

The Royal Engineers Association



PATRON: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

Secretary:

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“SERVICE - NOT SELF”

BOMB DISPOSAL BRANCH

BULLETIN ISSUE No 120

◆*SUMMER EDITION*◆

AUGUST 2004.

Dear Members and Friends

This year saw the 60th Anniversary Celebrations of the invasion of Normandy in 1944. I was on holiday in Spain and realising that I was going to be making my way up into France by car about that time, I was fortunate enough to witness some of the celebrations that were taking place in the area on June 5th and 6th. I managed to get into Bayeux on the 5th but to visit the city on the 6th was impossible. The Gendarmerie had closed off all of the roads leading to Bayeux. We managed to get to Bressin Port which lies midway between the beaches. There was a splendid display of Tank and Infantry Landing Craft (not the originals I hasten to add). It was fabulous weather and it couldn't have been a better day for this happening. Our now elderly veterans were blessed with this much better weather than they experienced 60 years ago. You couldn't help noticing they were all proudly wearing their campaign medals as they sat outside the cafes alfresco style smiling and no doubt reminiscing about those dark days, which happened sixty years ago. The restaurants and cafes were playing the Glenn Miller music of that era just to add a touch more nostalgia. It's nice to know it's still around! The entire house's in the towns and the towns themselves for miles around were decorated with the flags of all nations that took part in the Liberation. Sadly this will be the last visit for some of them. I suppose the French authorities were quite correct in limiting the number of veterans attending for safety reasons but it struck me as rather amusing as reading through the newsletter I received from our good friend Bill Glover who is the Chairman of the REA Swansea Branch. In it he has included an article from a National newspaper dated 9th February 2004 which is headed, 'D-Day veterans face beaches ban'. I will not quote the whole article but briefly. The French claim that numbers of Veterans attending must be limited due to the health and safety issues involved in getting hundreds of old soldiers down steep paths to the sands. There is more said in this article but the bottom line is, Mr Patrick Mercer who is an opposition home security MP says "It's a good job the French didn't restrict which beaches our men could go on in 1944. If they had, the French would still be under Nazi rule!". I thought that was rather an apt evaluation of the situation! However, there are several Anniversary dates taking place from this month onwards such as the Liberation of Brussels in Belgium, Ypres, Italy South, Arnhem and they carry on into 2005. There were some earlier events but unfortunately and once again, the notification arrived too late to include in our previous Bulletin. However, If you wish to find out more about these tours, contact **Remembrance Travel on 01622 791939 or 01622 716729**. All of these tours come under the heading of 'Heroes Return'. Did any of you attend this earlier D-Day Veteran's Commemoration Services? It would be nice to seek the opinions if any of you who made the pilgrimage to France in June. I myself was too young to have been involved! In April, I did a tour of the First World War Battle Areas around Ypres, Passchendaele and Arras etc which I can only say was most nostalgic, fascinating and a little sad. Having said that, I can thoroughly recommend the tour. It gives one a great deal of satisfaction to know that you've visited these places that will remain in our history chronicles for many years to come. In May, we also commemorated the 26 Brave lads who died on the Norfolk beaches clearing our own B-type-C anti-tank mines between the years 1943 and 1953. A more detailed report on this event you may read later through this Bulletin.

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IN MEMORIAM:

It is with deep regret, I have to inform you of the passing of the following members.

BUTCHER: Brian Derek. Of Carshalton Surrey died at his home in the early hours of Thursday 26th February 2004. It is suspected that Brian had a heart attack. He served with No1 Troop 1952 - 1954 and then with No 2 at Horsham 'til 1957 having attained the rank of Sergeant. The Troop covered Southend Essex, Wetwang Yorkshire, and Elgin in Scotland. He also served with the Airborne Engineers in Palestine and Korea. Brian was awarded the Korea Medal, U N Service Medal, and the LSGC Medal. He left the Army in 1962. His funeral Service was held at North East Surrey Crematorium Morden Surrey on the 15th March. Brian was 76 years of age. My thanks to Brian's brother Neil for phoning this sad news over to me. Any of our members who knew of Brian, should you wish to send a donation, you may make your cheque payable to either the British Heart Foundation or the Anthony Nolan Trust or the Royal Engineers Association Benevolence Fund. All cheques, would you please send them to **Mr Neil Butcher, 73, Barklands, Maresfield, East Sussex TN22 2HS.**

BOYSON: Arthur Frederick: of Sandwich, Kent died peacefully in the Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother Hospital Margate Kent on Friday 22nd August 2003. Arthur served with No 24 Bomb Disposal Company (dates unknown) and rose to the rank of Lance Sergeant. His funeral service was held at Woodness Bow Road Cemetery Sandwich Kent. The Normandy Veterans Association said farewell to Arthur by providing a Guard of Honour. He would have been 84 years of age in the September. My thanks to his daughter Mrs Friend for informing me of this sad news.

ROBINSON: Kenneth Hugh GM. of Mapperley, Nottinghamshire passed away peacefully on Tuesday 29th June 2004. Ken started his army career in the TA with the Royal Corps of Signals and in 1940 was posted to France with the BEF. He was eventually evacuated from Dunkirk. Having returned to 'Blighty' and after a short rest period, Ken was transferred to the Royal Engineers where he served with No 3 and No 5 Bomb Disposal Companies. He was awarded the George Medal in recognition of his bravery in Bomb Disposal Operations. Ken was cremated in Bramcote Crematorium Nottingham on Thursday 15th July 04. A Guard of Honour was formed as Ken's coffin entered the chapel. He was a dedicated member of the Dunkirk Veterans Association and their Association Standard was present along with the Standard of the Royal British Legion. The Branch was represented by myself Reg Journet (Secretary). WO1 (RSM) Andy Carnochan RE. represented 33 Engineer Regt (EOD) and Mr Noel Cashford MBE represented the Mundesley Landmine Memorial Committee. The REA Nottingham Branch was represented by Mrs Delma Matkin. Delma is a 'Friend of our Branch'. Her husband Richard was one of our dedicated members who sadly passed away six years ago. Wreath's were laid on behalf of 33 Engineer Regiment and the BD Branch. Ken leaves two children and four grandchildren sadly his wife Doris passed away three years ago.

