



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 6th October 2017. Back at the Minerva.

Members Present: M. Beardshaw, B. Bilton, G. Coe, N. Cooper, A. Costello, G. Crum, T. Cunningham, W. Drayton, A. Foster, R. Franklin, D. French, C. Ham, D. Harvey, D. Hines, A. Irwin, A. Lee, J. Mace, D. Meekin, K. Millington, F. Pougher, G. Ratten, K. Robinson, P. Robson, K. Russel, S. Saxby, C. Shillito, P. Sims, A. Stimpson, Mart. Tindle, C. Walker, T. Walker, A. Weldon, C. Wilcock.

Apologies: F. Gray, J. Duffy, J. Thompson, C. Gadd, J. C. Thompson, D. Ideson, M. Holdsworth, B. Steele, G. Beaumont, K. Blacker, J. Brooks, S. Hoyle, A. Kitching, M. Maddison, L. Ransom, D. Skolyes, L. Smith, D. Woollas.

Guests: Eileen Robinson.

Welcome and 'Roll Call'

The Chairman, **Chris Shillito** welcomed all present then opened the meeting by asking **Mike Beardshaw** to recite the verse known as THE EXHORATION from that ode of Remembrance; "For the Fallen" by **Laurence Binyon**.

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

Proposed by – **P. Robson**.

Seconded by – **F. Pougher**.

Treasure's Report:

Martin informed the meeting on our current financial status which still remains very healthy, he also wants you all to know that he is prepared to save your money in the association bank account for next year's Arnhem trip, as & when you want to put some away, this will guarantee your place on the trip with the option to pull out if things don't work out, he has several deposits already, the final price is not yet known, hope to have more information by the next meeting.

Correspondence:

Johnny Mace: message bd. 4/9/2017 "forwarded a message from **Eve Rands** that the collection for **Fred** was £361 destined for the cancer wards at Castle Hill Hospital. **Eve** once again thanked his comrades from 299 for their great support. Well done lads"

Dean Ideson: message bd.5/9/2017. "Thank you to those who gave their time to attend **Malcolm Roberts's** funeral yesterday. It was very much appreciated. **Malcolm's** family also asked me to pass on their regards and thank you for your attendance"

Short letter of thanks from **Eve Rands:** 6/9/2017 to 299 Association "I have just picked up your last email as the latest technology is not one of my specialities.

We, my family and my self, have drawn much comfort from knowing **Fred** had the respect of his comrades in 299, both during his service and after"

A tremendous thank you to all members of 299 Association who gave so generously"

Terry Cunningham: message bd. 8/9/2017. Health update on **Nev Smales** "I spoke with **Shelia** (wife) after our last meeting and **Nev** is picking up reasonably fast now that the surgeon sorted him out, after all the cock-up's, he almost made it home the day after his op, but blood pressure was low so had to stay in until it had stabilised for 24hrs, He has had food for the first time in days and has got the colour back in his cheeks, and is generally perking up in him-self, I will keep you all informed"

Dean Ideson: message bd.12/9/2017. "To all those going to Arnhem have a fab time. Sorry I can't be with you this year but it's my 50th on Sunday, so spending it with my family.

Look after **Les** lads & don't let him lead you astray. Have a great time & you RAF boys steady on the Sherry, we don't want you getting frisky with one another in your hotel rooms. Enjoy & all the best **Deano**.

Chris Shillito: message bd. 12/9/2017. "For those who know and served with **Alan Parks** 301 Troop, his wife **Kath** passed away on Sunday night after a very long illness, she was in a hospice for over 5 years, a very brave lady. The 299 Association sends their condolences to our old friend **Alan** at this very sad time.

Letter from the Communications Manager of the **YORKSHIRE AIR MUSEUM:** 13/9/2017 to the Secretary, Standard Bearers and Men of the 299 Association,

"Dear all, thank you once again for your fantastic support of our Allied Air Forces Memorial Day, which we greatly appreciate. Please find the following link to our Website Journal review of the occasion, which dose include some video clips. I do hope you enjoy this. Next year's event, marking the Centenary of the formation of the Royal Air Force, and of course the general Commemoration of the Service of all the Armed Forces in the cause of freedom from tyranny over many campaigns, will take place on Sunday 2nd September 2018, so we hope that you will mark this date in your diaries and support us once again.

