



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 7th October 2016

Members Present: D. Barker, M. Beardshaw, G. Beaumont, B. Bilton, K. Blacker, J. Brooks, G. Coe, N. Cooper, A. Costello, A. Grimes, G. Crum, T. Cunningham, W. Drayton, R. Franklin, D. Harvey, D. Hines, A. Irwin, C. Lickiss, J. Mace, D. Meekin, O. Nelson-Girchen, F. Pougher, L. Ransom, P. Robson, K. Russell, C. Shillito, P. Sims, N. Sission, D. Skoyles, Mart. Tindle, A. Weldon, C. Wilcock.

Apologies: F. Gray, P. Robinson, C. Walker, T. Walker, B. Steele, D. Ideson, C. Gadd, A. Stimpson, J. Cherry, J. Duffy, A. Foster, C. Duggan, M. Hall, C. Henrickson, S. Hoyle, A. Kitching, K. Robinson, L. Smith, Mike. Tindle, D. Woollas, G. Ratten, D. French.

Guests: Benny Bridges.

Welcome and 'Roll Call'

The Chairman **Chris Shillito** welcomed all present to this very well attended meeting and opened the proceedings by asking **Gary Coe** to recite those famous four lines taken from **Robert Laurence Binyon's** poem "FOR THE FALLEN" ... "**They shall grow not old**"....

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

Proposed by – **F. Pougher**

Seconded by – **P. Sims**

Treasure's Report:

Martin Tindle gave a comprehensive report on the association funds and was pleased to report the receipt of a cheque from the Guild Hall in Hull. He was also pleased to receive sponsorship money from **Tony Weldon** after his year of activities, yet another very generous gift to help bolster our funds, the meeting showed its appreciation by thanking **Tony** for his selfless dedication to this association.

Reminder: Those who still owe the £25 extra needed because of the increase to the Arnhem 2016 Pilgrimage need to clear this up with **Martin, ASAP please.**

Correspondence:

GSM with Clasp South Arabia: news from our Scottish friends and their struggle for recognition in the fact that they took part in actions against dissidents in Yemen (Aden) during 1966, resulting in deaths and many wounded amongst the TA soldiers of 300 Para Sqn whilst deployed as a part of 131 Para Regt RE TA during the construction of the Dalha road.

John Donaldson and others have campaigned over many years to no avail. The bottom line from the MOD is that the thirty day criteria had not been met, he has appealed this decision twice and on the 16th September 2016 received the following in an e-mail and I quote; “ **I can confirm that the soldiers of 300 Para Sqn RE TA who lost their lives are entitled to this award, as set out in the Special Army Orders of 25th July 1966: ‘If the qualifying service is brought to end before the completion of 30 days on account of death, or evacuation owing to wounds, or other disability due to service, a reduced period of service will be sufficient qualification for the award’**”

Because this is a unique case **John** has asked the Prime Minister if she will waver the 30 day criteria and he awaits her reply, we all wish him well in his endeavours and thank him for his resolute determination in achieving what I would consider to be a massive victory, **because at last, the MOD is acknowledging that 131 Para Regt RE (V) played an operational part in Southern Arabia (Aden) during 1966 with 300 Sqn paying the heaviest price. IT HAS ONLY TAKEN 50 YEARS, but what an achievement.**

N/B: Anyone who wants a copy of their Army Service Records try 0345-600-966 Disclosures (Option 3)

Or e-mail address: apc-sp-disclosures1@mod.uk, if you think you may have a claim for an award, do something about it, an award often requires some personal effort, especially in the above case, I am aware that some of you went out as an advance party, you may well fulfil the 30 day criteria on these grounds alone, therefore get stuck in.

Social Calendar:

Message posted by **S/Sgt C. Ham, (Carlos)**, “A big thank you to the association men for their attendance at the barracks for **Capt. John Thompson’s (Tommo’s)**, leaving do. You helped to drink the bar dry, a great send off for a very deserving troop member, who put so much into the unit over many years” The many accolades flowed freely for this soldier and very likeable man. We look forward to his presence at the association meetings any time in the near future, and we also look forward to his renowned generosity when drinking at the bar!

Message posted by **Chris Shillito** on the 22nd Sept. marking 41 years since the **Cromwell Weir disaster** with the loss of 10 of our Scottish friends, RIP the lads.

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Kingston upon Hull and Admiral of the Humber, Councillor Anita Harrison has released the funds from her **Charity Appeal** for the year 2015-16 and **Craig Gadd** was invited to the Guild Hall in Hull on 23rd September for a cheque presentation on behalf of this association. **Councillor Harrison** praised everybody from 299 who contributed gifts, time and support in making this year’s appeal a great success, raising much needed funds for many local charities.