The Branch Committee and the Royal Engineers Association send their sincere condolences to the bereaved families friends and relations

NEW MEMBERS:

We are pleased to extend a warm welcome to the new members listed below.

WILCOX: Cyril of Hornchurch Essex. Cyril served with No 2 HQ at Horsham. He served 12 years in the army and attained the rank of Sergeant.

WHYTE: Bryndon James George: of Great Lumley Co Durham joined the Branch in March this year. Bryndon served with No's 49 & 58 (EOD) RE. He served for 13 years having enlisted in September 1977 and left the army in June 1990 having risen to the rank of full Corporal.

GYMER: Henry; of Bognor Regis West Sussex. He joined the Branch in March of this year. Henry was called up for National Service March 1948 and left the army December 1950. He served with No 2 BDS and attained the rank of Lance Corporal.

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FARDOE: John Charles: of Loughborough, Leicestershire joined the Branch in March this year. John served with No 3 Bomb Disposal Company later to become No 1 BD Company.. He left the army in 1948 having attained the rank of Lance Corporal.

BARRAN: George William: of Sandhurst, Berkshire joined us in March of this year. George served with No1 Bomb Disposal Co. He enlisted in 1940 and was de-mobbed in 1946 having risen to the rank of Sergeant.

ASHWOOD: William Albert of Oldbury, West Midlands Joined the Branch in April this year. William served with No 9 Bomb Disposal Coy from 1940 'til 1941 at Harbourne Birmingham. He was involved in dealing with UXB's in the Birmingham and Coventry areas. After that period, William served with RE Field Company's covering Europe from 1941 until his demobilisation in 1948 having attained the rank of Corporal. He also served with the TA.

KERRY: James William of Hatfield, Doncaster, South Yorkshire joined us in April of this year. James enlisted in 1940 and served with No 17 Bomb Disposal Coy as well as seeing service in France, Germany and Palestine. James was discharged from the army in July 1946.

ROBINSON Richard Francis: of Radwinter Essex joined the Branch in June of this year.

KAVANAGH: Sean: of Gravesend, Kent joined the Branch in June this year. He served with 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD) 58 Squadron. Sean saw nine years with the Regiment and was discharged in 1994 having attained the rank of Lance Corporal.

Would members please note that in our Christmas Edition of the Bulletin **Mr Christopher Perry** of Croydon Surrey was included in our New Members list. This was entered in error. Until we receive the subscription for new members, we cannot enter them permanently into our Branch records. As we have not had any response since January, his application for membership to the Branch must be considered as null and void. Apologies for this error.

Once again welcome into the Branch.

BRANCH ANNUAL LUNCHEON 2004:

First of all, would members and friends please note that in the July/August publication of the Royal British Legion Magazine, there has been a misprint. The note states that our BD Unit is holding our lunch at the Union Jack Club!. As you are aware, we are not a BD Unit we are a BD Branch! We ask you all to ignore this 'write up' in the Legion Magazine (this entry is unknown to us) and to be guided by your official Bulletin information as written below.

We are pleased to inform you that once again we have set a date and time for our Annual Branch Luncheon this year. This will be held as is normal in the WO's and Sergeants Mess at Carver Barracks Wimbish Nr Saffron Walden Essex the Home of 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD). This is by kind permission of the C/O Lt Col Tony Troulan RE and WO1 (RSM) Andy Carnochan RE who will by that time have been commissioned to Captain. Our sincere congratulations to Andy. These two gentlemen and their ladies will both be in attendance along with our Guests of Honour Lt Col (Retd) Neil Jordan and his wife Pam. Mrs Beverley Booth and her husband will also be in attendance.. Beverley is the Curator of the Winston Churchill Britain at War Experience Museum in Tooley Street London. I am pleased to inform you that Lt Col Tony Troulan RE will also be our Guest Speaker along with Lt Col (Retd) Neil Jordan. There will also be representatives from the Norfolk Landmine Clearance Memorial Committee (Mundesley) in attendance. **The date set for the Luncheon is Saturday 23rd October 2004**

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Winston Churchill Britain at War Experience Museum in Tooley Street London. I am pleased to inform you that Lt Col Tony Troulan RE will also be our Guest Speaker along with Lt Col (Retd) Neil Jordan. There will also be representatives from the Norfolk Landmine Clearance Memorial Committee (Mundesley) in attendance. **The date set for the Luncheon is Saturday 23rd October 2004.** We request that Members and friends etc should assemble **in the WO's and Sergeants Mess at 11:45hrs** for the sit down lunch at 13:00.hrs. A suitable menu has been chosen and for starters we have **Roast Pepper and Tomato Soup served with Garlic Croutons and Prawn Salad served with Dill and Lime Dressing followed by Champagne Sorbet.** Our main meal comprises of **Braised Steak served on a bed of Caramelised Onions with New Minted Potatoes with a medley of Seasoned Vegetables.** This will be followed by desert of a **Brandy snap Basket with Fresh Cream and Exotic Fruit Salad.** There will be a **Cheese Board with Coffee and Mints.** Our Lunch will be complimented with **Wine and Traditional Decanted Port at the tables,** There will be the usual raffle taking place with several attractive prizes to be won. There will also be an auction of several signed football articles and other items of interest. Below, there is a confirmation form for member's etc attending the Lunch and for transport requirements. It is essential that you complete the form and send it to our Assistant Secretary Mr Gary Woodman-Simmons (address as below) enclosing your total remittance for the number of persons attending in your party (if applicable). Transport will be provided at the Union Jack Club Sandell Street, **Waterloo, London SE1 8UJ.** If you require transport, you should be at the Union Jack Club **no later than 10:00 am.** **Your confirmation form together with your remittance must reach us no later than Friday 1st October 2004**

ANNUAL BRANCH LUNCHEON ATTENDANCE SATURDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2004.