<http://yorkshireairmuseum.org/latest-news/allied-air-forces-memorial-day-2017/> (Press the Ctrl key and Click on the link)

I hope you enjoy this and Best regards.

Ian Richardson"

N/B: For those amongst you without the facility to view this link please make every effort to do so by using friends and/or family to help, it's well worth a look and you are all in there, on the video, plus group photo, almost famous.

John Lee, (President AEA): e-mail 14/9/2017, regarding the Gala Dinner at the AGM in Hull, "Gents, I have just received the following information from **Craig Gadd** who is the main organiser. The critical point is the cut-off date for those required to book and could I ask you to remind any of your members who wish to go but have not yet made any reservations to do so ASAP please.

Can book accommodation direct with the hotel via debit card through Sam or Tyler on 01482 325087.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the AGM and the Dinner. Regards **John"**

Dave Rutter, (AEA Journal editor): e-mail regarding Journal subscription 19/9/2017, "to those who received a subscription reminder in their June edition for payment to be forwarded to me by 1st October, that there are approx. 50 still unpaid. I'm away on holiday 1st – 25th October and any outstanding payments after this date will mean removing their names from the mailing list. Have also put a message on the AEA website. Your assistance in this matter would be appreciated"

John Lee: email, 20/9/2017, "Gents, I am pleased to say the AEA Car Badges have now been delivered and will be available at the AGM next month. I understand that some branch members have expressed an interest in these and I am asking you if you would be kind enough to firm up on those members who require them from your branch and let me know so I can bring them up to Hull. Payment should be made on the day and this way saves on postage, as **Dave Rutter** will not unfortunately be attending the weekend I will be handling the sale of the badges.
The price has been set at £12.50 per badge plus postage. After the AGM badges will be available through the association shop as per normal.

Regards **John**"

Tony Costello: Message bd.26/9/2017. "Interesting article in today's issue of the Radio Times on the Aden conflict. See you on Oct. 6th. TC"

Forwarded e-mail from Gilbert Nicol, regarding Frank Murray: 28/9/2017. "I have just been informed that one of our members, **Frank Murray**, has passed away. He had a sudden heart attack on Tuesday 26th Sept. 2017 and did not recover. **Frank** had been an officer in Troop, 300 Squadron, 131 Para Engineers during the 60's. He was a staunch supporter of AEA Scotland and attended every function that he was able to attend. He is a former Chairman of our branch and will be sorely missed.
Would you guys please be so kind as to inform our fellow members south of the border about this sad occurrence. Once details are finalised for the funeral I will pass them on.

Regards **Gil Nicol**" (Sec. Scottish Branch of the AEA).

Johnny Mace: message bd. 30/9/2017. "Hi Gents, with regret another comrade has passed away in Australia, **Mally Scott** he served in 299 from mid-1950's to early 60's. Our thoughts go out to his family in OZ, **RIP. MALLY**"

Gaddy: message bd, 1/10/2017. "Guys the AEA dinner that we are hosting at the Royal Hotel is fast approaching and so is the deadline to get your names down, if you want to attend then please contact me ASAP as the deadline is Friday 6th, (meeting night), unfortunately I won't be at the meeting as it's my father's birthday. So I'll see you at the dinner or the next meeting in November. **Gaddy Mb: 07974086591**"

Simbo: message bd. 3/10/2017. Hi lads, we are proposing to hold a raffle at the AEA Dinner. So we are looking for prizes. If anyone would like to donate a prize, could you please bring it to the next meeting, (this Friday), or you could bring it on the night.

