



299 Branch of the Airborne Engineers Association

Charity No: 1009201

Date: 7th February 2014

Members Present: M. Beardshaw, G. Coe, N. Cooper, A. Costello, G. Crum, T. Cunningham, W. Drayton, J. Duffy, C. Gadd, A. Grimes, P. Hairsien, D. Harvey, D. Ideson, A. Irwin, A. Kitching, S. Knowles, J. Mace, A. Mossop, G. Newton, S. Oliver, F. Pougher, L. Ransom, G. Ratten, K. Robinson, P. Robson, C. Shillito, P. Sims, N. Sisson, M. Tindle, C. Walker, A. Weldon, C. Woodward.

Apologies: W. Draper, M. Maddison, K. Saddington, D. Stuart, K. Russell.

Guests: D. Newton, R. Franklin, C. Bowden, B. Bridges.

Welcome and 'Roll Call'

The chairman welcomed all present then opened the meeting with the sad news that our friend and former Brother in arms Bill Dick, (Seadog), passed away peacefully with his family around him on the 2nd February 2014.

The men of this association offer our deepest sympathy to all of Bills family.

This man gave his time for this association so freely and without his efforts, especially during the early days, acting as our secretary, this association would not have survived. He under took an unseen work load that was taken for granted by many, he was a dedicated administrator/record keeper, reliable, honest and a brilliant wordsmith, " we all enjoyed his scripts", produced in his own inevitable style. We will all miss Billy, "I maybe more than most" he was always there to help and encourage, an invaluable source of this associations history. He was a real life character who always wanted to be accepted as just one of the boy's.

Funeral to be held at Haltemprice Crematorium, Willerby, Near Hull. On Monday 17th February 2014 Service starts at 11.30am, Standards will be paraded and gentlemen, it goes without saying a maximum turnout for Bill please. We will parade 30 min before the service.

Bills Son, Mathew has asked the association if it would be possible for his Father's ashes to be released over Ginkel Heath, (Arnhem), on the seventieth anniversary of the battle. Dean Ideson is going to try and organise something with Chief Technician Paul Routledge at RAF Coningsby, may be able to release from one of the WW2 Dakota's! If there is no luck there, the lad's from 299 Para are jumping in and we are sure they will do the business. Gaddy's checking with the OC.

One minutes silence was observed followed by a toast to Bill. Any of Bills monies laid out in deposits etc are to be used to buy a drink for his pals, many thanks Mathew. Wake at FAIRMAID in Cottingham.

Minutes from the last meeting were proposed as a true record?

Proposed by – C. Shillito
Seconded by – A. Kitching

Treasure's Report: Martin reports that our funds are healthy. All monies for the Arnhem Pilgrimage are needed ASAP. There are now two coaches' running for this trip.

Colin Bowden: Dean Ideson introduced his Nephew and Colin's only Grandson Connor Bowden to the meeting, Connor is serving with the Light Dragoons at this present time and had been released from duty on compassionate grounds because of his Grandfather's deteriorating health. Connor then proceeded to break the devastating news that Colin had passed away that morning, we were all stunned. Therefore we have lost another one of our band of brothers. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Col's family, we knew he had been struggling with his health and had hoped he would bounce back like many times before, this was not to be, and we are all saddened.

Colin was a first class airborne soldier, dependable and courageous, a good man in a tight corner, always putting others needs before his own, he was 299 to the core and one of our diminishing Aden Vets. Because of broken service, he is one of the few who completed P company selection twice, took it all in his stride never complained and just got on with it. Colin was one of the hardest working men that I have known, he was an excellent Joiner/Carpenter serving his time with Bob Rose, (Garden Village), just a genuine all round decent guy, easy to get on with and very well liked, we've never heard a bad word spoken against him. He doted on his family, no sacrifice was too great, he was immensely proud of Connor taking to the military, Colin was a big influence and we were all impressed with Connor's fortitude in informing us all on his grandfather's death, thus displaying great depth of character, he held it together well.

The family have requested our support at his funeral and preliminary dates are 13th or 14th February, please watch the message board.

Correspondence: See letter from Ben Rule, (attached)

Letter to the Chairman from the AEA executive

The Chairman, Tony Mossop was asked by the members about this letter he had received from the AEA, (Airborne Engineers Association), executive. He had written for confirmation, as promised about the terms of our entry into the AEA during 2009. The lad's had been told by our then Chairman that the AEA constitution had been "re worded or amended to grant EVERY ex 299 man FULL, (ordinary), membership status within this association" apparently this alteration was sent in a letter from Lt. Col. (Ret'd.) John Lee to the said Chairman, **and it was an absolute requirement for the 299 men in voting for entry into the AEA.**

The Chairman, Tony Mossop was then asked about the **content** of this letter received from the executive on this matter of clarification and he replied that the letter had been left at home and the whole business is a matter of **misunderstandings**. This letter of **total misunderstandings** will be produced by the Chairman for all to read at the next meeting, **March 7th 2014.**

The official AEA rules for membership categories, Para 15 b conditions of membership:-

" Any person who has served on the posted strength of an Airborne Engineer unit (including Parachute and Air Assault units) or any member of the Corps of Royal Engineers who has served on the posted strength of a Special Forces (SAS or SBS) unit, **IN A PARACHUTE ROLE**".

