

BD News[®]

NEGOTIUM PERSEVE

Journal of the Royal Engineers Association – Bomb Disposal Branch.

Branch President

Colonel

B S T Archer GC OBE ERD

Patron

Her Majesty the Queen

Christmas Edition

Issue 133 December 2008



Well Ladies and Gentlemen, here we are at the end of another year and a rather busy one at that for the branch. I will not waste your time in repeating all that the branch has been involved in this year as it is reported further down and also in previous issues of BD News (spring and summer). We have a new CO at 33 Engr Regt, David Southall MBE and RSM, Justin Spreadborough and it was good that we were able to meet up with both at the annual lunch in October. The feeling gained is that the branch will, in the future, be able to work more closely with the regiment compared to recent years.

The committee remains resolved in the work of taking the branch forward in respect of admin, recruitment, and in participation at as many events that we are able to organise or be part of. We have had a great year in 2008 and are sure that next year can only get better.

It only leaves us to wish you all a very merry Christmas and all the best for the coming year.

BRANCH ANNUAL LUNCH

By Ron Harris

On Saturday 18th October 2008, 86 attendees assembled in the WO's and Sergeants Mess at 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD), Carver Barracks, for the annual Bomb Disposal Branch luncheon. Prior to the serving of lunch, grace was given by the Branch Chairman Mr Jeff Baldock BEM who also requested we remain standing to pay a silent tribute to those who had paid the supreme sacrifice in the field of Bomb Disposal, and to absent friends.

The four course meal was superb, and we would like to congratulate mess manager, Kim Halls and her staff for the excellent service provided throughout.



Before welcoming the guests, and prior to the speeches, the Chairman proposed the loyal toast, and spoke of a letter received from Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, to the Bomb Disposal Branch, on the occasion of their Diamond Jubilee Luncheon.

The Chairman began his speech by informing us of apologies for absence from the Branch President Colonel Stuart Archer GC OBE ERD. Jeff said that he would be writing to Archie on



behalf of us all, expressing our good wishes.

The Chairman then welcomed all the guests. He thanked the CO of the regiment Lt Col David Southall MBE RE for allowing us in to the barracks and to the RSM Justin Spreadborough for allowing us into the WO's and Sergeants Mess to hold the branch luncheon. The Chairman continued his address, by thanking the officers and members of the committee for their support and input, which contributed to the making of a successful branch. The CO replied on behalf of the guests and gave members attending an in depth and interesting update on the deployment of troops from the regiment, not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but the continuance of work on World War 2 ordnance, plus assisting government agencies, on security matters.

When the speeches had been completed, presentations of flowers were made to the wife's of the honoured guests. A cheque for £425 was handed to the CO by Jan Raiment, which was from monies raised from the collecting box at the Britain at War Museum, the legacy of Bill Hill, also £150 was presented by Pat Johnson from the sale of specialised handmade greeting cards. This money is for the children's fund at the regiment.

Friends of the branch, who were in attendance, each received a framed Certificate of Friendship signed

by Archie and Jeff in recognition of their support to the branch over the years. The certificates designed and framed by Gary



Woodman-Simmons were much appreciated by the recipients. The Toast to the ladies was proposed by Major (Retired) David Harrington, the reply, by Mrs Lydia Calton.

The first section of the branch auction was of various types of ordnance, provided by Mick Collarbone MBE. Mick was the auctioneer ably assisted by Mick Menzies-Baird. It provided much humour, and proved very successful. The last item in this category was a one off painting by Friend of the Branch, Chris Clark depicting various incidents within the field of BD to commemorate this 60th anniversary of the Bomb Disposal Branch.

A lot of interest was shown in this item,



encouraged on by Mick Collarbone, the bidding eventually reached £210. The successful bidder was Peter Tworek.

The second part of the auction was sporting memorabilia provided by Dave Charnick in this auction Dave was assisted by Mick, all items were bid for. To Mick and Dave we offer our sincere appreciation for not only supplying the majority of



these articles in the auctions for free, but for the effort and time they put

in to this event. The Raffle was organised by Lydia Calton.

The amount of money raised was £1100.00. The committee really do appreciate all the work put in to running the luncheon fund raising.

This years luncheon was again very successful and like all successful events it just does not happen without a lot of hard work and the ability of the organiser to focus his attention down to the smallest detail. The Hon Secretary, Gary Woodman-Simmons who has been organising the branch luncheon for the past number of years, as

with this luncheon, has set a bench mark that makes the Bomb Disposal Branch luncheon so very popular that a full house of persons is guaranteed and at times oversubscribed. Gary, on behalf of all those members who attended the luncheon congratulations!

