



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 March 2017

Members Present: N. Arksey, M. Beardshaw, G. Beaumont, B. Bilton, K. Blacker, J. Cherry, G. Coe, N. Cooper, G. Crum, T. Cunningham, W. Drayton, R. Franklin, C. Gadd, C. Ham, D. Harvey, D. Ideson, A. Lee, J. Mace, M. Maddison, S. McMahon, D. Meekin, F. Pougher, L. Ransom, G. Ratten, K. Robinson, P. Robson, C. Shillito, N. Sisson, P. Sims, L. Smith, J. Thompson, Mart. Tindle, C. Walker, T. Walker, A. Weldon, B. Young.

Apologies: F. Gray, P. Robinson, J. Brooks, A. Costello, J. Duffy, C. Duggan, A. Foster, D. French, C. Henrickson, D. Hines, S. Hoyle, A. Kitching, C. Lickiss, B. Steele, R. Swatman, Mike. Tindle, D. Woollas.

Guests: Eileen Robinson.

Welcome and 'Roll Call'

The Chairman **Chris Shillito** welcomed all present then opened this well attended meeting, (37), on this wet and stormy night in Hull.

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

Proposed by – **A. Irwin,**

Seconded by – **J. Thompson.**

Treasure's Report:

Martin gave a comprehensive and detailed report on our financial status which remains in good order, he also thanked **Paul Sims** for doing the monthly bus stops and all the other association fund raiser's, these monies are important in taking care of our stationary expenses, also frees us up from collecting membership subscriptions.

Reminder that all monies for the Arnhem Pilgrimage needs to be paid by the AGM on the 5th May 2017, the numbers taking this trip continue to grow, the last count being 36 and possibly still rising.

Correspondence: Letter from **Syd Hoyle**

"Thought I'd should make you aware of a forthcoming event on the events diary of the PRA, which is Falklands/MV Norland Commemorations 2017 on the 28th May. The format to be similar to previous years, but perhaps with slightly higher profile in that it is to coincide with the taking of 'Goose Green' in 1982, consequently **J. J. Moore** along with other high rankers will be there, maybe even some royalty, but don't tell **Bill, Keith Thompson** (SAMA) is running the show with a little help from the branch"

The PRA Association have recently launched a new website which you may find of interest:

www.theparachuteregimentalassociation.com

Letter received from Ian Richardson, Communications Manager at the Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington, York.

"The annual Air Forces Memorial Day will take place on Sunday 3rd September 2017 and once again we welcome participation by Service Association branches. The event will feature the customary Service followed by the Marchpast & Salute and sunset Ceremony. The Parade will be once again be led by the Yorkshire Military Marching Band and Corp of Drums". "This is an invite for your consideration"

Tony Costello posted the following: The Armed Services Trauma Rehabilitation Outcome Study, (Advance Study), requests for volunteers. Funded by the MoD and Help for Heroes. Full details at:

[HTTP://WWW.ADVANCESTUDYDMRC>ORG>UK](http://www.advancestudydmrc.org.uk)

Chris Shillito posted the following: Gentlemen 8 men from this association formed up at the Royal Courts London with over 500 ex Royal Marines and army Commando's in support of Alexander Blackman in his bid for freedom, the outlook is positive although it will be a couple of weeks before the verdict, good effort all round. Full account of the day's activity later.

Chris Shillito posted the following: Today the 10th February seven 299 men attended the funeral of the legend Bill Rudd, a massed gathering of Airborne and Commando Engineers turned out to say farewell to the great man. RIP Bill.

Adam Garforth, GARTH, posted the following from Kanchanabun in Thailand: Recent visit to Kanchanabun, location of the Bridge over the river Kwai. Hellfire Pass war museum and the WW2 Cemetery: - a bit of info...of the 6,588 Allied POW's buried there, 3,442 were British servicemen, 162 Royal Engineers died during the constructing of the Thai/Burma railway in world war two. The senior Allied officer at the bridge was Britain's lieutenant Colonel Philip Toosey, (not Alex Guinness). Toosey in fact did as much as possible to delay the building of the bridge and was certainly not a collaborator as depicted in the film. Professor G.

Letter received from John Donaldson ex 300 Sqn. 131 Ind. Para. Regt. (V). RE.