These rules were in place, WITH NO AMENDMENTS, at the time of 299's vote for entry into the AEA during May 2009, at the AGM.

Most, if not all of the members of this branch who voted for entry into the AEA feel they have been misled and let down, not only because of the clarification of the AEA rules, but also the following statement taken from the **299 AGM 2009** minutes, (the vote for entry), and I quote it word for word:-

“The Chairman read out a letter which he had received from the AEA which he proposed to read and discuss under section 9 rule d (amendments to the association rules). This was accepted.”

Does anybody know what any of this statement really means? How does this give us entry into the AEA? Is there any wonder we have all this discontentment.

Requests from our members to view the J. Lee letter have so far been ignored, did this letter ever exist? If it did it's had 5 years to materialise.

The minutes of this AGM can be downloaded from the 299 website. I will supply copies on request.

What does all this mean? Historically, the 299 unit had been deployed as an Army Commando unit for approximately 30 years. A Commando unit only carries about a 30% airborne capacity, therefore there are many ex 299 men who are not allowed full membership status within this association. **It would be against the AEA constitutional rules for non parachute trained men to be accepted as full members of the AEA, the clue is all in the name, (Airborne).**

Because of the level of dissatisfaction amongst the members about this situation, a motion has been tabled:-

**DO YOU WISH TO REMAIN AS A PART OF THE AEA (Airborne Engineers Association)
AND ACCEPT THAT SOME ex 299 MEN WILL BE EXCLUDED AS FULL MEMBERS,**

OR

MOVE BACK TO OUR ORIGINAL 299 ASSOCIATION THUS GIVING EVERY ex 299 MAN EQUAL STATUS.

This will be a simple STAY or LEAVE vote, following the AEA rules for constitutional change and it will be held at the AGM on May 2nd 2014.

This motion was proposed by: - N. Cooper

This motion was seconded by: - P. Robson

Votes for the motion: 21, Votes against the motion: 4.

This argument has troubled this association for a long time now. Tony Mossop the Chairman refuses to allow a vote whilst he is in the chair, therefore the members have agreed to hold back the vote until this committee steps down in May at the AGM and a new committee is in place.

Social Calendar: Pending day out, including visitation to The Yorkshire Air Museum, awaiting member's decisions on the timings. Without your input nothing will happen please don't wait for the committee to pick a day that you don't want, remember it's your association to do as you wish.

Possible trip to the National Memorial Arboretum, looking for feedback!

Proposed dinner/dance, could use the barracks, maybe!
Great idea lads, its good of you to take it on, don't hesitate
to shout out if you need a hand.

Proposed: A. Irwin
Seconded: C. Woodward, a majority vote.

Items from members:

GADDDY'S LEGACY



Ginkel Heath Arnhem September 2009
(His last parachute drop)

As we all know, our friend and colleague Sgt. Craig Gadd will finish serving with 299 Parachute Squadron RE this year, after been given a medical discharge. He will have completed a military career spanning 21 years, this Territorial soldier has set an example of service second to none and has shown a dedication to duty which has to be mentioned. The founder members of 299, Major George Widdowson and all those WW2 veterans would have been honoured to have served with him.

It was 1993 when Craig enlisted into the 299 unit, which at this time was a part of 131 Independent Commando and his search for adventure has taken him all over the world, serving in all the major conflicts as a front line Combat Engineer. His active service began in 2003, Iraq, deployed in the first wave of troops used for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. In 2006-7 he completed an arduous tour of Afghanistan; his unit suffered 13 casualties with 3 KIA. It was during his second tour of Afghan. In 2010, whilst leading a unit in clearing an enemy compound in the Helmand Province, that Craig triggered an IED. Thanks to the action of his men his life was saved but the surgeons at Camp Bastion field hospital were forced to amputate his left leg. Therefore this year the British Army will lose a very experienced Combat Engineer, also Civvy Street has lost a first class bricky/builder, Craig served his time with Sangwins, (Builders), "a name synonymous with 299 Parachute Squadron"

You will find no trace of bitterness or regret in Craig, he knew the risks and he took his chances. He enjoyed his army life and says "he would do it all again", may try and avoid the IED next time. For those of us who have watched him struggling with all his medical problems over the past few years, we cannot help but respect the man. We all know that he will face up to his new challenges in life with the courage and tenacity shown whilst serving with 299. Good luck Craig and welcome to the association.