THIS IS TO CONFIRM MY / OUR ATTENDANCE AT THE BOMB DISPOSAL BRANCH ANNUAL LUNCHEON AT CARVER BARRACKS WIMBISH ON THE ABOVE DATE

Members Name: _____

Address: _____

Number of Persons and names of those Attending Inc Yourself :

I shall be requiring Vegetarian Meal/s No: _____

I do require Transport Yes / No ? How many Persons _____

I enclose my total remittance of £. _____

Please send this form complete with your remittance to Mr Gary Woodman-Simmons, 2 Sutton Close, Sutton Lane South, Chiswick, London W4 3JS in the enclosed envelope and PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHEQUE/S PAYABLE TO THE REA BOMB DISPOSAL BRANCH. The Committee does realise the difficulties some members may experience such as travelling etc but we would welcome your support at this lunch. Your efforts will be appreciated. If there is an article on the reverse side of this page that the confirmation form is printed on, and you want to save that page, then before you cut the form out, may I suggest that you take a copy of both sides. **The cost per head for the lunch is £24:** The good news is that the Lunch is being extensively subsidised by the Branch **both for members their partners, carers or friends by 50%.** **This means that the cost of the subsidised lunch for ALL is only, £12,** per person and I do repeat, **THIS IS FOR EVERYONE!!**

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We are looking forward to meeting as many of you there as possible. It will be a great day to meet your Branch Officers, Committee and those pals and friends whom we only get to meet once a year. Your President Colonel Archer (Archie) will also be in attendance. All monies raised from the raffle after expenses have been deducted, will be donated to the Branch Funds. **We must emphasise here that the capacity of the Mess will only accommodate 85 persons.**

BD BRANCH 56th AGM:

On Friday 19th March 2004, the Branch held its 56th AGM at Carver Barracks Wimbish. There were 10 members in attendance. Our President Col Archer (Archie) opened this AGM at 12:00 hrs by warmly welcoming those present. He then called upon the members present to stand and observe a few moments silence for those of our comrades both past and present who have paid the supreme sacrifice whilst engaged on Bomb Disposal Operations. Archie then suggested that the existing Officers should be proposed en-bloc if those existing Officers were still willing to stand for office. All these existing Officers showed their willingness to stand for office for a further year. Mr John Paul then proposed that they should be re-elected en-bloc the proposal was seconded by Mr Hugh Marshall. The Officers re-elected were: President Col B S T Archer GC., OBE., ERD, Chairman: Mr R F Harris, Hon Secretary/Bulletin Editor: Mr R L Journet, Assistant Secretary: Mr G C Woodman-Simmons, Treasurer: Mr A L Porter, Committee Members re-elected and elected were as follows: **Capt (Retd) F P Cunnington TD, Mr L Murphy and Mr Peter Chamberlain.** Taking the place of our friend and Committee member Mr Sid Leader who sadly passed away in January of this year, we warmly welcomed **Mr Ivor N Smith** as Sid's replacement to the Branch Committee. Our Branch auditor **Mr Sid Pursey** was thanked for auditing the Branch accounts for the year 2003 and was re-elected in his absence to be our official auditor for a further year. This ended the election of Officers and Committee members. Before Archie handed over the proceedings, he thanked his Officers and Committee for their efforts in the year 2003. After this election of Officers and Committee was completed, the re-elected Chairman Mr Ron Harris resumed the Chairmanship of this AGM. The Chairman, Hon Secretary and the Hon Treasurer gave their usual annual reports at this AGM. The normal Branch monthly meeting followed immediately after lunch. It was rather disappointing that there were only 10 members attended the Branch AGM out of our 280 members! We very much appreciate those that phoned over their apologies for non-attendance namely; Bill Hayward, Peter Chamberlain, Bert Woolhouse and WO1 RSM Andy Carnochan RE. As I always say, we do understand that travelling can prove difficult for some of our elderly members especially those who are infirm and of course those that are still fully employed. Having said that, I feel sure that there could have been more of our members in attendance? There was transport laid on at the Union Jack Club Waterloo for those members who might have found it difficult to travel to Wimbish. These meetings are called to decide the future of our Branch affairs. We would like you to be part of those decisions. What about next year??

REA AGM 2004:

To remind you that the 36th REA Annual General meeting takes place at the Victory Services Club 63/67 Seymour Street, London W2 2HF. The date is set for Saturday 2nd October 2004. Those attending should assemble in the Conference Room by 14:15 hrs. The REA Annual Dinner will also take place at the Victory Services Club following the AGM. The bar will be open at 17:30 hrs. You will be permitted to bring along your partner or your carer should you so wish. For more information or application forms to attend, you may **telephone the Deputy Controller on 01634 82 2407**. The cost of the tickets are £18 per person.

