



299 ASSOCIATION

Affiliated to the AEA, Charity No: 1009201

The aims and ideals of this association are decreed as being:

Promoting and maintaining contact with past and present members of 299 Squadron RE.

Promoting and encouraging such events as may bring pleasure to all members of this association.

Relieving where practicable any hardship or distress suffered by a member, or dependent(s) of a member of this association.

Promoting and maintaining contact with the members of 131 Independent Squadron RE; and all other Airborne/Commando association.

W. Dick, (Seadog), 2/8/2002

Date: Friday 3rd June 2016.

Members Present: M. Beardshaw, B. Bilton, J. Cherry, G. Coe, N. Cooper, A. Costello, G. Crum, T. Cunningham, W. Drayton, J. Duffy, A. Foster, C. Gadd, A. Green, S. Hoyle, D. Ideson, A. Irwin, J. Mace, M. Maddison, D. Meeking, F. Pougher, L. Ransom, G. Ratten, K. Robinson, K. Russell, C. Shillito, P. Sims, B. Steele, Mart.Tindle, A. Weldon, C. Wilcock.

Apologies: D. French, D. Harvey, D. Hines, C. Henrickson, P. Robinson, R. Franklin, C. Duggan, J. Thompson, J. Brooks, D. Barker, G. Beaumont, P. Jefferson, A. Kitching, C. Lickiss, O. A. Nelson-Girchen, P. Robson, L. Smith, Mike. Tindle, C. Walker, T. Walker, D. Woollas, A. Grimes.

Open apology to D. Hines, his name was incorrectly spelt on several occasions in the May minutes, (AGM).

Welcome and 'Roll Call'

The Chairman: **Chris Shillito** welcomed all present then opened the meeting by informing us all about the death of our friend and comrade **Colin Woodward**, he died on Saturday 28th May 2016. **Colin**, "**Woody**" fought long and hard against his illness, but sadly, this was a fight he could not win, he showed great courage in dealing with his terminal prognosis, displaying a strength of character that would surprise many who thought they knew him well, our thoughts and prayers go to **Marion**, their two girls, and the rest of the family.

Woody served for 14 years with 299 as a Squadron/Troop Signaller, he was a quiet unassuming man, honest, steadfast and reliable, one former Troop Commander described him as "always been there, just like a piece of familiar furniture"

He was an indentured trained Woodworking Machinist, still had all his fingers, this is exceptional, finishing his working life as a technical advisor within the College for Further Education at Hull. **Colin** served this association well, he raised the art of Standard Bearing to the 'nth' degree, he paid for himself to go on courses run by the British Legion and was fiercely proud to carry the Standards, he also passed this knowledge on to others, the job suited him, because he did like his own space.

Woody was a one off, and was perfect for that wonderful World of "frequency, interference, roger over and out" He gave up his time so freely in supporting the **CESA organization, (Combined Ex-Serviceman's Association)**, this group of men support ex-serviceman's families in their hour of need, with a military presence, if required at their funerals, totally on a voluntary basis, this was the measure of the man, he giveth, asking nothing in return. A special man that will be missed by so many.

Colin Woodward's Funeral Service will be held on Thursday the 9th June 2016, 12.30hrs at The Chanterlands Avenue Crematorium Hull. The family would welcome a 299 presence because the unit and its men played such a large part in his life, therefore as your Chairman I am asking you men for a maximum turnout and let's give **Woody** the farewell we all owe him. If we could muster at 12.00hrs, Squadron ties, Berets, Decorations if possible, your presence is the most important factor.

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

Proposed by – **F. Pougher**

Seconded by – **A. Weldon**

Treasure's Report: **Martin** brought the meeting up to date with our current bank account status which continues to remain healthy, and reminded people on the Arnhem trip that the total monies have to be in at the next meeting; 1st July, this is the cut of point, no cash means no trip.

Correspondence:

Letter received from **Ray Inchbold** to **John Mace** regarding his father's inclusion onto the associations' Roll of Honour. **Ray** wishes his father's name to be added: **Edwin (Ted) Inchbold** a founder member of 299, enlisting during 1948 after demob from the 1st Parachute Regiment which he joined in 1942. **Ted** was still serving with 299 as late as 1964, his civilian occupation was as a Furnace man. A collection of early photos have been passed over from **Ray** to our Web master **Dave Hines** and Archivist **Tony Irwin**.