GENERAL SERVICE MEDAL 62 WITH CLASP SOUTH ARABIA

Dear all,

This is the reply I received from the letter I wrote on the 14th December 2016 to General Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter KCB CBE DSO ADC Gen Chief of the General Staff, it says it all.

I am starting to run out of ideas and am just about to give up hope of ever getting 300 Para Sqn RE awarded the GSM 62, however, I am very pleased that those killed and wounded at Al Milah in 1965 will get the medallic recognition they deserve, albeit nearly 52 years late. I must add that it was not because of what I wrote, as it was always the case since the Army Act of July 1966, they just didn't inform us.

I am awaiting a reply from the Prime Minister, Theresa May, but she will probably side with the MoD and give the knock back. I could write to Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister, but not being a Scottish Nationalist I would probably get a knock back from her also. If any of you have any other thoughts on who else I could write to, please let me know. It is nearly three years since I wrote my first letter in connection with the award of the GSM 62, it might just be the time to stop.

Kind regards John.

Major General R M B Nitsch CBE



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Mr J Donaldson
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24 January 2017

Dear Mr Donaldson

Thank you for your letter of 14 December in which you describe the actions of 300 Parachute Field Squadron RE during its deployment to Aden in 1965. I understand that personnel from 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment (Territorial Army), including 300 Squadron, were deployed for specific road construction and bridge-building tasks as part of their annual training of fifteen days. I was sorry to learn that during this deployment WO2 Lonergan and Sgt Atfield were killed in action and other members of your unit were wounded.

As you will know from your correspondence with the Ministry of Defence Medal Office, the General Service Medal with clasp "South Arabia" was awarded to all those deployed into the geographic region of the Federation of South Arabia between 1 August 1964 and 30 November 1967 who spent the requisite amount of time in theatre. The judgement of the authorities at the time was that the qualifying period in theatre was to be 30 days. As you and the other members of the Squadron were only deployed for the period of your annual training of fifteen days, you are ineligible for the medal and therefore cannot qualify for the award. As the criteria apply equally to all soldiers, both Regular and Reserve, it is not possible to award the medal outside the guidelines agreed at the time on the basis of your status as members of the Territorial Army.

It has always been the policy for campaign awards that qualifying service may be reduced for those who are killed or have their service in theatre terminated prematurely by wounding or other related injury, or having been captured or detained. It was for this reason that WO2 Lonergan and those who were injured received the GSM 62 even though they had not completed the full qualifying period.

I know that you will be disappointed that 300 Squadron's actions and time in Aden cannot be rewarded with a campaign award, but I hope that you will understand the rationale. Regrettably, I cannot authorise an exception, nor would it be appropriate to use a campaign award to recognise the actions of a Territorial unit when the rules applied equally to them as to Regular soldiers.

Yours Sincerely,

Robert Nitsch

My reply to John: There you have it John, 299 can but praise your efforts and sympathize with the result, disappointing to say the least. The MoD are tight with their awards, I have my own experiences in this department, but none of this stuff will console me that it is nothing short of a national disgrace that the dead and wounded of 300 Para Sqn RE have had to wait all this time in receiving their entitlements, "no sign of an apology" outstanding arrogance displayed as per usual.

The very fact that they are receiving this award is due to you, `believe me,` it would not have happened without a `poke` in the eye from you, therefore your efforts have not been a total waste of time. The Aden Veterans of 299 Association thank you. Kind regards

Gaz Coe.

Chairman's Comments:

Chris Shillito reminded the meeting that it is fast approaching the AGM in May and is asking for a maximum turn out, also, it is time for all of you to start thinking about volunteering for a job on the committee, all positions become vacant as in every year, and fresh blood would be welcomed, remember no volunteer would be left in the lurch, full support and coaching will always be there. If interested, let the Secretary know ASAP.

Chris had picked up some harrowing news about members and their dependants: **Gary Newton**, former Secretary has under gone radical surgery in the removal of a large tumour from his side, losing several ribs in the process.

Tony Foster's wife has been involved in a major accident and is struggling on a high dependency ward, and **Davey Bowron**, one of our "Brumie" friends has under gone a leg amputation due to circulatory problems, this association offers best wishes to all concerned and hope that all pull through their immediate trauma, and our thoughts go with them.