FIELD OF REMEMBRANCE 2004:

This Ceremony will be held at Westminster Abbey on Thursday 11th November 2004. A short service will take place at **10:50 hrs** The Corps Plot is Number 58 which is close to the West Gate. **Those attending should assemble at the rear of the Corps Plot by 11:00 hrs at the latest.**

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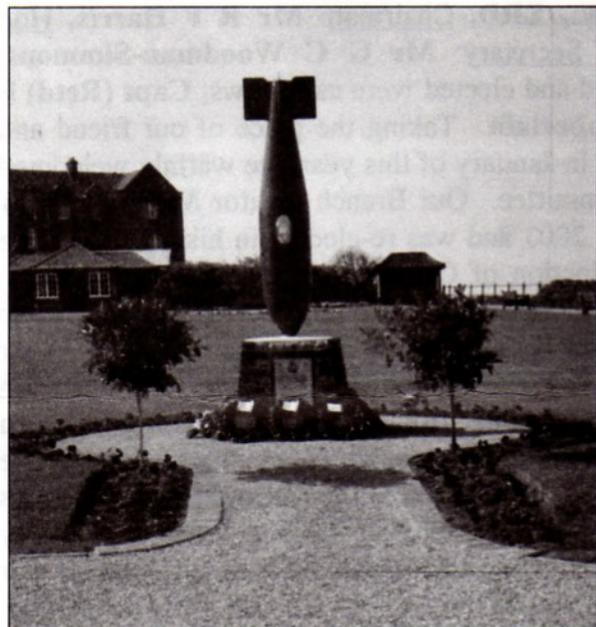
Airborne Assault which was to 'Bounce the Rhine' and hopefully end the war. For more information on this event. You should telephone **Mr Peter Yeates on 01179 603898** or you may write to him at **41 Riverside Way, Hanham, Bristol BS15 3TF.**

BATTLE FOR MALTA REUNION 2005:

A veterans reunion will be held in Malta at the end of September 2005 for the RAF, FAA and the Army. AA personnel and others who supported their efforts in the Battle for Malta (1939-1945) Apparently this will tie in with the prestigious Malta International Air Day. The write up states that for the first time for many years at least one Hurricane and one Spitfire will once more grace the skies above the George Cross Island. For more information on this event please write to Mr Brian Essex, 6 Alley 1, St Mary Street, Tarxien PLA11, Malta GC. There is an Email address sx@vol.net.mt and also a website address www.battleformaltareunion.freesevers.com The vast majority of the funding for this reunion will be met from the 'Heroes Return' scheme under the sponsorship of the Veterans Agency.

NORFOLK LANDMINE CLEARANCE MEMORIAL:

On Sunday 2nd May 2004, many ex BD and serving EOD personnel along with observers including holiday makers and residents gathered in the small town of Mundesley Norfolk at 12:00 hrs. They were there to remember and honour the 26 brave lads that died whilst clearing the beaches of anti-tank mines not only on the Mundesley beach, but the beaches all along that Norfolk coastline between the years 1943 to 1953. There must have been something like 200 observers and official personnel in attendance to witness this most impressive Service of Dedication. The service was conducted by the Reverend A K Gair. Mr Wyndham J Northam (Chairman of the NLCM Group) opened the proceedings paying his own respects to these 26 Sappers after which the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk Sir Timothy Colman KG made his own personal speech of thanks to these lads and he then proceeded to unveil the monument. This was followed by a speech of tribute by our own CO of 33 Engineer



Regt Lt Col A G L (Tony) Troulan RE praising the bravery of these Sappers and indeed all of the BD Sappers that died on the beaches throughout the British Isles. Something like 150! The Lesson St John 15.9-17 was read by Ms Sue Willis. Sue is a Councillor on the District Council. At this point, the band of the Dragoon Guards marched long the main road with the Standard bearers to their rear. After the prayers etc, the Union Jack was removed from the square base of the monument revealing the four plaques attached to the four walls with the 26 names engraved upon them. At this stage of the Ceremony, the five Standards, four Royal British Legion and our own BD Standard, were lowered in respect as poppy wreaths were laid around the base by Sir Timothy Colman KG, Lt Col AGL Troulan RE, Tommy O'Donoghue laid a wreath on behalf of all of the next of kin. Tommy's father died on Weybourne beach on 18th January 1945. The laying of wreaths continued with Councillor Cyril Durrant (Chairman of North Norfolk District Council), Mr Geoffrey Cheadle (Chairman of Mundesley-on-Sea Parish Council), Councillor Neville Chapman (Chairman of Norfolk County Council), Councillor Russell (Mayor of Great Yarmouth Borough Council). A wreath was laid on behalf of the Royal British Legion and Mr Noel Cashford on behalf of the Norfolk Landmines Clearance Memorial Committee laid the final wreath. As the wreaths were being laid one by one, WO1 (RSM) Andy Carnochan RE read out the names of the lads that lost their lives-individually. Andy is the RSM of 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD). Following the wreath laying, a short prayer was read by the Rev Gair. After a two minute silence had been observed, the Last Post and Reveille was sounded. After the Service of Dedication was at its