Telephone conversation with **Bud Oldfield:** 5/10/2017. Update on **Nev. Smales** who is doing great considering the state he was in, put some weight back on and is out of hospital, the medics are hoping to have him fit enough for surgery on the Gall Stones, (original problem), within the next couple of weeks. He thanks you all for the card, it chuffed him up no-end. **Bud's** back fighting fit and ready to take on all comers, the new hip is supersonic, better than the real thing, & faster. **Big John Davis** is now in his middle to late 80's but hanging in there, **Bud** gets round on a regular basis for a bit of company, keeping things alright. We wish the Donny lads well.

Social Calendar: AEA Dinner at 19.00hrs for 19.30hrs seated, on the 21/10/2017 at the Britania Royal Hotel, Ferensway, Hull

Chairman's Comments: Chris Shillito

Great day out at the Yorkshire Air Museum for their Memorial Day on the 3rd September with 13 association men, including Arnhem Vet. **Les Ransom** attending, with 2 Standards paraded, also some of your family & friends enjoying the occasion, the weather was set fair and your attendance was welcomed in front of a large appreciative crowd, so much so that the management have asked for your participation in next year's event which will be on a much grander scale due to the Centenary Anniversary of the formation of the RAF. I would like to thank all you men for making the effort, but especially our Standard Bearers: **Tony Irwin & Arthur Stimpson** who played a major role in the march past & service, well done lads.

While I'm on the 'thank you theme' it was good to see the response from this association for **Deano's** old friend's funeral, ex Royal Marine **Malcolm Roberts**, after his family had requested a military presence, if possible, **Tony Irwin** carried for us, and also organised the full CESA detachment from within the Hull area, 'Last Post & all' Thanks again to the 8 members who gave their time so freely.

I have had a request from **Councillor Anita Harrison** for volunteers to help again in the construction of her projects for the under privileged children of the North Brandsholme Estate in Hull, those who helped last year know the ropes, it's at the same site as last years; The Ash Plantation, if any of you can spare a few hours for the first event which is the "Halloween" experience on the 31st Oct, followed by "Santa's Grotto" later in the year, (date for this one to follow), for directions and more info contact Gaz Coe on Tel: 01757 268188, if interested please let me know ASAP, she would be grateful for any help.

Mike (Ozzy) Holdsworth wants me to thank all the 299 men on the last Arnhem Pilgrimage for their company and kindness throughout the trip, he enjoyed the experience immensely. He has enclosed a pro forma for the Birmingham Branch Christmas party and the Secretary has send this out to everybody separately from the minutes. Those of you not on the computer let me know if interested.

We have to thank **Ozzy** for the many Arnhem photos sent to us on a disk via **Simbo**, our web master **Dave Hines** is sorting and storing before sending on to our Archives.

Howard Leake has found photos of an exercise in Libya around late 60's, he has managed to put them on a disk and sent them to the Secretary who will try and find more info and report at a later date, a big thanks to **Howard**.

The 299 Squadron coasters are been replaced and **Capt. J. C. Thompson**, CO 1 Troop is selling the old ones at £2 per place mat with the cash raised going into the Squadron funds, if interested contact me on Mb: 07877277288 or Tel: 01482 806690.

The Chairman invited **Major C. Wilcock** (function organizer), to give a run down on the preparations for the AEA Dinner on the 21st of this month everything is on track with over 100 expected for the meal, timings: 19.00hrs to be seated by 1930hrs. The AGM is to commence at 9.00hrs the same day, as requested by the President of the AEA.

Items from members: **Tony Costello** ex 6th Division Para Regt, Intelligence Corps, Palestine Veteran and a member of 299 Association, (amongst many), presented this script for inclusion into the minutes. This is part page 4 of the 18 page Annual Newsletter of the PVA, (Palestine Veterans Association).

National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire – Sat, 20th May 2017.

On arrival, I was surprised to note that the over flow carpark that we have had to use on our last few visits was very quiet.

I mentioned in last year's newsletter that the NMA was undergoing a multi-million pound expansion and redevelopment in order to cope with the annually increasing numbers of visitors that it now receives. I was interested to see the development which has improved the ability of the centre to accommodate the growing numbers.