Bomb Disposal Memorial, Whitley.

On the 18th of October 1940, seven men of 9 Bomb Disposal Company, Royal Engineer's, died at Whitley Common. They were not the first nor will they be the last to sacrifice their lives whilst clearing unexploded ordnance.

The section tasked to clear the bomb at, Chapel Street, Coventry, was commanded by 2nd Lieutenant



Alexander Fraser Campbell, George Cross, aged 42. Working with him were Sergeant Michael Gibson, George Cross, Sapper's William Gibson, aged 22, Richard Gilchrest, aged 32, Jack Plumb, aged 25, Ronald William Skeet, aged 25 and Driver Ernest Frederick George Taylor, aged 32.

The bomb took four days to be uncovered commencing on the 14th October 1940. When it was inspected both fuzes were found to be badly damaged and due to their condition it was not possible to remove them. An electrical discharger was placed on the bomb as a precaution in case the electrical charge had not been dissipated. On the 18th October 1940 the bomb was loaded onto a lorry and taken to Whitley Common, an open area, to be defuzed. As it was being defuzed it exploded killing all seven men.

At 15.00 hours on the 18th October, 2008, a memorial to the memory of these men was dedicated at an area near to the spot where they died. The afternoon had been rather overcast,

however as we all gathered as if on cue, the sun broke free of the clouds. Over 100 people gathered for the service with Standard Bearers from various military groups. The Royal Engineer Standard was carried by Colin Norburn, REA Coventry and the REA BD Branch was represented by our Webmaster Peter Markham and Friend of the Branch Chris Ranstead. Also in attendance was Bill Wood who served in BD during WWII.



L-R
Pete
Markham
Bill Wood
and
Chris
Ranstead

This memorial had come about due to two years of hard work and determination by Mr Reg Kimber, Honorary Secretary of the Whitley Local History Group. Without this gentleman's efforts this memorial would not be in place today.

The Service of Dedication was led by the Reverend



Pam Stote,
Vicar of
Saint James.

The
welcoming
address was
given by
Councillor

Hazel Noonan followed by opening comments from the Deputy Lord Major of Coventry, Councillor Jack Harrison, MBE, JP.

The memorial was then unveiled by Derek Gibson, the son of Sergeant M. Gibson, GC, along with Derek's son Michael and Derek's grandson also named Michael. (pictured above) They were also accompanied by other members of the family. Derek along with his mother had in fact been in Coventry on the way to visit his father the day his father died.

The unveiling was followed by the Roll of Honour being read, and the Last Post played before a two minute silence was broken by the bugler calling Reveille. A short sermon and the singing of the National Anthem concluded the service.

After photographs had been taken and all had time to look at the memorial people retired to the Imbis Hotel for a warm drink and to look at a photographic display set up by the Whitley History Group.

The day was a moving experience and a fitting tribute to the seven men on the 68th anniversary of their death.

"For your tomorrow, we gave our today"

Remembrance Parade Whitehall.

Sunday the 9th of November proved to be a bright sunny day if not a tad chilly as members of the branch and ex members of 33 Eng Regt (EOD) began to assemble in Column B section 15, which is the branches own section directly to the rear of the Corps main column. In previous years the branch has struggled to get more than four members in attendance and a concerted effort was made this year to try and attract as many members to attend as was possible. The parade began to assemble just after 9am prior to the 10am march from Horseguards onto Whitehall proper.



(Members on parade with Bomb Disposal)

Among those on parade were John Phillips, marching with the Falklands Veterans Association, Stephen Hambrook and Kev Bryant marching with BLESMA, Albert Homes marching with the Burma Star Association and the following marching as the Bomb Disposal Branch: John Paul, David Hiddleston, Gary Woodman-Simmons, Doug

Naismith and his wife, Kev and Pat Johnson, Nick Martin, Kev Purves, Stephen Duplock., Robert Evans, Richard Morgan, Robin Bennett, Hugh Marshall, David Atkins and four unnamed members of 101 Engr Regt (EOD) (V). The honour of carrying the branch wreath was given to Pete Markham for all the hard work he has put into the Roll of Honour. Once the parade was dismissed, those members attending decided that a drink was in order and retired to one of the many hostelrys that were hosting members and ex members of the armed forces.

All those who attended the days event spoke of their pride at being able to attend and of their intentions to march again next year. The branch ended the day with 25 members on parade up from 4 last year. It is hoped to have even more on parade next year. To book your tickets please contact the branch secretary.