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and Mr Noel Cashford on behalf of the Norfolk Landmines Clearance Memorial Committee laid the final wreath. As the wreaths were being laid one by one, WO1 (RSM) Andy Carnochan RE read out the names of the lads that lost their lives-individually. Andy is the RSM of 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD). Following the wreath laying, a short prayer was read by the Rev Gair.). After a two minute silence had been observed, the Last Post and Reveille was sounded. After the Service of Dedication was at its conclusion, the nearest families / relatives of these Lads were invited to lay their own personal flowers and wreaths around the monument recalling their own private memories and prayer. The National Anthem was played. All of these lads served with No 4 Bomb Disposal Company (later to become a Squadron) under Major Charles Chapple GM and No1 Troop. Field Marshal Sir John Chapple GCB., CBE., DL son of Charles was in attendance to pay his own personal respects along with Lady Annabelle Chapple. We congratulate and commend the work that the Norfolk Landmines Clearance Memorial Committee has achieved in their efforts over many months in launching this project. The weather on that particular weekend was atrocious, plenty of rain, wind and cold but at about 11:00 hrs on that Sunday, the clouds cleared, the sun came out and generally speaking, God must have known the importance of that day and so smiled upon us! At the conclusion of the service, the band marched off playing our signature tune 'Wings' we were then invited to the reception at the Manor Hotel where we enjoyed an excellent dinner. This was a memorable day, one that will be remembered for many years to come. This free standing memorial is a permanent reminder of those lads that lost their lives to make the beaches safe for adults and children to enjoy for evermore. We are ever appreciative to WO1 (RSM) Barry Davis RE of 101 (City of London) Engr Regt (EOD) (V) for his courteousness in carrying our Branch Standard at a week's notice. The Norfolk Landmines Clearance Memorial Committee and others involved will forever be appreciative to the following major benefactors for without their funding generosity this project would not have been possible. They are **Harry Marks of Bacton Gas terminal Shell UK, Alan Marshall and Georgina Baines of Tullow Oil UK, Frank James of Shell UK, Stephanie van Rosse of Transco, Stephanie Dickes of Perenco UK. Mr and Mrs Spilstead RC Snelling Blofield Norwich, Lt Cdr A Allenby of the Royal British Legion, Brian Farrow of the North Norfolk County Council, Jane Bailey Partridge Association Aylsham Norfolk, The supplying of the steel plaques was by Mr and Mrs K Shepherd of Kaliber Engineering Derby, P Burton CE North Norfolk District Council, C Durrant Chairman North Norfolk District Council and M N Lamb MP North Walsham Norfolk.** The Branch was represented by the following; Major (Retd) Arthur Hogben QGM, Mr Ron Harris (Chairman), Reg Journet (Hon Sec'y), Laurie Murphy (Committee), Capt (Retd) Peter Cunnington TD (Committee), Capt (Retd) John Phillips DSC, Ken Cushen, Ivor Smith, Bryndon Whyte, Bruce Hogg OBE and Dennis Russell of the Woolwich Branch. Our other members previously mentioned in this report were Lt Col Tony Troulan RE (Honorary Member), WO1 (RSM) Andy Carnochan RE and Noel Cashford MBE (Associate Member).

ANOTHER MEMORIAL SERVICE:

This is a report sent to me from our good friend Maj (Retd) John Hannaford of Bexhill East Sussex. John calls his story '**Remembering the Forgotten Ones**'. I write John's story word for word: Visiting the ancient church of St Laurence Catsfield in East Sussex, Joyce and John Hannaford (ex-WW II Bomb Disposal RE) bought the church History Booklet and were surprised to read the following; "During World War II, many ordinary and flying bombs fell in East Sussex (it so happened that there was a Bomb Disposal Unit Stationed in Catsfield). Sadly, among those buried in the church cemetery are Lieutenant G K O'B Cunningham RE and Sergeant G L Mack RE both of which were well known in the village. They lost their lives dealing with an unexploded bomb on 6th May 1944. A visit to the village the following day disappointingly was of little help in establishing the fuller story but the villagers were immediately interested. They wanted to know more and were of a great help in the following months of my research. The story which eventually unfolded is quite extraordinary. On September 11th 1940, the Luftwaffe unleashed, in daylight, a formidable number of bombers intent on causing severe damage to Central London. The Royal Air Force was waiting to pounce and in the air battle many bombers were shot out of the sky. One badly damaged Heinkel about to crash land, dumped six 250Kg unarmed bombs on farmland in the village of Udimore near Rye, East Sussex.

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were successfully removed but the last which had lain deep down for those years proved fatal. The writer having dealt with similar German bombs in World War II, now began to speculate on the sequence of events which led to the seemingly unavoidable deaths. This was helped significantly by discovering two villagers whom 60 years on remembered the incident. They heard the explosion which they described as 'huge' and saw a towering column of black smoke. The remaining disorientated Sappers said that the last they saw was the officer descend into the hole and the sergeant on top looking down. Although the reason for the accident will never be known, the circumstances suggest that this 250 Kg bomb was fitted with a No 17 clockwork fuse (which would have been safe because the bombs had been dropped unarmed) but underneath was the dreaded Zus 40 anti-handling fuse. This would have remained active despite the bomb being dropped unarmed. By 1944, techniques and equipment to deal with this situation were available and well understood and so what went so badly wrong? Complacency comes to mind but that is simply speculation and it would indeed be unfair to pass judgement on Lt Cunningham. Bombs are to say the least, unpredictable. The job is highly dangerous and it would be well to leave it at that. Reference back to the records of St Laurence church revealed that the two servicemen for some extraordinary reason received no rites of the church in the shape of a funeral. Why was that? The key to the mystery seems to be linked with 'D-Day' the allied invasion of the continent and just days away from the incident. It is recorded that the next of kin were informed but the high level security zone at that time in southern England precluded, for any reason, civilian visits. For a few years there the matter rested until the War Graves Commission sought to erect the headstones. Failing to locate the graves - there were none - a decision was made to inscribe the two names on a single headstone and site in a conspicuous position in the cemetery. Further research showed that Lt Cunningham aged 32 was born in Ohio USA and Sergeant Mack was from Ayr Scotland.