Making my way down to the area where the PVA and Palestine Police Memorials and benches are located, it was good to see the area was looking tidy, and the copse of Mediterranean trees and shrubs occupying the area behind the memorials are now well established, (they also provided useful cover when a passing rain shower decided to try and put a damper on our gathering shortly before 13.00hrs). Fortunately the shower passed and a very small 'band of brothers' approximately 12 veteran members and 35 family and friends gathered around the memorial to pay our respects to comrades and friends. We were pleased to welcome back **Adrian Harper** to sound the Last Post and Reveille before wreaths were laid.

We were also pleased to welcome **Tony Carter**, Yorkshire Regional Secretary of the Intelligence Corps Association, and a group of veterans from 299 Association Royal Engineers who member **Tony Costello** had travelled down with from their home town of Hull.

Our association has a debt of gratitude to 299 Association as their Standard Bearer, when not carrying their own Standard, carries our Standard. When both Standards are paraded, (as they were at the NMA), then another 299 man undertakes the role. **Tony** had provided the members of 299 with a bit of information about their, (Airborne Engineers) involvement in Palestine during their journey down to the Arboretum.

Info: The early days of the Field Service Companies (RE) came under the command of the Palestine Work Services. There were at that time no Airborne RE units. Following the end of WW2, the 6th Airborne Division was posted to Palestine in September 1945, consisting in part of the 1st, 3rd and 9th Airborne Squadrons and 147, 249 and 286 Airborne Park Squadrons.

Non-airborne RE Field Service Companies came under the command of Middle East Land Forces. Between September 1945 and April 1948 when the mandate ended and the British forces withdrew, 45 Royal Engineers had been killed during this period.

Web site address: www.299association.com

Simbo's Bus stop: one winner this month **Keith Robinson**.

Next Meeting: Friday the 3rd November 2017, 20.00hrs at the Minerva on Corporation Pier, Hull.

Dates for your diary:

The AEA Reunion/AGM to be held at THE BRITANNIA ROYAL HOTEL, FERENSWAY, HULL, HU1 3UF, over the weekend Friday the 20th to Monday the 23rd October 2017, a room has been booked for the AGM.

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 2017.

ADEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION: 50th Anniversary Commemoration Parade and Service – York Minster at 14.00hrs on Wednesday 29th November 2017, for further info talk to the Tony Irwin.

299 ASSOCIATIONS ARNHEM PILGRIMAGE 2017

The gathering: people moving in to the Hull area from all over the country on Thursday 14th September with the one aim of catching the P&O North Sea sailing from Hull to Zeebrugge at 18.00hrs. **Jonno Palmer's** public house, The Ship Inn at Dunswell did a roaring trade in steak pie dinners washed down with some of his finest, the last we'd taste over the next few days before descending on to that chemical excuse for a beer served up in the Netherlands. The Ship Inn was the main pickup point for this year's large group, with the rest of the lads making their own way to the 'Riverside Terminal' on King George Dock in Hull, under their own steam, trying not to look like an asylum seeker.

The whole procedure for getting on to the ferry goes something like this; the coach is given a slot, (position in the ship) and has to be loaded in that said order, if you miss your slot, you miss the boat, it's as simple as that, the coach with all its passengers on board has to go through the custom shed for clearance, after that, the passengers disembark the coach and board the ferry on foot. It's the reverse of this on the way back, therefore anybody working on 'Zulu' time is likely to cause a few problems, there is 'now' a booking clerk at the Hull terminal that 'hates me' I'm definitely off her Christmas card list, never the less, we all made the sailing and that's what counts, none the worst for a few bollockings.

34 on the trip this year, picking up another 2 over in Holland, probably the biggest group so far with quite a few first timers. The 299 group made full use of the ships facilities as per usual, but still did not manage to get our Arnhem Veteran **Les Ransom** to bed before midnight, but thankfully he did not turn into a pumpkin, although, he "over did it with the Sherry"

Again this year, all three of the armed forces were represented amongst our group, as well as serving and retired police officers, also friends and family of 299, I have got to mention that all-time great character and friend of 299 **Mike (Ozzy) Holdsworth** from the Birmingham Branch of the AEA, who jumped on to the trip because of a last minute cancellation due to illness, and took up the role as the trips photographer and tireless PR man. He was lucky enough to share rooms with **Ray Franklin** who set about teaching him how to speak proper English, (a countrified Yorkshire dialect), none of that 'Brummie' lingo, this produced interesting results with Ozzy..! What's a Coggy Boat? I heard him say.