_January 2014

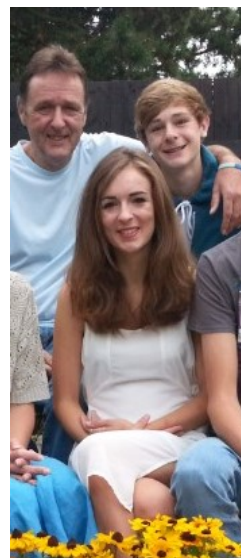
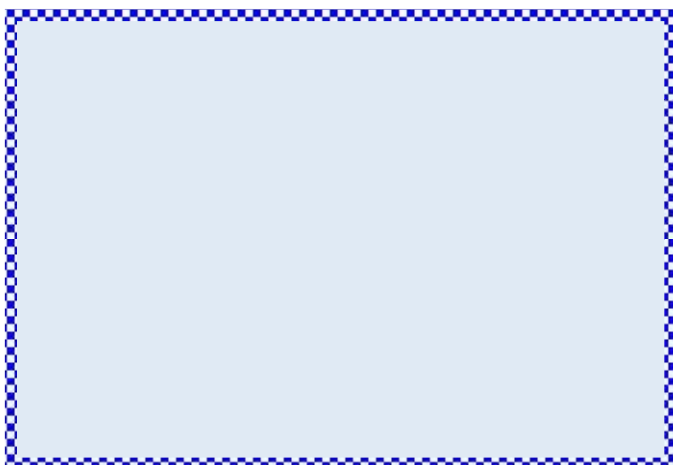
Dear Members of the 299 Para Association

You very kindly sponsored me in April 2010 to walk from York to London in aid of Help for Heroes. In total, with your help, I raised over £1600 and the total from the team effort was in excess of £9000.

I'm just writing now to let you know what I've been up to since that long walk when I was 14 years old.

In 2011 whilst working hard (!) on my GCSE's, me and two pals took part in a sponsored climb to raise funds for the Special Care Baby Unit. The aim was for the three of us to collectively climb the height of Everest using the climbing wall at a Sports Centre in York. In the end, we climbed the height of Everest and Kilimanjaro combined, scheduling in our climbing at the Centre over a period of just 4 days. We were ably supported by 2 friends and a parent who belayed for us (and had blisters to show for it, as did we!).

It was then head down studying for A Levels (History, ICT and Maths) – I really enjoy history and with an A* result I was accepted to study for a History Degree at Southampton University. I'm thoroughly enjoying university life (particularly the Fresher's Fortnight!!). As I expected, there's lots of reading/researching required for History and endless essays! My next priority is to look for private rented accommodation for September 2014 and get a part-time job. Not certain yet what the future holds, but I am enjoying the journey so far.



*Me and dad at the end of our walk to London –
I'm nearly as tall as Crouchy now....!*

Thank you again. I was proud to have your support. Keep up the good work and all the best for the future.

Regards Ben Rule

I have replied to Ben on behalf of this association and thanked him for his update, (I have passed a copy of this letter around at the February meeting). It was whilst working with Ben's father, Kevin Rule, during 2010 that the search for sponsors for that marathon walk resulted in a letter to this association asking for help, and of course we supported his efforts in this worthy cause. Kevin accompanied young Ben on this walk and I believe it took about 2 weeks often using TA centres for overnights.

Was it destiny that this brilliant fund raising effort coincided with the terrible wounding to Sgt. Gadd?

Craig Gadd, "Gaddy" is on his way back to Headly Court for more surgery, but is down for a big charity bike ride in early June therefore get your money out, it's Help 4 Hero's, and he's going to put some back in the pot, more details nearer the time. Craig is into this face book/twitter sites, it's all the rage and he swears by it. Try.

Paul Sims, "Simbo" needs thanking for all the organizing and communicating to do with "Seadogs" funeral, someone had to do it. Also thanks for sorting the bus stops out, it all helps.

Col. Woodward, "Woody" thanks for sorting out the Standards and Parade Marshals for our forth coming funerals.

Dean Ideson, "Deano" needs thanking for all the organizing and communicating to do with Colin's funeral. The committee appreciate and admire the effort you lad's put in to make this association work.

Les. Ransom, please spare a thought for Les, his eldest Daughter, Jennifer is struggling to hold on to life, she is desperately ill and the whole family are worried, as Les would say "where there's life, there is hope also Ray Franklin who is in a similar situation, our thoughts and pray's are with you both.

Web site address: www.299association.com

Next Meeting: 7th March 2014, at the Minerva, Cooperation Pier, Hull, 2000hrs

Dates for your diary: Forces Memorial Day – Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington, Nr. York.
Sunday 7th September 2014.

Arnhem Pilgrimage 2014

The 6 day option 16/9/2014 – 22/9/2014

The 4 day option 18/9/2014 – 22/9/2014

