



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 associations.

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

Date: Friday 4th October 2019 at the 'Minerva'

Members Present: M. Beardshaw, B. Bilton, K. Blacker, J. Brooks, N. Cooper, A. Costello, T. Cunningham, C. Duggan, R. Franklin, D. French, C. Gadd, D. Harvey, D. Hines, A. Irwin, T. James, P. Jefferson, J. Mace, R. Meachen, K. Millington, F. Pougher, L. Ransom, G. Ratten, P. Robson, C. Shillito, P. Sims, L. Smith, B. Steele, A. Thomas, Ma. Tindle, C. Walker, T. Walker, A. Weldon, C. Wilcock, P. Wolstenholme, D. Woollas.

Apologies: C. Coe, A. Foster, F. Gray, A. Homan, S. Hoyle, M. Maddison, P. Robinson.

Guests: E. Robinson, B. Bridges.

Welcome and 'Roll Call'

The Chairman **Chris Shilito** welcomed all present then opened the meeting by asking Terry Walker to recite the Exhortation from "To the Fallen" by Lawrence Binyon followed by a minute's silence.

Thus reminding us all that we lost our friend and comrade in arms **BIG BILL DRAYTON** on Thursday 26th September 2019, aged 73yrs, someone we can never forget, 30+ years' service with 299 in both Red & Green and known around the world, (you have to see the mail bag to believe it), everybody will have a story about this guy, he could never be ignored, he was not only a first class Royal Engineer, but a natural wit and comedian, a brilliant impersonator, who could forget his "Jamaican big bamboo" He was the finest singer of the first line of any song that I've ever met, and a real personality, bit of a one off who will live with some of us for ever.

Billy reached the rank of Staffy whilst serving, something he was very proud of, and rightly so, he was the current Vice Chairman of this association and served on this committee for almost 6 years, taking on the role of Chairman early 2014, at a time of turbulence within this association, where his courage and honesty was needed to steady the "ship" He was respected by everybody, especially by those bearing bad will and deceit.

He retired from the local council aged 65 years where he had worked as a groundsman and this allowed him to put more time into his racing pigeons, he had a flair for breeding winners and was a bit of an expert in this field. We now have to manage without him, and he will be missed, another thoroughly honest and decent 299 man gone forever. **RIP.**

BILL DRAYTON'S FUNERAL will take place at Chanterlands Avenue Crematorium (HU5 4EF) at the large Chapel on Monday 14th October at 14:30hrs.

Dress: Blazer, berets Tie & Medals. **Bill's** family have requested that the association provides a formal military presence. Please try to be there for 14:00 hrs to give ample time to organise lining the route.

The wake will follow the service at the Hull and East Riding Sports Club, Chanterlands Ave, Hull HU5 4ED.

Keep your eye on the 299 notice board and 299 Facebook page for further information.

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

Proposed by – C. Gadd

Seconded by – D. Hines

Treasure's Report: **Glenn** brought the meeting up to date with the association's financial state, which remains in a healthy.

Relevant correspondence:

Dean Ideson, message bd, 10/9 2019. If anyone is interested in getting their original medals mounted or want miniatures then please contact my friend below and mention me. It's a chap who works for the police and his dad is ex 299.

He's put my originals in a glass case which looks really good and provided me with miniatures. He can also get you duplicates for your blazer so you're your originals can be left at home.

Des Buck Medals, mounting & framing service, call Mark Desforges on Mb: 07947598639.

Carl Ham, message bd. 23/9/2019. Just a big thanks to all for a great weekend (again) a special mention to **Chris Shillito & Gary Coe** for their "shepherding skills" this weekend. This trip takes a lot of time & effort to sort out so our thanks go to **Gary & Shags** for organising the weekend.

Dean Ideson, message bd. 23/9/2019. I would like to echo the sentiments of **Carlos**.

Great weekend had by all and a massive thanks to **Chris, Gary & Glenn** for all your hard work to make a great weekend away, work so well and run smoothly.

On a personal note I had a fab time away with you all so thank you. Look forward to seeing you all soon.

MEMO: As you can imagine I have been inundated with messages of sympathy regarding the death of Bill, far too many for me to display in these minutes, I have spoken to his wife Dorri and we have agreed for me to print them off to give them to her for reading when she is able, please rest assured, your words of condolence will not go amiss, and on behalf of Bill's family I would like thank you all for your kind words.

Chairman's Comments:

Chris opened up by thanking **Brad Steele** for stepping into the Secretary's shoes for this meeting whilst **Gaz Coe** is away on his 'jollies'

A few people need to be thanked regarding the Arnhem trip this year, two days before leaving for Holland **Jamie Ransom (Les's son)** had to cry off, thus leaving **Les** without a personal chaperone, **Stewart Saxby** stepped up to the mark and agreed to room with **Les** helping him with his dailies, and he has to be thanked, not only by the association but by **Les** himself. **Les**, like all our members are under the care and responsibility of those running these association trips.