Chris went on to thank **Alan Lee** for a brilliant piece of work included in these minutes and also the flyer printed and handed out at the meeting regarding the BBC Panorama, Marine A.: Guilty as charged? Will be broadcast on Tuesday 7th March at 2200hrs on BBC one.

Alexander Blackman, better known as Marine A, is the first British soldier to be convicted of murder on the battle field since the Second World War.

Matters arising:

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RAF REGIMENT UPON REACHING ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY

This association is honoured with the presence of some ex RAF Regiment men, both as full and associates members:

Jim Cherry, Mike Maddie, Young Robbie, Big Bird Mapp's and Tommy B.

Since its formation during February 1942, the RAF Regiment has played a vital role in major operations across the world including: WW2, Aden, Northern Ireland, The Falklands, Iraq and Afghanistan. "It's a privilege to have your company chaps"

John "Willy" Harrison has made contact once again, apparently he has had a few health issues whilst living over in Belgium but appears to be over the worst now, he dropped in on "Weldo" bearing gifts of cigars and "Weldo" reported that "Willy" looks very well and he was over the moon to see him again after many years of absence, he also joined Sheggs at the "Keys" for a few drinks, hopefully he may make the odd meeting if he has finally decided to retire, would be good to see him down at the Minerva again, amongst his many old friends.

Terry Cunningham: brought the meeting up to date news of our "Donny" friends, the old 2 Troop of 299 Squadron: **Bud Oldfield, John Davis and Nev Smales** who are all fighting the aging process like the rest of us, but still remain the eternal optimists as usual. They asked to be remembered to you all and hope to see you at the AGM in May.

FOUNDER MEMBERS

Our next AGM in May will mark the fifteenth year since two ex 299'ers, **Kev Saddinton & Mick Hookem** put out a call to all 299 men for them to "come together in the formation of an **Association**" **A brilliant idea designed to renew old friendships, also foster new, amongst men that served within the Squadron or Troop.**

Looking back through our historic Archives produced by that "old word smith" and Secretary during this period in time, the late **Bill Dick**, I came across these minutes taken at a meeting in the Minerva on Friday 4th October 2002, the association being just five months old, where, under the heading **Correspondence** he published the then current membership status of 299 Association at the time, what's interesting is the names included, and, or even more importantly those not included. I will insert the full section taken from these minutes, how many of you can remember this?

Correspondence taken from the minutes of Friday 4th October 2002 meeting

"Four very nice letters in reply to the, 'wish / do not wish to join' slips which were mailed out, have been received from **Bud Oldfield, John Davis, Mick Sutherland** and **Dave Woollas**, and were read out at this meeting by the Vice Chairman **Paul Sims**. All present were appreciative, and understanding of the comments expressed in the letters. Sadly, **John Davis** and **Mick Sutherland** are unable to join the association at this time, but who knows what the future might bring. We wish them well for the future.

Dave Woollas enclosed a subscription cheque for £20 with his letter and although Friday evenings are a very busy time for him, he promises he will 'Stand To' at future meetings as soon as he can.

Bud Oldfield an interesting case. Why? – Because **Bud** indicated that due to the distances involved (and his current condition) he was unable to join at this time. But **Bud** being **Bud** he also sent a £20 cheque "to cover postage". Well **Bud** old lad, thanks to yer 20 – quid, you are now a fully-paid up member of The 299 Association. So stick that in your mess tins..!

'Wish to join' slips; 28 slips were mailed out with pre-paid envelopes to 'names' we held but had not seen at any of meetings. The slips were mailed on 8/9th September and to date (6th October) only 10 slips have been returned, 6 indicated a wish to join and enclosed subscription cheques. A final check will be made on the accuracy of the names & addresses for the 'missing' 18 slips, therefore we will cease attempts to contact holders.

Membership: now stands at 38, and several more membership cheques may yet arrive as a result of the 'wish to join' slips. Anyone else still to pay his Subs – get your hand down!