Chairman's Comments:

At the last meeting, (May AGM), a lady presented herself to us all, "after knocking on the meeting room door", as the daughter of **Ernie Venus, (Joan)**. For those who don't know **Ernie** was ex 1st Div. Arnhem Vet and a founder member of 299. **Ernie** died a few years ago and his family requested his ashes to be spread on the Ginkel Heath DZ to be reunited with his many pals who died here during the battle in 1944. I, as training officer, was given the task of fulfilling the families' wishes. The Squadron had been designated places on the commemorative parachute drop that year, and young **Chris Duggan** volunteered to jump with **Ernie's** ashes but unfortunately he tried to release them on the descent and succeeded in covering himself in the process, **Chris** landed as the Grey man but the family were happy and **Chris** scrubbed up well.

Joan has written to our Chairman, and I quote: "it was lovely to have the opportunity to say thank you properly and really strange how it happened as we don't go in the Minerva very often. We'd just had our tea and were about to leave when I noticed a lot of guys in red berets and asked if they were 299 and was told yes, therefore I took the liberty and popped into your meeting. I will remember the time of your meetings and try and pop down sometime. Thanks for the welcome, I felt as if my dad guided me to the meeting, if such a thing is possible"

Chris Shillito: replied "too many strange things happened to dismiss the probability, we only wear Berets once a year at the AGM because we have a photo shoot, so for you to happen upon us was a big coincidence, I am sure your dad may have had something to do with it"

N/B: **Joan** is employed as a BBC radio producer and is currently working on a programme commemorating 75 years of the worst of the bombing on Hull during WW2.

Matters arising:

I am including a script taken from the May meeting of the Scottish Branch of the AEA because I am sure it will be of interest to many of you:

"**Aden 1965 GSM ; John Donaldson** received a letter, in reply to his, from RE RHQ Chatham informing him there was nothing they could do in securing the award of the GSM for service in Aden during 1965. They also intimated that there was no record of **John** applying for the GSM for service in Aden during 1965. They sent **John** a form to apply for the GSM which he duly completed and submitted. Their answer was to send him another Veterans Badge – he does not know why.

Kirsty Oswald, who is an MP for Renfrewshire, was debating on a National Defence Medal at Westminster Hall on 12th April 2016. She raised the point about the awarding of the GSM to members of 131 Para Engr Regt. who were in action at Al Milah, Aden during 1965. Her address was supported by other MPs at this meeting, trying to reinforce **John's** case. Needless to say the Government Minister waffled his way out of the situation, quoting **Winston Churchill** in 1944 on medallic recognition. At the moment everything is still with **Kirsty Oswald** who at least is trying to get something done. There will be other debates on a National Defence Medal, hopefully in the near future"

AEA Roll of Honour has been amended to include the names of the men killed in the Cromwell Lock disaster, but there has been no decision made yet for its relocation from the Aldershot Garrison Church to 23 Para Engr Regt. HQ at Woodbridge.

Items from members:

Syd Hoyle broke the sad news that **John Tidyman** of the Hull branch of the PRA has passed away, **John** is known to some of you who also attend their meetings. The PRA Chairman and former 299 man **Don Shaw** is requesting support with Standards from this association to meet the needs and wishes of his family, this is the least we can do for a fellow brother in arms, therefore those of you who can spare the time please try and make an effort in attending.

Johns Funeral service will be held on Monday 13th June 2016, 12.30hrs at the Chanterlands Ave. Crematorium, Hull. Like Woody's, muster about 12.00hrs, Squadron Ties, Berets, Decorations if possible, your presence is the most important factor.

Craig Gadd is looking for sponsorship for the BLESMA charity, (British Limbless Ex- Servicemen's Association) and it has been proposed that this association supports this worthy cause:

Proposed: **P. Sims**, Seconded: **M. Beardshaw**, final details and votes will be resolved at the next meeting on 1st July.

Tony Weldon announced that the Minerva, our current meeting venue is safe for all months except September which is questionable, but is going to keep an eye on the situation. This is all due to pending festivals in the Corporation Pier area of Hull.

Paul Sims: passed two bus stops around the meeting, the winners this week were **Bill Drayton** and **Paul Sims** well done **Paul** and thanks.

Tony Costello: sale of association group photos, **Dave Hines:** sale of photos, discs and 299 memorabilia, **Dave Meeking:** sale of some of his military books and documents. **Tony Foster:** photos of 299 in the 90's. The proceeds of all these sales go into the association funds and we have to thank these men for their generosity.

The Chairman set about auctioning a very expensive commemorative bottle of Pegasus Bridge wine, this had been donated to the association at the Kingsbury Barracks renaming ceremony. The final result went to **Chris Wilcock** for £30, well done.

A hooded fleece donated by **Pete Robbo**, bearing the association motif, was taken by **Gaz Coe** for £20, all these transactions have significantly bolstered the association funds and again thanks to all concerned.