A special thanks must go to **Tony Kitching**, whom without his forethought, drive and connections this association would not have been considered for this venture, missing out on the many benefits which will serve the future of this association for many years to come, thanks **Tony** from everybody in this association, a brilliant result delivered because of you.

Councillor Anita Harrison’s last appeal for volunteers: She is asking for volunteers to help put up various tents/marquees on the North Brandholme Estate in Hull for the benefit of the many underprivileged children living there, this will all happen on the afternoon of Monday 31st October, (Halloween party), and it is for putting up only, others will be taking down, she is crying out for people to help and is appealing to all those active pensioners in this association with nothing better to do on this Monday afternoon, I’m sure there enough of us willing and able to help out, please give your names to **Gaz Coe** Tel: 01757 268188.

Matters arising:

Dave Stuart, (son of former troop Sergeant Ron, served 1950-60’s) approached this association for any veteran combatants willing to talk to children about their military experiences at their assemblies during the week around Armistice Day, (starting Monday the 7th November), delivery time approx. 8 min. For further details contact **Dave** on Tel: 01482 706307, Mob: 07706207969.

Association Ties:

The Chairman brought the much awaited association ties to this meeting at a cost of £16 each, a suggestion of a £10 subsidy on each tie taken from the association funds was proposed and accepted unanimously, therefore cost to each member of £6.

Vice Chairman's Comments:

THE ARNHEM PILGRIMAGE 2016

This year's pilgrimage numbered 33 people making the trip, and the overall consensus was very positive, especially amongst the first timers. The weather was kind throughout except on Saturday 17th were low cloud delayed the commemorative parachute drop which meant we had to miss the drop in preference for attending the service at the Engineers Memorial at Driel, this is always a must, and this year was no exception. The depth of feeling generated by that much respected ex-headmasters account of the actions on that night of the 25/26th Sept 1944, combine this with the life storey of one of the Canadian Engineers KIA during the evacuation of that Oosterbeek pocket by two young girls, who researched and delivered impeccably, in both Dutch & English respectively, "just shadows and whispers in the night"

Charlie McColgan (ex 9Sqn) and his easy rider motorbike mates took care of the national flags around the memorial during the proceedings, and the music was delivered on pipes and drums. A wreath was laid by **Frank Pougher & Brad Steele** on behalf of this association with not a dry eye to be seen amongst all.

Mission accomplished regarding our two friends and comrades **Colin Bowden & Bill Dick** whose ashes nourish the sacred ground around the memorial at Ginkel Heath. Plaques dedicated to both men were fixed to the flag poles surrounding the memorial topped off with a single malt by **Nick Bowden & Brad Steele** (on behalf of son). This poignant gesture of remembrance was initiated by **Pete Robson**, evolved entirely from within his inner self, "true friendship in action"



Photo: courtesy of **Tony Costello**

Frank Pougher & Brad Steele

Wreath at Driel

After breakfast on the Sunday Morning we packed our bags and made an early start in order to secure a good parking space, near the main gate for the Airborne Memorial Service at the Oosterbeek Cemetery. Again for everybody, especially the first timers this is a never to be forgotten experience. Before leaving the hotel we made time for a group photo in aid of the campaign for the release of Marine A, this was initiated by former Royal Marine Commando **Brad Steele**. All three services were represented on this photo and I do believe it went viral. We then started out on our journey back to Europort, stopping midway for a few hours at a beautiful little village called Goringchem for a most enjoyable de-briefing after the weekend.

I wish to thank you all for making this pilgrimage something special, all of you contributed in your own way and I know for some the trip was in an act of memorial, but for whatever your reasons for been there, I do hope it fulfilled your wishes. **Bill Drayton**.

Report on the trip to Colchester

On the 28th August 2016 Gaz Coe posted an appeal for someone to act as chaperon to Les Ranson who had been invited, as a Veteran of Operation Market Garden, to be a guest at Merville Barracks Colchester of the 2nd Battalion the Parachute Regiment. Having once served in the 2/3rd Bttn this appealed to me to offer my services which were duly accepted and on the morning of September 7th I drove through to Les's where we were to be picked up by a driver from the battalion. At 07.30 hrs a smart young Para drove his Vauxhall Astra into Les's yard. We put our overnight gear into the boot and we were off.