MEMBERS

D. Barker, D. Catchpole, W. Draper, G. Grindley, S. Knowles, A. McGlynn, B. Oldfield, B. Coe,

G. Coe, G. Ratten, K. Russell, R. Swatman, Mike Tindle, D. Woollas, M. Beardshaw, W. Dick,

A. Beardshaw, J. Cherry, A. Cross, W. Drayton, M. Hookem, J. Large, S. McMahon, S. Oliver,

K. Robinson, P. Sims, R. Sylvester, A. Weldon, N. Yates, J. Duffy, S. Hives, J. Mace, S. Novis,

F. Rands, P. Robson, N. Sisson, Mart. Tindle, C. Woodward.

The Secretary managed to contact **Bud Pougher** by telephone. A 'wish to join' slip was mailed to him but he did not receive it because he had moved from his last known address, (hence the need to recheck the addresses of the missing 18.)

Bud sounds just like his old (or should that be 'younger') self. He now works permanent night-shifts but is delighted the association has got off the ground – and dose want to join. Well, **Bud**, let's have 'yer dosh – and you can come whenever you like"

N/B:

At five months in existence, these **FOUNDER MEMBERS** had drawn up, agreed and voted into the constitution the aims & ideals of what is more commonly known as the **Bill Dick** Charter, as shown at the beginning of these minutes, also members had agreed to honour and respect each other, working within an atmosphere of total honesty and friendship, but as with any association its strength would always lie in the hands of its membership, with their fundamental democratic right of majority decisions remaining paramount.

Not all the above have made it to this present day: **D. Catchpole, A. Beardshaw, B. Coe, J. Large, W. Dick** and **C. Woodward** have all sadly left us forever. **S. Ives** has moved to Spain and **R. Sylvester** has moved to the USA. **M. Hookem** resigned.

Items from members: Alan Lee's account of the London trip.

Hi all, this is an account of our trip to London in support of Sgt Alexander Blackman, known as "Marine A" in his trial appearance and subsequent conviction for killing a Taliban insurgent. The trip took place on Wed 8th February.

Chris Shillito, myself, Bri. Bilton, Paul Sims, Bill Drayton, Dave Woollas and special guest Sandra Robinson BEM, (take note Jack Brooks she is better looking and could easily replace the current 299 BEM medal holder), and joining us in London, Derek French.

Well we set off rather early having various pick up points along the way, the minibus pulled in at the filling station near to me at Melton where my wife had taken myself and "Sandy" Sandra, to meet the minibus. We parked up in good time in my WHITE Land rover and awaited the arrival of "Shegsey and crew", swapping stories about "Sandy's, in the RMP's, (forgot to mention that small point), not noticing the minibus parked up at the other end of the forecourt. After a while I decided to see if they were late and stepped out of the car to see them and subsequently boarded the bus.

Sheggs drove along the A63 to a running commentary from Bri about road choices and then said just as we were passing the M 18, "didn't you want the M 18" to which Sheggs replied yes, well that was it was the reply from Bri, I later found out it was a deliberate rouse for security reasons according to Chris who had just added another 45 mins to the journey. The rest of the journey went well without a hitch and I must admit I was really impressed with Bri's knowledge on almost any subject, especially roads. Our guest Sandy ex RMP was accompanying us as a member of the RMA Royal Marines Association as her father was a marine and she wanted to support this. On route Chris received a call from Derek French asking where we were parking and offered to get us a better place and became our guide and advisor in London, I would like on behalf of everyone to thank him for all his efforts and support and the hospitality he showed us, the beer provided afterwards was appreciated by all and Bill offered to return the complement when he comes to Hull as long as it doesn't cost more than a bag of pigeon food..

We did the serious business of flying the support flag outside the court and I was pleased to see Dave Woollas enjoying the moment just as he had done at Woodstock some years earlier, it rekindled the rebel in him.

