



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: 6th March 2015

Welcome and 'Roll Call'

The Chairman welcomed all present with special reference to the first timers, plus some of the old Brigade from years gone by, this was a very well attended meeting, (40), names and apologies were taken, all to be included into the records.

We were privileged in having two guests this evening: Benny Bridge's, that ex-pro footballer, soldier, (Aden), and long time friend of 299, also Derek French: ex-131 SHQ, a Hull man lost to the big city, but good to have his company, if only for the odd meeting.

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

Proposed by – K. Robinson.

Seconded by – L. Ransom

Treasure's Report:

Martin emphasised the need to secure your place on the Arnhem Pilgrimage, £30 deposit needed, the numbers are expected to be fewer than last year's visit, therefore not making it viable to run two trips simultaneously, a show of hands for the four day option was almost unanimous. (See; dates for your diary).

Correspondence:

Dave Rutter, (AEA Journal Editor) sends his congratulations to you all on the numbers attending these meetings, he goes on to say: "this factor alone reflects a popular, thriving group" I have thanked him for his comments.

Letter from **Capt. J.C. Thompson 23engr-299-2IC, Re: 299 Association Gathering**

After the last meeting John proposed the following and I quote: "1 Troop hosts a Summer Ball type event for 299 Hull members, past and present with their partners, dress code fairly smart, under an extended parachute in the Drill Hall at Middleton Barracks, Calvert Lane, Hull, on or around the 1-2nd August 2015.

S/Sgt. Carl Ham will act as organiser and point of contact and this will be an excellent opportunity for the current Troop members to have a bash before summer block leave and mingle with the old boys"

I have thanked John on behalf of the association for his contribution to our group.

Sqn News: S/Sgt C. Ham.

This year's annual Camp is in Cyprus, for those men who can secure absence from their civilian employment over and above their two week commitment will have options to soldier on over an extra twelve week period in Cyprus, "more sun oil needed" This possible extension to annual leave may mean the Squadron's availability for Remembrance Sunday could be compromised!!! Forward planning needed for us.

The Squadron has three men currently working full time at the Regimental HQ, using many of their acquired civilian skills; their efforts are winning much praise and recognition for 299. Well done lads.

One member of the Squadron has just landed a six week posting with the American Airborne based from Fort Bragg, if he can find the time a free fall course is available, "all with free apple pie"

Social Calendar:

Visit to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight on the 16th April 2015, vacant places are available and can now be filled, again on a first come basis; you must get your request to the Secretary ASAP, Tel: 01757 268188. For further details see dates for your diary.

299 summer, (Ball), Gathering is to be organised around the first W/end in August with Carl Ham as 1 Troop's point of contact and Tony Irwin for the association, this event is at the planning/ costing stage, its success lies in our own hands.

Chairman's Comments:

The Chairman offered his thanks to Jack Brooks BEM for organizing and collating much of our current Archives, which is now in the care of Tony Irwin, Archivist. He made a special reference to the "Founder Members" script, dated 10/5/1947, which I circulated electronically a few days ago," those without, will find it attached to their minutes" He went on to read the newspaper article announcing the formation of the 299 Squadron RE as a part of the 16th Airborne Division to be commanded by Major General R.E. Urquhart the former commander of the 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem.

None of the founder members are with us anymore, but fond memories were recalled by some, from their earlier days with 299, and the skills and experiences these men passed down can still be seen in the young men serving with the unit to this day.

Welfare Report:

Bill Drayton amongst others regularly keeps in touch with **Frank (Bud) Pougher**; he gave an update on his general well being;

After the surgery, which has gone well, Bud now faces weekly chemo for a month also thirty week day radium sessions, he is two weeks into this treatment and so far so good. He is managing to eat more solids and feels well.

Johnny Mace is keeping an eye on **Graham Beaumont, (Beau)**, and reports that the first stage of his treatment has gone well, a triple bi-pass, he now has to wait for the healing process to take its course before he faces more surgery to sort out his aneurysms, he has a preliminary date of 18th March, we wish him well, John will keep us in the picture.

The Chairman thanked everybody for looking out for each other; Chris Duggan for getting Mac to the meeting, all those who ferry others back and forth and the unseen who press the reminder buttons, this is a big team effort and very much appreciated.

Matters arising:

There has being a call for the reintroduction back into the meetings of the "EXHORTATION" they shall not grow old ----- One verse from the seven written in 1914 by Laurence Binyon titled "For the Fallen"

The subject was opened up to the meeting and the general feeling was that using it at every meeting somehow diminishes its significance, it was therefore proposed by C. Shillito that we use it around Remembrance day and times of loss, this proposal was seconded by P. Sims and carried unanimously.

Terry Cunningham has seen Bud Oldfield and reports that he looks well, sends his best and hopes to attend the AGM in May with the other Donny lads.

Terry also queried the web-site and was told that the material is all safely stored; we must never allow this association records to be tempered with again. In the meantime; Simbo has opened up a face book site which allows the chatter without any risk to association documents.