Web site address: www.299association.com

Next Meeting: to be held at 20.00hrs on 1st July 2016 at the Minerva on Corporation Pier Hull.

Dates for your diary:

Airborne Forces Day (Northern): at Eden Camp on Saturday 16th July. Free entry when wearing a maroon beret.

Arnhem Pilgrimage: 15th – 19th September 2016, Must be fully paid up by the end of June.

AEA Reunion/AGM 2016: The Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry. Friday 14th October – Monday 17th October. Booking forms can be obtained from the Secretary and will also be included in the June edition of the AEA Journal.

Remembrance Sunday: 13th November 2016.

Item from members: Dave Hines presented this for inclusion in the AEA Journal. 299 Associations Normandy Trip.

Commencing 14th April 2016.

299 Association Normandy Landing

Day 1: The 299 Association invasion of Normandy started with a Bang, a loud explosion from the rear of the coach sent the fiberglass wheel-arch panel flying across the carriageway and filled the coach with smoke and dust. Arnhem veteran, Les Ransom, didn't bat an eye lid. The driver decided not to recover his panel, completing a further 200 miles to France before he realized the inner tyre on the twin wheel axle had exploded.

Day 2: After an overnight crossing of the channel, the small town of Sainte Mere Eglise was our first objective. A manikin hangs by a parachute from one of the church pinnacles, a fitting tribute to the 82nd American Airborne Division. It was Pte John Steele who was caught up and hung there for two hours before being taken prisoner. The interactive flight and simulated exit from the D47 in the American Airborne Museum is an experience not to be missed, although one of our party declined to exit the aircraft. (No names but his para pay of 2 shillings a day has been cancelled) In the American cemetery nothing can prepare you for the sheer number of graves and the precise symmetry of the crosses, this piece of land is so immaculately tended down to the last blade of grass. Next stop, Pointe du Hoc memorial. History has it, the battleship Texas, fired more than ten kilotons of high explosives, the equivalent of the explosive power of the atomic bomb used at Hiroshima, into the position. I would not have wanted to be a German there on D-Day.



Day 3: Bayeux, a town with a very impressive Cathedral. A walk around its narrow streets and an hour or so perusing the Tapestry was enough culture for most of us. You would have thought history was repeating itself when we turned up at The Battle for Normandy Museum. The receptionist insisted on closing for lunch just as us Brits got there!! The British Cemetery was just across the road, so we were able to pay our respects to the brave lads in their final resting place. Yet another immaculately tended garden of remembrance. Spirits lifted as we headed for a cider tasting experience.

Day 4: Destination Sword Beach, stopping on the way at the Green Howards' Memorial for a group photograph. The 360 Cinema experience on the cliff top at Arromanches is well worth a visit. At the 'Landing Museum', a scale model of Mulberry Harbour B stretches along the inside of the building and a panoramic, unobstructed view out to what remains of the harbour, gives a great sense of the enormity of the operation. We still had time to visit the Beny Sur Mer Canadian Cemetery to pay our respects. Then it was back to the Hotel to celebrate Sapper Irwin's 76th Birthday.



Day 5: Merville Battery Museum, 600 men were assigned to the operation but only 150 made it to the assembly point. They succeeded in capturing the battery, only to discover the guns were old WW1 vintage, without the range to reach the Normandy beaches. Using what explosives they had, they disabled the guns, only 75 men survived the raid. The final bunker at this museum is not to be missed, another great interactive experience that literally puts you in the thick of it. Pegasus Bridge, our final objective. As in 1944, it took the small band of men from 299 just a few minutes to take the bridge. The only obstacle encountered was Sapper Sims and Marine Steele who between them had bought so many fridge magnets they could not be separated! A guided tour of the museum followed where Les Ransom was given the well-deserved red carpet treatment. Taking up his original position in the full size replica of a Horsa Glider another photo opportunity presented itself for the Association.



The day ended on a somber note with a visit to the Ranville cemetery, the final resting place of 16 year old Pte Robert (Bobby) Johns, who made history by becoming the youngest soldier to parachute into Normandy on D-Day. On 23rd July 1944, Pte Johns shot dead by a German sniper in Le Mesnil.



An overnight ferry crossing brought us safely back to good old Blighty. As we passed Western on the Green the sight of a stick of six, with containers, exiting from a skyvan was a fitting end to our trip.

“Let us pray that peace be now restored to the world, and that God will preserve it always” (*General Douglas Macarthur, 1945*)

(*Sapper 24243416 Hines D B 299 Troop 1971-1975*)