Move to Oosterbeek: On Friday 15th September, after our driver (**Peter**) introduced himself, spelling out his rules & regulations regarding his coach, but forgetting to tell us all that some 'drive shaft union joint' (I think), was past its best, and this produced a terrible knocking sound when he was changing his gears, you have to remember that traveling on this coach we have men that have spent a life time as HGV drivers, **Ray Franklin & Les Ransom** for example, who wanted to sort the problem out at the road side, immediately, as done in the old days. The rest of the lads solved the problem by singing loud enough to drown out the noise, helped along with liberal amounts of refreshments. Other than the odd 'splash & dash' stop we arrived at the Schoonoord Pub & Restaurant in Oosterbeek just in time for a spot of lunch and light refreshment..!

N/B: The Schoonoord had been a Field Dressing Station during the Battle for Arnhem and has since become a favourite watering hole for all Airborne Forces.

Many of the party made their annual visit to the Hartenstein Hotel (Museum), also looking up the various sights in Oosterbeek, and there are many, especially for the first timers. After a full afternoon we all rendezvous at the coach to be taken to our hotel in Doorwerth, where, after a small mix up with luggage we were joined by **Lee (Big Bird) Mapplebeck ex RAF Regt & John (Willy) Harrison ex 299 Squadron** who had travelled independently, and it was good to see them both again. We all enjoyed a dinner together that evening with a few hardy souls venturing out after the meal looking for the bright lights.

Commemoration para drop: Up early on this Saturday 16th September, but unfortunately I missed the morning run around the extensive hotel grounds with **Kev Blacker & Lee Smith**, just a simple mix up with timings, (that dammed Zulu again). This was a damp, drizzly morning with bags of low cloud and it was not looking good for parachuting, but straight after breakfast we were on to the coach heading for Ginkle Heath at Ede, the DZ used back in 1944. The Service & Wreath laying went ahead at the memorial as always, the many memorabilia stalls seem to grow by the year. Eventually the cloud lifted thus allowing the parachuting to commence, it was very noticeable that there was no British involvement this year, perhaps we need a whip round..! The rain fell steadily throughout the day, driving most of our party under cover in the 'Big Cockrill Bar' across the road, I believe it was at this point it was decided by **John Thompson, (Tommo)**, to send a video recording of us all singing 'Happy Birthday' to **Deano** for his 50th back in the UK, apparently he was delighted..!

About 13.00hrs we headed back to our hotel for a rest, wash & brush up, and to get all toggged up for the Ceremonials pending at the Engineers memorial, sited at the Driel cross roads, and due to commence at 17.00hrs.

Every year the congregation for this service gets bigger than the last, **Charlie McGolgan** and his Airborne Rough Riders were present in big numbers, also many dignitaries, including a Canadian representation, not forgetting **Syd Hoyle & Paddy Denning**, the whole place was packed out with many locals adding to the numbers, 10 years ago you would be lucky to get 20 people in attendance. I believe its popularity is due to the feeling the 'old School master' manages to generate into the service, of course he bore witness to the proceedings as a small boy back in 1944. Age seems to be wearing the old man

down, a big difference observed from last year, he used his young trainee for most of the service, but still managed to pull it off. The Wreath laying took place with 2 of our ex Commando's doing the business for 299, also the Eulogy of a young Engineer Officer killed in this action was read out by a local school girl, the Dutch children are brought up to know exactly what went on in 1944, every one of them is an expert, perhaps this is a product of this county's occupation during WW2, remember, lessons learnt the hard way are never forgotten.



