 'march past' Maj Gen K. Cima CB, the reviewing officer



**"Brothers in Arms"
Spr Slimm a member of 131 Indep Comdo Sqn (V) (3rd from left in rear rank) with members of 9 Para Sqn on Op HERRICK 8 earlier this year**

Membership Report

Steve "Billy" Morris MSM-Membership Secretary

We welcome to the "Airborne Engineers Association" the following new members

Andrew Mullen	131 Para Engr Regt / 300 Para Engr Sqn (TA)	1963-1968
Peter Micheal Robson	299 Troop 131 Indep Sqn RE (V)	1970-1975
Joe Crawford	9 Para Sqn RE	1988-2004
I.David.B Brock	300 Sqn 131 Para Engr Regt (TA)	1962-1964
Richard J Ellis	9 Para Sqn RE	Oct 1998-?
Leslie Chester	131 Airborne Engr Regt 301 Tp	1974-?
Brian R Spivey	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1971-1979
David W Benson	9 Para Sqn RE	2007-still serving
Mewin Lane Sansam	9 Para Sqn RE	1979-?
Jack Mayers	9 Airborne Sqn RE	1946-1948
Steve Sinclair	9 Indep Para Sqn RE	1968-1973

Total membership as at: 17/11/08 Past and Present 1344

Acts of Remembrance Far and Wide



Memorial Day at Suda Bay, Crete 2008
Alan Lindsay, Frank Menzies-Hearn & George Lightowler



Eileen & Bob Ferguson in the company of a former Colonel of the Portuguese Commando and Commandant of the nearby military establishment - Tavira, Portugal



Led by Bil Rudd the Yorkshire branch members and colleagues march past at the Hebburn Remembrance Service Parade

Obituaries

Jim Thackway - Jim died on the 30 March 2008 in Hereford hospital. Jim was born 1945 in the Shankill area of Belfast and joined the army in 1963 volunteering for 9 Indep Para Sqn and seeing active service in Aden. He went to Hereford in 1967 and joined B Sqn seeing more active service in Dhofar and Northern Ireland and being wounded at least once in Dhofar. Jim left the Army in the mid 70's and worked on the security circuit and also had a small jewellery business, he also managed to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Geography and Political Science.

Jim was married to Chris and had 2 daughters Samantha and Lizzie.

Harry Moseley of 3 Para Sqn RE, 6th Airborne Division died Tuesday 12th August, aged 85 years. His funeral was held on Wednesday 27th August at Poole Crematorium.

Selby Milner 10 March 1937- 17 August 2008

David Selby Milner was born in Kent in 1937. When he was a year old his family moved to India, as his father was appointed to the British Army Staff College in Quetta in Balochistan province, now part of Pakistan. With war looming in Europe, the young Milner returned to Britain with his mother and younger twin sisters. Shortly afterwards, his father was involved in the hopeless defence of Singapore, where he was captured by the Japanese and endured four years on the Burma railway.

After prep school in Surrey, Milner went to Rugby School and, immediately afterwards, did his National Service with 9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers. Having first been posted to Cyprus, Milner was actively involved in the first phase of the Suez campaign and the invasion landing in Port Said. For many years thereafter he retained his involvement with airborne forces in the TA and as a troop commander in 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment. After National Service he went up to St John's College, Cambridge, and took his degree in mechanical sciences.

In the 1980s Milner qualified as a chartered surveyor and moved with his family to a country house near Abergavenny, not far from Aberfan. As an accomplished violinist, he was a member of the Abergavenny Orchestra.

He became High Sheriff of Gwent in 2003. It was, at first sight, the unlikely connection between Alpine glaciers and colliery slag heaps that led Selby Milner to discover the cause of the Aberfan disaster in 1966. Milner, a young consulting engineer with Binney & Partners, was appointed to the official inquiry into the cause of the mud slide that engulfed a school in South Wales and claimed the lives of 116 children and 28 adults — Britain's worst mining tragedy above ground.

Milner is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, whom he married in 1968, and by their two daughters.

Bert 'Jigger' Price passed away in September 2008. He has lived a good and honourable life, but said as he lived his life he thought each and every day of his mates of 9 Para Squadron of Operation Freshman, North Africa, Italy and Arnhem.