Realising that the 60th anniversary of their deaths was approaching, the rector Father Jonathan Beswick and the villagers thought it highly appropriate to have a Commemorative Service on May 6th 2004. And so it was at precisely 14:15 hrs (the time of the explosion) a gathering of about 40 met at the headstone and joined in a moving memorial ceremony to say farewell to two brave men - **THEY WERE REMEMBERED**. John wishes to thank the many that helped in the research without whom this story would have remained untold. **John goes on to say, he hopes the publicity will effect a contact with any of the remaining relatives. Particularly of Sergeant George Lewis Mack RE who lived at 56 Main Street Ayr. Lt George Killian Cunningham RE lived at 29 Roland Gardens, South Kensington London. He had a sister who lived at Burnham Buckinghamshire.** Do any of our members remember them? John has also done some research on the German Heinkel bomber and found the names of the crew, also the name of the RAF pilot who shot them down. Quite a story - my thanks to our colleague John.

CAN YOU HELP?

I have had a letter from Mr William Turner of Accrington Lancashire. William is searching for information on a RE Bomb Disposal Lieutenant who died near Hull on the 27th November 1944. William is a local historian and is compiling a Book of Remembrance for the men in his hometown of Haslington who died in the Second World War (1939-1945 (90 in Total). Having investigated the lives of those men he has found, William has written on the personal lives of each man to include a brief description of how they died. One RE in particular who he is finding it difficult to trace is **Lt Philip E Halstead RE**. William does know that representatives from No's 3 & 7 BD Company's attended his funeral. William says that he feels he owes it to each of these 90 men to give them the best quality description he can for the sacrifice they made. William say's "*It's the least I can do*". There are still a few of our members who served with No's 3 & 7 BD Company's. Does Lt Philip Halstead mean anything to you? If you can help, William would be most grateful to hear from you. You can either write to him **Mr W Turner at 52 Bamford Crescent, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 2PQ** or you may telephone him on 01254 388792.

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Another letter received from **Mrs Paton**. She is trying to trace the service history of her father and any of our members who may have known him? His name was **Albert (Bert) George West** and he served with No 4 Bomb Disposal Coy from 1940 'til 1943. Bert must have joined the Company on its initial formation under Maj Charles Chapple. In 1943, he was posted from BD and he joined 81 Assault Squadron RE. Mrs Paton would be most delighted if you did know her father and if you can help, please contact her at **Odell Cottage, Queens Lane, Eynsham, Oxon OX29 4HL**. You may also telephone her on **01865 880321 or Fax 01865 880862**. E-mail address senbrea@clara.net

A letter received from a **Mr Gavin Mortimer of 15 Mill Hill Close, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1NY**. Gavin is writing a book on the London Blitz 1940 – 1941. He would like to make contact with any BD personnel that were involved in UXB's in the London area during those years. If you can help, please contact Gavin at the above address **or call him on 01444413044**. If you can help and you do contact him, inform him that you got the message from the Bulletin.

Another inquiry from **Mr Frank Elliott**. Frank would like to know more about his father's service in Bomb Disposal. His father's name was **John Elliott (Sapper)**, Army No 14344602, Service Trade: Timberman. It appears that he enlisted in November 1942 and in March 1943 was posted to No 7 Bomb Disposal Company. John was demobbed in November 1946 having attained the rank of Lance Corporal. He was awarded the Defence medal 1939-45 and the General Service Medal with Clasp 'Bomb and Mine Clearance 1945-49'. Frank's father served on UXB operations at the Bomb Training School in Christchurch Bournemouth, Weymouth, Plymouth, Princetown Dartmoor (Bomb Dump), Tavistock and Perranporth beach landmine clearance at the end of the war. Frank would like to trace the months that his father served in these areas. Is it possible that any of our members who served with No 7 BD Company may have known John Elliott and could have worked with him at these sites? If you can help, Frank would greatly appreciate your contacting him **Mr Frank Elliott, 52 Selkirk Drive, Walton-Le-Dale, Preston, Lancashire PR5 4TL or you may telephone him on 01772 337397**. Sadly Frank's father died in 1993.

Our Good friend and member **Jack Curtis** of Southampton would like to know where No 12 BD Company finished up from 1942 'til the end of hostilities or even after? Jack served with No 12 until 1942 when he was posted to other duties. If you do know of No 12's movements from that date, Jack would appreciate your information. You may write to him at **9 Fairlea Grange, Denbigh Gardens, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 7EJ or you may telephone him on 02380 768240**.

I've had a letter from Edward T Portess. Eddie as he likes to be known, would like to hear from any member who may have known and/or served with his father **Sgt John Edward Portess** Army No 1945445. John served with No 22 Bomb Disposal Coy (212 BD Section). Sadly John died November 2001. However I have included a photograph and you may recognise yourself or the three officers in the photograph? Sergeant John Portess is back row-far right (by the 'Z'). Who is the face (not too clear) looking through the window? However, Eddie would be delighted if you can recall his father or knew him in any way. You may write to him **Mr E T Portess, 98 West Common Lane, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire DN17 1DU**. He would



appreciate your interest

Tommy O'Donoghue has phoned. Tommy was at the Service of Dedication at Mundesley back in May. His father was **Lance Sergeant Thomas O'Donoghue** Army No 2090444. He was killed on the beach at Weybourne Norfolk on the 18th January 1945 aged 32. Tommy would like to know if there are any of

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our members who may have known his dad? It is assumed that he was serving with No4 Bomb Disposal Company at the time when he lost his life? If you did serve with or know his dad, Tommy would be more than delighted to hear from you. Tommy does have a copy photograph of a team having recovered a 'Satan' UXB at Frederick Road Gorleston. There were three HE bombs dropped in Duke Road/Lowestoft Road/and Frederick Road. This one did not explode. There were four people killed and one was injured. That was on June 12th 1941. Unfortunately the print cannot be printed here. However, if you can help, you may write to **Tommy O'Donoghue, 21 Larkhill Lane, Freshfield, Formby, Merseyside L37 1LT** or you may telephone Tommy on **01704 870642**.