Courtesy M. Holdsworth

Engineers Memorial at Driel

Lee Smith

Kev Blacker

After the service we boarded the coach for our hotel, but 2 men were missing **Jonno Palmer & Chris Dunn**, without a word to anybody **Jonno** had dived into the Lower Rhine, (Niesderrign), and swam the river, **Chris** took care of his cloths and boarded the ferry that was just leaving and was not charged a 'penny' for his crossing, because of the entertainment value provided for the rest of the ferry passengers, "not something they'd see every day" **Jonno** climbed out on the other side to much applause from all who witnessed it. Now that is not a bad effort for a Pub Landlord..!

On Saturday night people did their own thing, but for those of us who stayed in the hotel for a meal, witnessed a performance that has to be classed as second to none, after the meal, **Tony Weldon (Weldo)** entertained all un-sundry to a unique performance of his own making, based on his many years of military service, 40+ years, those of us that had severed with him recognised some of his material, but nobody could put it together like him, as for the first timers, he had many of them rolling on the floor with laughter. He would, in his service days, lose his stripes on a regular basis, well before Velcro was invented, we used to view demotion as a badge of honour, he also experienced an Army medical that should have been recorded, just a couple of the topics used. 'He should have been put on the stage many years ago, even, if only to sweep it' Well done **Weldo**.

Sunday 17th Sept. unfortunately there was no time for the run this morning. All cases packed and onto the coach for an early getaway, ensuring a prime parking spot at the Cemetery, also time for people to look around before the crowds gather, Arnhem Vet. **Les Ransom** likes to visit the graves of some of his old pals, something he now dose every year with the 299 Association, where he is one of our treasured associate members, although his act of remembrance always brings him close to tears, time has done nothing to diminish his feelings.

A volunteer was asked for to accompany **Les** throughout the Service and **Craig Heppenstall** stepped forward, a young serving 299 Squadron man from Wakefield acted as his escort. **Les** never wants to sit with the other Arnhem Veterans, (not his thing to be classed as special), and always chooses to sit with the main congregation, he gives his reasons as; "it's for a quick getaway, just in case"...? I always leave it at that.

The service & wreath laying at the Sword of Sacrifice monument proceeded in the usual way with the flower children from the many schools in the area taking up their positions at every grave, this always tugs at the heart strings. The occasion proved too much for some of the children with a number of them fainting. This problem may be aggravated by the length of the service which has note ably increased over the last few years, because of the linguistic duality of the service both in English & Dutch, any normal service would take twice as long, add to this people who wish to make this service all about their own personal performance, and it becomes a problem.

As the service came to its conclusion we were all treat to a flypast by 2 WW2 aircraft; an Anson & and a Dakota, this was warmly appreciated with applause from the crowd.

A spontaneous applause rippled through the crowd as **Les** accompanied by **Craig, (Heppy)**, was spotted following the Clergy and dignitaries out of the Cemetery, in their bid to get a quick getaway, this did cause **Les** some embarrassment, but only emphasised the respect that we all have for this dwindling group of men that gave everything they had at Arnhem and set the standard for the rest of us to follow.



Courtesy Chris Shillito

Les Ransom

Craig Heppenstall

We left the Cemetery heading back towards Ede for the Ginkle Heath memorial which is the final resting place for some of our old friends from 299. Travelling with our group was **Nick Bowden, son of Colin** who left us in 2014, his ashes were parachuted in by 299 Squadron and dispersed in front of this memorial. We all showed our respects to **Col** and the other 299 men, and left **Nick** having a drink with his dad.

Back on the coach and on the road to Euro port, Rotterdam, after much discussion it was decided to make a debriefing stop at the small town of Gorinchem, 45mins out of Euro port, we enjoyed brilliant sunshine in the Medieval square of this small market town, which was packed with people occupying the many bars & restaurants, a great way to spend our last few hours in Holland.

The ferry trip back to the UK is always a time for reflection on just how fortunate we are to be amongst friends, some of these friendships go back over 50 years or more and are as strong now as they have ever been. The 299 Association prides its self in fostering the comradeship gained whilst serving with 299 and we willingly share this gift with our families & friends. G. Coe.



Courtesy M. Holdsworth

Most of the 299 Group at the Sword of Sacrifice

Oosterbeek War Cemetery