A63..M62..M18..A1M whizzed by. Me in the front passenger seat and Les in the rear. A short stop at the transport caff at Stubbington for a bacon samy and use of facilities, we were on our way again and duly arrived at the Officers Mess around noon. Welcomed by a lieutenant who told us to call him Jamie, we joined other veterans and the supporting friends and families in the Mess ante-room where drinks had been laid on. When everybody who had been invited were assembled we were taken in three mini buses to the Dakota Gate Guardian for a photo opportunity and then to an area where all the young soldiers demonstrated all the ordinance and equipment that they use. Les tried his hand with a heavy machine gun which fortunately wasn't loaded. Every body stood behind him, just in case. Back to the buses and this time to the Sergeants Mess and a welcome just as genuine and warm as the earlier one. A pint of Guinness for Les and a pint of coke for me £2. Can't be bad.

PRESENTATION. I very much regret that I didn't get the name of the lady involved but she presented a framed collection of her late husband's medals, together with a silver bowl to the Mess. The WO who received the presentation then gave her a large bouquet of flowers to loud applause. Bottles of Port were then presented to each of the Veterans, the number rank and name on the glass, (not a paper label) as well as the Para cap badge on the reverse.

We then all went into the Dining Hall and had a very tasty steak and kidney pie with chips and peas. Then back into the Mess for more drink and lamp swinging. Never had to buy another drink all night. the CO Lt Col Mann spent a lot of time listening to to Les's account of his experience of the battle and his subsequent captivity and time as a POW.

Eventually, Jamie took us both back to the Officer's Mess and our en-suite bedrooms. 07.00 hrs he again escorted us to the Officer's dining area and we both had a full English breakfast. Our driver of yesterday reappeared and with one quick stop at Grantham services we were back at Les's at noon. I then drove home, ran some photos into the computer then had a short kip.

I have written and posted a "thank you" letter to Lt Col Mann a copy of which will be placed in the Archives together with this report.

Tony Costello
10th September 2016

Parachute Regimental Association, 2016 Reunion at the Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry.

Les Ransom (Arnhem Vet), was invited to be the guest of Honour for the PRA, after a chance meeting with **Pete Thacker, (former Para Log Regt)**, in Oosterbeek during our recent Arnhem Pilgrimage. Addresses were exchanged and arrangements were made for **Les** plus companion **Tony Irwin** to be picked up and taken to the above hotel for them to be included in, and enjoy their annual reunion. This took place throughout Friday 30th Sept and Saturday 1st Oct. Both men were treated like royalty and of course **Les** stole the show with that razor sharp wit, brilliant sense of humour and recall, all a part of this very modest man. They must have been a 'hit' because they have been invited to next year's bash. **"Must keep taking them tablets"**

Arnhem Pilgrimage 14th - 18th September 2017

Places for next year's pilgrimage can be secured as from now, our Treasurer will bank your monies (£50 deposit), into the associations account, (you could consider spreading the full cost over the year if you wish), this also gives everybody, especially those still working the chance to make a commitment for next year's trip well in advance, no money, no place on the coach, it's the only way to guarantee your place for next year. The cut off point for finalisation, (pull out or full payment), will be the AGM May 2017. This will give the committee some idea on numbers for pricing purposes, the list will be closed when the coach is full. (Price for last year's trip was £285p/p).

Mick Addams former PSI at 299 has made contact with **Paul Sims** regarding his civilian occupation which enables him to offer help to ex-military personnel in their hour of need. **Paul** has agreed to be the go between and requests in confidence any inside knowledge of people suffering distress and/or hardship, this is a sensitive subject and respect for these people has to be paramount at all times. Tel: 07717887465 for **Paul**.

Dave Hines attended this meeting carrying arms full of 299 calendar's and fridge magnets manufactured in his own time and his own costs leaving instructions for members to take on a donation basis, this raised another substantial sum of money for association funds and yet again we have to thank him for his commitment.

Simbo's Bus Stops: 2 sent round this evening, winners were: **Chris Shillito and Nigel Sission**.

AEA Reunion/AGM: 4 members intend to travel down to Coventry as representatives of this association, if any more of you would like to attend its £65 p/p and early start on the 15th October, contact the committee.

With nothing more to discuss the Chairman closed the meeting by thanking everybody for turning out on this Friday evening.

Web site address: www.299association.com

Next Meeting: Will be held on 4th November 2016 at 20.00hrs in the "Minerva" Cooperation Pier, Hull.

Dates for your diary:

Palestine Veterans Association: a parade, (12noon) and service of Remembrance is to be held at Eden Camp, Malton on Saturday 15th October, the gates open at 10.00hrs and Standards will be paraded. For more details contact **Tony Costello** on Tel: 01482 632100. **"We are few in number and need the support" ALL WELCOME.**

AEA Reunion/AGM 2016: The Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry. From Friday 14th – Monday 17th October. All booking forms should be in by now!

Remembrance Sunday: 13th November 2016. Hull Cenotaph.

Arnhem Pilgrimage: Thursday 14th – Monday 18th September 2017. Places can be secured now with a deposit, see **Martin**.