We went to the courtrooms early afternoon, it was a grand building with airport type security screening before you are allowed to go into one of the many courtrooms inside, our court No 4 was upstairs, up a tiny stone spiral staircase and it was admirable to see Sandy, with her disability, forgo one of her crutches and make it up, as well as the short walks we did for taxis and buses, it must have been a challenge for her. I am now aware she suffered the next day, but considered it worth it and thanks everyone for our support and allowing her to join us, "well it was a pleasure"



We sat on the old wooden benches in the public gallery with the Chief Justices cross examining the Prosecution's submissions and quickly realized this was going our way, with the Prosecution lawyer having to squirm around and concede that Al Blackman did in fact have a battle stress disorder, much to our delight, and in fact we were told off for applauding the defence barristers dismantling of him. The Chief Justices, five of them, the highest in the land, did seem to be on our side, and at one point told the prosecution they have had 3 years to get the evidence in front of them and if he was struggling for the crown's case notes he could get his junior to do it, which went down well overall, the justices indicated this was a pivotal point in Al's trial and they did not need an extra day's sitting and they would go away, deliberate and inform every one of their decision within the next 2 weeks. We would have liked an immediate answer, but I am convinced there is some damage limitation going on there.

The courts may do one of the following: retrial, acquit him, reduce sentence to manslaughter through diminished responsibility and hopefully release him given time already served, we will see!

We left the courtrooms to a large crowd of supporters waiting outside on the Strand, we stood in front of the media pack to cheers of support outside, or was it because they had seen a better view of Simbo who unashamedly jostled for a front row position, thus presenting the media with his best side.

We left the pack around 1700hrs and were taken to a small pub reminiscent of The Beer Keller by Derek French who duly went straight to the front and got us all a drink in, I found out the strange properties of London beer loosened the vocal cords of both Bri, who sat next to me and Bill who had now turned into a Scotsman and it nearly ended in us spending a night in London. Apologies given to our host we made our way by bus to our departure point, entertained some innocent tourists who just happened to be from Yorkshire and treated the bus to the singing Scotsman and his accomplices.

The journey home was uneventful apart from the detour near Leicester due to closure of the A1M, most of us were home by 12 midnight.

I would like to end this report by thanking the 299 Association for their support and a special thanks to Derek for all the support in London, I think we did our bit and had an enjoyable trip. Regards Alan.

Web site address: www.299association.com

Next Meeting: Friday 7th April 2017 at 2000hrs in the Minerva on Corporation Pier, Hull.

Dates for your diary:

Falklands/MV Norland Commemoration Parade and Service, Holy Trinity, Hull, on Sunday 28th May 2017, to coincide with the taking of Goose Green.

Airborne Forces Day, (Northern), Saturday 15th July 2017 at Eden Camp, Malton, Parade and Service starts at 1100hrs, Admission free for maroon berets.

Allied Air Forces Memorial Day at Elvington on Sunday 3rd September 2017.

Arnhem Pilgrimage: Thursday 14th = Monday 18th September 2017. All monies to be paid by the May meeting, AGM.

THE AEA REUNION/AGM TO BE HELD AT THE MERCURE ROYAL HOTEL, FERNSWAY, HULL. HU1 3UF over the weekend Friday the 20th to Monday the 23rd October 2017, a room has been booked for the AGM.

Very important: rooms at this hotel could be at a premium over this week end, therefore book early to avoid disappointment. Remember it's the year of culture in Hull and they will not hang onto rooms on a promise. There are other hotels close by, but if you want a guaranteed room at this hotel you can reserve with your card without money been taken out of your account. Provisional costings for a room are £80 per night, this is on a B & B basis. Confirmation to follow. Hotel tele: 01482 325087, Email: enquires@hotels-hull.co.uk **Details have been sent to the Executive Committee.**

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 2017.

ABOVE TIMINGS TBC LATER.

With nothing more to discuss the Chairman closed the meeting thanking all for their attendance especially on such an awful night.

INVITATION

LES RANSOM, ONE OF JOHN FROST'S MEN

Les will turn 95yrs young on the 5th April 2017, his son **James**, also friend & Publican **Jono Palmer** have planned a surprise celebration for him to take place on Saturday 8th April 2017 at the Ship Inn, Beverly Road, Dunswell, near Hull.

This is an open invitation to 299, friends and families, everyone is welcome, anybody travelling from afar can take advantage of the Ship's Quarter Deck (accommodation), very reasonably priced.

Remember this special man has out lived his comrades, and you 299 men play a massive part in his life, it would be great if you could pop in for a quick "Hello" nobody has to spend the full evening although those who do expect a late one, "knowing **Les**" Therefore "Mums the word" This will be deleted form **Les's** copy, (hard print out).