Bill Dick's son & grandson, Matt & Oliver Williams made their car available in getting **Les Ransom & Gaz Coe** to the reception on time at the Hartenstein Museum on the Saturday evening then hung around to enjoy the rest of the evening with **Les**. Without the help this reception for **Les** would not have happened, not a chance of a taxi with those crowds, therefore it's a big thankyou to **Matt**.

Thanks to **Gaddy** for supporting **Les** at the Cemetery, we know it was a struggle and it should not have been.

The following men have to be mentioned in despatches: **Jack Brooks, Bri. Bilton and Tony Irwin with 299 Standard**, all three attended the funeral of **Harry Cammack** a 97yr old 6th Div. man and Normandy Vet on Thursday 26th Sept. at All Saints in Hessle, after an appeal from the Chairman of Hull PRA. This poor man had nobody to bury him, uniformed men from 1 Para attended (Pall Bearers) along with other vets and gave him the send-off he deserved. You have to ask yourself "Would You Do It"?

Thanks to **Pete Robson** for standing in on the 299 Standard at Cromwell Lock on the 44th Anniversary.

Big thank you to **Dave Hines (Web Master)** who pulled all the stops out over the last few weeks on the association home page, he put the names of the Cromwell boys on a loop, also, after the death of **Billy** he paid tribute to him in his own special way, yours to view.

Matters arising: 44th Anniversary of the Cromwell Weir disaster of 28th Sept 1975.

A number of ex 131 men decided to mark this anniversary at the Monument site of Cromwell Lock.

Years of frustration arose because on previous years', Remembrance Service dates at the Lock were always selected at least one full week ahead of the disaster, and this date usually fell upon the Arnhem week end which was fine for those people not going to Holland, but this year being the 75th Anniversary and very well attended meant many are denied Cromwell Lock yet again.

Anybody can show their respects at the Lock site Monument at any time of the year, and they do, many people leave flowers and tributes, it therefore amazes me that some organizers choose a full week ahead of the disaster date to mark the remembrance of the 10 men killed, especially when there is no need to, and it almost always clashes with the biggest Airborne event in the past 25 years. Maybe not Airborne?

This year, just short of 50 men attended a Remembrance Service at the Lock, the service was led by the local Parish Clergy **Canon Mark Adams**, with **Lt Col (Ret) John Lee** setting the scene by reading out the names of men killed, former **Capt. C. Shillito** presented the Airborne Prayer, and **Sgt C. Gadd** laid a wreath at the rock on behalf of the AEA. Ex **SSgt P. Sims** played the last post/reveille and standards were presented.

The comrades from this fateful exercise (Trent Chase 1975) were invited to make their way to the Weir side for a photo shoot for the Newark Advertiser and **Chris Shillito** threw a wreath into the Weir as a final act of Remembrance.

We all met up at the Muskem Ferry a couple of miles South of Cromwell for debriefing and a chance to reflect and renew many an old friendship.

2020 Association Trip – **Glenn Ratten** put the question to members present, “Would the association like to return to Arnhem or change the location for the 2020 Association trip?”

Members voted in favour of a change of location. **Dave Hines** has volunteered to gather details of a package for a Normandy trip to present to the members at the next meeting. A deposit at the next meeting will secure a place on the trip.

Tom James 1 Tp 299 Sqn, has invited 299 Association members to Middleton Barracks on 8th November for an evening to celebrate receiving the duplicate plaque created by Edmund Smyth for the Toscaig Bridge bridge 299 built Scotland.

Gerry Grindley will be hosting an event on 6th October to raise awareness for PTSD. The event will be at O'Reillys Beverly Rd HU3 1XR, starting at 14:30hrs and going on through in to the evening. There will be an afternoon and evening of live music including Oasis and Status Quo tribute bands to raise money to support veterans with Combat Stress. A worthy cause, support will be greatly appreciated. Tickets available on-line at, <https://www.skiddle.com/e/13614372>

Tony Irwin presented an improved design for the Association Wreath centre piece to association member present. A vote was held and members voted in favour of using this new design in future for 299 Association wreaths.

Chris Wilcock expressed this thanks and appreciation to the committee for their continued hard work. Especially for the successful Arnhem trip which presented more challenges than normal due to large numbers of members on the trip and congestion around Arnhem with it being the 75th anniversary year.

Chris would also like to let the association know that **Tony Windass** is not well at the moment, as is Simon Martin who will be having surgery next week.

Tony Costello brought in a large collection of military books for members to buy if anything took their fancy. **Tony** raised £20 and generously donated all proceeds to the association. Well done Tony.