Another letter from **Mr Charles F Wilkins**. Charles served with No 6 and No 8 Bomb Disposal Company's from 1940 'til 1944. He served in Bristol, London, Plymouth, Portsmouth, West Cowes, Shanklin and Ventnor on the Isle of Wight. After the Air Raids had receded, Charles (or Charlie as he likes to be known), was then engaged on mine clearance on the beaches. If you remember serving with Charlie he would be most pleased to hear from you. You may write to him **Charles F Wilkins at 130 Strode Road, Street, Somerset BA16 ODZ** or telephone **01458 445087**. He does have a mobile number which is **07967 435642**.

Simon Harris writes. Simon is trying to find out some information about his grandfather. His name is **Roy Thomas Harris**. Simon says his grandfather was awarded the George Cross and believes at that time he was dismantling UXB's as an ARP Engineer? Later he joined the Army (Corps of Royal Engineers) and attained the rank of Lt Colonel. Simon has asked if there are any of our members who might have known of his grandfather Roy? You may write to **Simon Harris at 77 Merlin Crescent, Cefn Glas, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan, South Wales CF31 4QW**. He would greatly appreciate any information received. (Simon it might be of some help if you contacted **The Armed Forces Admin Agency Personnel Centre, PPPA E/D/C/C&R Wing, Discharge Section3 MP45, Kentigen House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow G2 8EX**) I do believe there is a fee of £25 required for any information they supply but I believe they may have the information you require (Ed)

A letter from **Angus Cameron**. Angus would like to know if any of our members have any recollections of his father? His fathers name was **William James Cameron** from Stirling in Scotland. Angus believes his father served with Bomb Disposal during 1940 – 1941 and held the rank of Captain at that stage? William later served in Malta and attained the rank of Major (he believes) and ended his career as an acting Colonel. If you may have known his father, Angus would be most grateful if you could write to him **Angus Cameron, 38 Chalton Road, Bridge of Allan, Stirling FK9 4EF**.

Jenny Gardiner writes. Jenny is looking for information concerning her Great Grandfather **Peter Lyons** who she believes may have served in Bomb Disposal. Jenny goes on to say that during World War II it appears that he was the youngest RSM at that time? Jenny thanks everyone for their time. If Peter Lyons name registers with anyone Jenny would be glad to hear from you. You may write to her **Ms Jennifer Gardiner, 655 Wright Street, Welland, Ontario, Canada 13B2K8**.

George Rosier would like any information if possible on his father **2129167 Cpl Charles Frederick Rosier**. Charles served with No 10 Bomb Disposal Coy and sadly was killed on the 25th April 1945. If you knew George's father he would like to hear from you and would be most grateful for your help. You may write to him **George A Rosier, 28 Glenister Park Road, Streatham, London SW16 5DR** or you may telephone him on **020 8764 2820**.

Mrs Davey has telephoned. She is trying to find out any information about her uncle. His name was **Eric Dudley Percival** Army No14388498. Eric served with No2 HQ BD Company possibly from 1943 onwards? He attained the rank of Lance Corporal. Did you know or ever serve with Eric? Mrs Davey would appreciate any information that might be forthcoming and that she might get to know of her

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Mrs Davey has telephoned. She is trying to find out any information about her uncle. His name was **Eric Dudley Percival** Army No14388498. Eric served with No2 HQ BD Company possibly from 1943 onwards? He attained the rank of Lance Corporal. Did you know or ever serve with Eric? Mrs Davey would appreciate any information that might be forthcoming and that she might get to know of her uncle's service experiences with bomb disposal during World War II. If you can help, would you kindly **telephone her on 01737 762225**

CONGRATULATIONS:

Are in order for our member **Ernest Oaklands of Beeston Nottingham**. Ernest was awarded his Badge of Merit at the same time as our Chairman Ron Harris last year. I have to apologise for this omission in our previous Bulletin. Ernest is also a member of the Nottingham Branch and has been its Chairman for the past ten years. He is also the Chairman and Welfare Officer of the Dunkirk Veterans Association Nottingham Branch. However Ernest, many congratulations on reaching your 87th birthday and also on your award.

We also congratulate **Captain Timothy Gould**. Timothy was awarded the Queens Gallantry Medal for clearing a route through a minefield in Iraq to allow the medics to reach a seriously injured soldier. He removed M42 bomblets by hand to speed up the operation which in itself was a most dangerous procedure. Sadly, the injured soldier Staff Sergeant Chris Muir RE died at the scene. The citation quotes that Timothy carried out exemplary acts of bravery.

Congratulations to our good friend and member **Captain Chris Fowke RE**. Chris has been promoted to Major and has now taken up his new posting as Senior Training Officer at 101 (City of London) Engineering Regiment (EOD) (V). Also to **Colonel John Shannahan MBE RE**: John ex-C/O 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD) has now been appointed the OBE (Order of the British Empire). Congratulations to them all.

A WARM WELCOME:

To **WO1 (RSM) Ross Fyvie RE**. Ross is the current RSM at 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment (EOD) (V) Catford London. Ross has taken over from **WO1 (RSM) Barry Davis RE** who has now done his tour of duty and sadly has had to move on. On behalf of the Branch, I would like to thank Barry for his interest and assistance in our Branch affairs over the past years. We send him our good wishes in his new vocation. In welcoming Ross, we are sure our relationship with 101 will continue far into the future.