'Jigger' was friends with most of the Sappers who died at Double Hills, but in particular Sapper John Fernhough (Ferry). Ferry & Jigger were also great friends of Corporal 'Jacko' Jackson and Sapper Faulkner, who were murdered by the Nazis after capture in Operation Freshman. The tough Corporal 'Jacko' was not executed until February 1943 along with 4 of his comrades and one matlot.

Jigger had volunteered for "Freshman" but was given compassionate leave from the urgent training because his father had died. It was too late to resume that training, thus his life was saved. After hearing what had happened on Op Freshman, his mother later said, "It took a life to save a life".

He had fought a brave fight against the enemy at Arnhem but in later years fell victim to the dreaded cancer.

Time and time again his friends tried to persuade him to return on an Arnhem pilgrimage, but stated, "I am ashamed to return because I left my mates on that Rhine River bank, they could not swim and I could". This was of course typical of him, typical of his unique character, honest and true... right the way through.



Doug Phillips, 1933 – 2008

(submitted by Len Lennon)

Doug collapsed on Sunday 9th November at his home in Stanmore; was taken to hospital but regrettably passed away.

Doug and I were great mates and go back a long time. As youngsters we used to go round the streets after an air raid picking up pieces of shrapnel for our collections. On reaching the age of 17½ years in 1950; Doug decided not to wait for his National Service call-up and enlisted into the Armoured Corps where he spent 5 cushy years in Germany, while I was crunching sand and eating flies in Fayid and Moascar with 9 A/B Sqn. After our demob we went our separate ways for a while. I joined 302 A/B Sqn at Kingsbury finishing my reserve time with them. Doug had met and was 'walking out' with my sister who he later married. They celebrated their Golden wedding anniversary last February.

I talked Doug into joining me in 302 Airborne Sqn, and, while the rest of the Sqn went off to Germany for our annual camp; Doug completed 'P' Coy and his 8 qualifying jumps at Abingdon. He became a valued member of 302 Para Sqn and in a short period of time climbed the promotion ladder to become a SNCO.

Doug leaves a widow; Margaret, sons John and Ron and their respective wives plus four grandchildren. To me Doug was more than a brother-in-law and I'm going to miss him like hell. AIRBORNE

LAST POST

Fred Pinkney

Formerly of 9 Indep Para Sqn

Neil Westbrook

(A tribute to Neil is published on page 16)

Association Shop

Ray Coleman

Description	Price	P&P (UK Post Rate)
Ties		
Association Ties (Pegasus logo)	£15.00	£1.00
Anniversary Ties (Wings & Pegasus logo)	£15.00	£1.00
9 Para Sqn Ties (Wings logo)	£15.00	£1.00
Bow Ties (Pegasus & wings logo)	£9.50	£1.00

Badges		
Association Blazer Badges	£14.00	£1.00
9 Squadron Blazer Badges	£14.00	£1.00
Lapel Wings - Blue Enamel S/C	£3.50	£1.00

Clothing		
Association Jumpers (sizes 38 - 48) Maroon or Blue with Pegasus logo embroidered 'Airborne Engineers'	£25.00	£3.10
Association Sweatshirts - Maroon with blue logo - Small/med/lge or X large £16-50 £3-10	£15.50	£2.50
Association Polo Shirts - Fred Perry style - Maroon or blue with Pegasus logo - small/med/lge or Xlge		
Association T Shirts - Maroon with logo - small/med/lge/Xlge £9-00 £1-80 Association Shower proof Fleece in Maroon or Blue -with embroidered 'Airborne Engineers' logo - Med/Lge/Xlge	£28.00	£3.00
Baseball Cap (in blue or maroon) - with combined Pegasus & Wings crest	£7.00	£1.00

Miscellaneous		
Association Shield	£18.00	£2.00
"The 9th " (1787 - 1960) by the late Tom Purves	£7.00	£3.80
Association Cuff Links (slightly smaller than lapel badge)	£8.50	£1.60
Silk Cravats (Wings & Pegasus logo)	£17.50	£1.00
Association Cumberbunds (Wings & Pegasus logo)	£17.50	£1.00
Ladies Association Long Polyester Scarves (Pegasus logo)	£15.00	£1.00
Ladies Pegasus (Gold Coloured) Brooch	£3.50	£1.00
Association Key Ring (Pegasus Logo)	£2.00	£1.00
Association Fridge Magnet (Pegasus Logo)	£2.50	£1.00
Association Paperweight (Pegasus Logo)	£5.00	£2.00