Items from members: 299's Arnhem Pilgrimage 2019, 75th Anniversary.

This year's trip attracted 57 people on the coach joined by 4 more making their own way into Holland to join the group. Four brave individuals took up a push biking challenge, riding from Euro-port to the hotel at Doorwerth, Arnhem, some 90 miles. **Andy Green, Carl Ham and Terry Walker** on conventional bikes, but **Chris Wilcock** did the challenge on an old fold up Para bike, WW2 style, and it cost him dear, liberal amounts of liniment required, but a brilliant all round effort by all.

The coach made its way to Nijmegen for a welcome back to Holland drink on this sunny Friday afternoon whilst our hotel was prepared to accept us all. A small group (4) left the coach on-route to rendezvous with **Ed van der laan, (Arnhem Commemoration organizer)**, leading these few was that ever popular and much in demand **Les Ransom** that 97yr old Arnhem Vet, they were taken to the **King William 111** barracks in Apeldoorn for a Commemoration Service and reception. **Les** took his chance to present the Officer Commanding the barracks with a 299 Association plaque, and this was accepted with thanks.

After a light lunch **Les** was taken to **Col. G. Warrack's** museum, head surgeon in 1944, at the former Airborne Military Hospital, where **Les** presented **Ed van der laan** with a framed portrait photo taken of him during the war, also a **Ransom Army** tee shirt.

Back to the hotel just in time for a 299 group photo, followed by Dinner, with around 70 attending, after being joined by the men from Birmingham AEA & others, **Chris Shillito** delivered the Airborne Prayer followed by a toast to absent friends.

Saturday 21st Sept. Ginkel Heath for the parachuting, **Les Ransom** is invited for talks and his presence required for mixing with royalty. Makes no difference to **Les**, everybody receives upmost respect at all times, what you see is what you get. Unfortunately 299 could not make the Royal Engineer Memorial at Driel for the service, because of the sheer numbers of traffic & people. This gave a free afternoon for all.

This afternoon; **Les** was captured by some **Times** reporters looking for a Vet, they got him into the Glider fuselage for photo op's, all happened on Oosterbeek Green, with his story published the following day. **Les** had also received an invitation to attend a reception at the Hartenstein Museum from the UK Ambassador to Holland & CO Lt Gen. Para. Regt on Saturday evening, he attended the event, but as I suspected it had nothing at all to do with the veterans and everything to do with the VIP's and their hanger-on-er's, needless to say we escaped at the first opportunity, and did something useful and a dammed site more enjoyable. **Les** is at his best talking to the people, he describes himself as "just an ordinary carrot cruncher from the East Ridings of Yorkshire"

Sunday morning up early, coach packed, leaving the hotel for good, in an attempt to make the Service of Commemoration at the Cemetery, (the laying on of flowers by the local children). The roads were packed, also thousands of bicycles, it was slow going, but we got through, thanks to the correct paper work and passes supplied by **Ed van der laan**. Everybody struggled to get in the Cemetery before the gates were shut, **Les** was allocated 2 seats for this service, he was chaperoned by **Craig Gadd**, a 299 amputee & Afghanistan Vet but seating was not forth coming, not even for a 97 year old Arnhem Vet, the day was saved by a couple of true patriots donating their own seats. This service gets longer by the year, this year the children started fainting because they had been stood for too long, and the service over ran the vintage aircraft fly past, which rather spoilt the proceedings, a case of service participants over playing their parts, possibly now, the wrong priorities are in place...!

The drive back to Euro port was helped along by our Chairman leading the singing only to be interrupted by the annual stop off at Gorinchem for a bite & drink, the weather was perfect and the market square looked its best, this was a fitting finish to a full and enjoyable trip. **G. Coe**

Simbos Bus Stop Winner: - J. Mace

Web site address: www.299association.com

Next Meeting: Friday 1st November 2019 at 20:00hrs in the `Minerva`

If you wish to donate prizes for the Remembrance Day Raffle, please bring them with you to the 1st November meeting. All items gratefully received.

WITH NOTHING MORE TO DISCUSS THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING THANKING ALL FOR THEIR ATTENDANCE

Dates for your diary:

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 10TH NOV. 2019, muster 10:00hrs in the car park behind St. Stephen's shopping Centre, Hull.

Dress for parade & service at the Cenotaph.

1 Troop 299 Squadron are parading in Hull this year and will be sharing the buffet at the Minerva with the association.

CONTACTS:

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WELFARE:

The veterans Hub & Forum, coordinator Callum Day for all your problems

Address: Goodwin Community Hub, Anlaby Road, Hull. HU3 2LL, (opposite the `Tigers Lair`).

Tel: 01482 485958, email: veteranshub@goodwintrust.org