We also welcome **Lt Col Richard D Elvidge TD** as the current Commanding Officer of 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment. Richard takes over from the previous C/O Lt Col Steve Squibb TD who has recently moved to Canada. We also wish Steve the best of luck in whatever he's doing!

GONE AWAY!

Our member **Ian Daniels** has disappeared. His Bulletin was returned to me as having moved from his address last November. Ian's last known address was **27 Sturgee Avenue, Gillingham, Kent ME7 2JL**. Should anyone know where he has moved to, would they please let me know. And we're still looking for **Timothy Van Der Kraan**!

W.G.F.D.S:

This is a new type service that has started recently. The initials stand for **War Graves Flower Delivery Service**. The service is for those families and relatives etc that have lost loved ones in the two World War conflicts. The service provides a flower delivery and photographic service to the appropriate cemetery in France, Holland and Belgium. They are the only Countries that are listed. Obviously there are charges for this service which do vary according to your personal requirements. There are three 'bands' of service.

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For more details on this, you should contact **W.G.F.D.S. 55 Palmbeach Avenue, HYTHE. Kent CT21 6NW** or you may telephone on **01303 268009** or **01313 102857**. They do have a mobile number which is **07773178745** and an e-mail address which is checkit55@aol.com If you do use this service perhaps you would be so kind as to mention that you got their details from our Bulletin.

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION!

As from 1st January 2005, you will be able to pay your subscription by standing order. Those of you wishing to take advantage of this option, the Branch bank is the NatWest, Ilford Branch, A/C No 19864884 sort code 60-50-09. To respectfully remind those members who have not paid their Branch subscription for 2004, we would appreciate your remittance as soon as possible. You should send this direct to our treasurer Mr Alan Porter, 141 Hamilton Avenue, Ilford, Essex IG6 1AA.

GIBRALTAR VETERANS VISITS-2004:

The Government of Gibraltar has just issued an Invitation to Veterans of Gibraltar to visit the Rock as part of the 300 year celebrations. The Government of Gibraltar is looking to host 500 Veterans (from all Arms and services in 10 Groups for one week during 2004. There have been several dates to attend the Rock but unfortunately they arrived too late to be able to be published in our previous Bulletin. However there are two more dates available which are from the 15th October and the 3rd -10th November. Unfortunately again, this circular publicising this event was received too late to be included in our previous Bulletin and bids for this should have reached REA Control by the 10th April. The dates are also on a first come first served basis. However I can only advise that if you wanted to attend these two later tours, **you should contact the REA by phone** to see whether it is still possible to attend ?? The telephone number is **01634 82 2407**.

DERBY DRAW RESULT (2004):

The Derby Draw was held at the Union Jack Club on Wednesday 2nd June 04. The first prize of £100 was won by **Mr W Roberts** of the Central London Branch (**North Light**), the second prize of £50 **Mr John Smith** of the Central London Branch (**Rule of Law**), third prize of £30 **Mr Chris Fowke** of Woolwich Branch (**Let the Lion Roar**), Fourth prize of £20 went to **Mr & Mrs I Overd** of the West London Branch (**Massif Centrale**) and the fifth and last prize of £10 was won by **Mr Ron Harris** Bomb Disposal Branch (**Salford City**). London Group wish to thank all those that supported the Draw

HEROES RETURN:

I have received a standard letter from our Deputy Controller Lt Col (Retd) Neil Jordan. In his letter Neil informs us of the New Opportunities Fund. The Fund is financed by the National Lottery and is available to assist the cost of overseas commemorative visits and trips to areas where British Armed Forces saw active service in the Second World War. A fixed sum will be available for each veteran and their spouse / carer to fund the cost of their visit. This funding is available for visits which take place any time from Jan 1st 04 to the 31st Dec 2005 (i.e. start of WWII to VJ Day). Neil has asked that all Branch Secretaries complete an attached proforma confirming the names of all eligible personnel that qualify for this funding. This is somewhat difficult in our case as we are a postal Branch. Although I can inform members who attend our branch meetings, it would be some task to go through some 280 odd members and to seek those who are eligible. I feel from our point of view that if you are eligible for this funding that is providing you are interested and you have a UK residential address, you should **give Neil a call on 01634 82 2407**. We are aware that some BD Company's served overseas during the Second World War and if you served with those Companies and you have an interest in returning, then register your application now. This of course will now mainly apply to the year 2005. You may also call the **Veterans Agency** free on **0800 169 2277**.

FIND AN OLD FRIEND:

Mr Robert Ewart Brown has sent a circular. Mr Brown specialises in tracing old friends. He is an ex-Sapper and did his training at Brompton Barracks in '43.

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'THE FIGHT FOR IRAQ'

This is a book recently published telling the story of the first six months of 'Operation TELIC' (the code name for UK military action in Iraq). This is an official British Army pictorial account of that war. The book is edited by Major Angus Beaton and all the book images were taken by Army photographers. The Army Benevolent Fund is the charity beneficiary of the book which was published at the end of March this year. If you wish to purchase this book, please telephone the ABF hotline 01869 325829 or through their website address www.armybenfund.org The cost is £14.99 plus post and packing with free P&P for serving military personnel.

DONATIONS:

On behalf of the Branch Committee, I would like to thank all of those kind people who have sent generous donations to the Branch. As that well known supermarket advert says, "Every little Helps".

THE END

Editor / Hon Secretary.

**Reg Journet
20, Selvage Lane
Mill Hill
London NW7 3SP.
☎ 020 8906 1696.**