Craig Gadd,(Gaddy) thanked the members of this association for the support and sponsorship given to him, in his efforts to raise £2500 for "Help for Hero's" with the "Big Battlefield Bike Ride" Well done Craig that's given some back.

Items from members:

MEDALS

Recent exchanges between the medal department of the MOD and myself with regards to my late father's WW2 medal entitlement has not only left me frustrated but perplexed by a system which allows unaccountable bureaucracy a free hand in every decision that is made, with no form of redress available for the applicant.

Medals can be an emotive subject among veterans and serving members of the armed forces because they are valued by so many and signify so much. The British system of awarding campaign medals is governed basically by a reluctance to spend money. The MOD believes a campaign medal should be something which has had to be hard-earned, with a risk to life, under arduous conditions; and should be seen to be so by all concerned. Fairness and consistency should be constant and crucial in all decisions made. **Winston Churchill** commented on the subject during 1944, and I quote;

"The object of giving medals is to give pride and pleasure to those who have deserved them. This draws the distinction between those who have them and those who have not. If all have it, it is of little value. No qualifying criteria can ever offer a perfect solution; it is not possible to satisfy everybody without running the risk of satisfying nobody. All that is possible, is to give the greatest satisfaction to the greatest number and to hurt the feelings of the fewest"

Some groups or individuals falling within this "**fewest**" bracket are often convinced that wrong decisions have been made with regards to their own particular situation, and on many occasions, past decisions made, have seemed in some cases to be dismissive of the given facts, there is also a lack of transparency about the process, and the reasons for any particular decision made has led to feelings of injustice and frustration when dealing with this wall of bureaucracy.

The current system of decision-making is very vulnerable because "Joe public" has obviously no say in medal policy making with no knowledge of what has been decided, or why, also has no access to this information, they can only use the published qualifying criteria as a guide when applying for a medal or award, this is open to manipulation of the parameters or/and interpretation by bureaucrats, whom may be hell bent in denying a given award for whatever reason, the reason/s may well be a directive from the policy makers themselves, but to be sure, we will never know. A reason can always be found for not granting an award and justification for any such action is not needed.

The last few years have seen the medal policy makers in this country neglecting their own standards and principles; the wearing of 'double medals' is now permitted in some cases, also the wearing of medals celebrating various royal celebrations which have nothing to do with service or the risk to life, all this undermines the credibility of any rules that the MOD may claim to have in place, thus leaving many, including the "**fewest**" feeling that double standards may be at work. God forbid!!!

G. Coe

Congratulations to L/Cpl Joshua Leakey of the 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment upon being awarded the VC for his actions in the face of the enemy, during operations in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan.

The Chairman reminded the meeting again that the **AGM is in May**, all committee places will become vacant; if you are interested in standing for a job please make sure your written request is given to the Secretary at least **21 days before the AGM**, nothing will be accepted after this date. Thank you.

A group photo of 299 association members is proposed for the AGM on the 1st May, this is an early warning for you to reserve time on this date, as to include as many members as possible, and a maximum turnout would make a great photo. Dress; smart casual, Squadron ties, Blazers if you have, but if you have to come straight from work that's also OK, just come.

The Chairman thanked everybody for taking part in a very enjoyable meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 2nd April at 2000hrs in The Ship Inn, Beverley Road, Dunswell.

This change has being forced upon us, because our next meeting should fall upon Good Friday at the Minerva, but this venue is not available, therefore the committee has managed to secure the **Ship Inn**, which just happens to be **Les Ransom's**, (that Arnhem vet.), local watering hole and Thursday night just happens to be his Domino night, he usually gets in around 2100hrs. By the way; Les will not be getting this info in his minutes; he will be given a dirty lie, he has no computer, and his nearest & dearest are complicit, therefore "Mums" the word.

Easter Sunday 5th April is his 93rd birthday, the Ships landlord, "Jonno" and 299 association have planned a bit of a surprise, "do" for him, all to happen after the meeting, it's a bun fight "buffet" plus forties music, singing is optional, everybody is welcome, wives, girlfriends/boyfriends? Serving members and friends of Les & 299, all are welcome. It's a bank holiday the next day, therefore no work/duties for most, this has to be a must, so please spread the word.

Dates for your diary:

Visitation to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight: RAF Coningsby:16th April 2015

Leaving time is 0800hrs from outside the Hull Truck Theatre, Ferensway, Hull.
Dress smart casual Squadron ties, Blazers if you have.

Airborne Forces Day at Eden Camp on the 11th July 2015

Dress: if you wear your maroon beret admission is free.

Summer Ball at The Middleton Barracks, Hull 1st or 2nd of August 2015 (details to follow)

Arnhem Pilgrimage 2015

One trip this year: 17th – 21st September 2015

Wreath laying at Cromwell Lock: 27th September 2015

It is the 40th Anniversary of the Cromwell Lock disaster when 10 of our Scottish friends perished whilst taking part in the **Trent Chase exercise of 1975**; (further details to follow)

The AEA Reunion/AGM 16th – 19th October 2015 at Coventry

Remembrance Sunday: 8th November 2015