Mundesley

On the same day as the Remembrance Day service in Whitehall a service was taking place at the BD Memorial at Mundesley in Norfolk headed by



Friend of the Branch, Noel Cashford MBE. Many local people and branch members were also in attendance as were representatives from 33 Engr Regt (EOD). Our thanks to Noel and all those concerned in insuring that this annual event is well supported.

Thank You

Joan Harris, wife of the former Branch Chairman and now Honorary Vice President Ron Harris, would like to thank members of the branch for their kind messages of support and flowers during her recent ill health and spell in hospital.



Corps Circular

We would like to belatedly thank all those members who, when purchasing their Derby Draw tickets, included a donation towards branch funds. Your generosity was most welcome and gratefully received.

Birthdays

Our hearty congratulations go to the following branch members. Harry Ridsdale of Chard, Somerset, who is celebrating his 90th birthday on the 18th of December. Celebrating his 80th birthday on Christmas Eve will be Maurice Arnold of Monmouthshire.

Ripon REA Weekend 15-17 May 2009 60th Anniversary of the Freedom of Ripon

The above National Event is being organised by the Ripon and District Branch of the REA. Those branch members interested in attending this event should, in the first instance, contact the organiser Mrs Janet Sanderson of 3 hazel Court, Aiskew, Bedale, North Yorkshire DL8 1UX email morag.sanderson@btinternet.com Failing this an application form and event itinerary can be sent from branch secretary Gary Woodman-Simmons. Details are available at the end of this news letter. Remember to get in fast as places will be issued on a first come first served basis. All monies and applications must be received by Janet by the 7th of April 2009.

REA Spring Reunion

Mill Rythe Holiday Village
Friday May 8th – 15 May 2009.

The Spring Reunion for 2009 will be at Mill Rythe Holiday Village in Hayling Island, Hampshire. The cost of this 7 day event is £284.00p per person. A deposit of £30 would be required to reserve your place. Application forms can be obtained from the branch secretary.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

BRANCH MEETINGS

Dates and locations for 2009

Friday 16th of January

101 Engr Regt (EOD), Hudson House,
Bromley Road, Catford,
LONDON. SE6 2RH
(nearest rail station is Bellingham).

Friday 17th of April

(includes the AGM)

House of Lords, Parliament, LONDON.

Friday 17th of July

33 Engr Regt (EOD) Carver Barracks
Wimbish, ESSEX. CB10 2YA.

Friday 9th of October

House of Lords, Parliament, LONDON.

ANNUAL LUNCH

Saturday the 24th of October 2009

At the WOs & Sgt Mess, Wimbish, ESSEX.

For further information contact the branch
secretary on
020 8994 1172 or
BombDisposal@talktalk.net

Founders Day – Royal Hospital Chelsea

This event is by invitation only. Members wishing to attend should apply for tickets to HQ REA. Bids must contain name address and telephone number for each person wishing to attend. Bids must be in by 13th of March 2009

Trooping the Colour

Major Generals review will be on 30th of May 2009. There is no fee for this event and bids should be made to HQ REA by 20th of February 2009.

Colonel's review will take place on the 6th of June 2009. Cost of tickets will be *about* £10. Applications for this event should be sent to HQ REA by the 20th of February 2009. Please confirm costs with HQ REA before sending your cheque.

Queens Birthday Parade will be on Saturday the 13th of June 2009. Tickets for this event are

about £20 and allocation of tickets is by ballot. To enter the ballot you must apply to HQ London District by the 28th of February 2009 and you must include a SAE. For further information contact :
Superintending Clerk
HQ Household Div
Horseguards
LONDON. SW1 2AX (telephone 020 7414 2479)



MISSING MEMBERS

Are you in contact with or know the whereabouts of our below missing members?

Kent Adrian YOUNG. Last known as living in Rochester, Kent.

Douglas Grant RITCHIE. Last known address was in Tiverton, Devon.

Harold MERRITT. Last known address was in Godalming, Surrey.

Sean LIGHTOWLER. Last known contact address was in Woking, Surrey.

If you have any contact details for the above then please let us know, otherwise we are obliged to return their membership to HQ REA.

New Members



Robert Evans of Gravesend, Kent. Rob served with 4 Troop, 49 (EOD) Squadron between January 1985-86. Robert was one of our recruits from the regimental reunion back in May of this year. Rob officially joined the branch on the 2nd of September 2008.

William James Loughlin, of Llandudno, Gwynedd. William joined the branch in late June of this year just after the Summer



issue of BD News had gone to press. William joined the Corps in May 1959 and served with 49 (EOD) Sqn at Tilshead from 1972 to 1974. William saw service in Oman before eventually leaving the army in September 1975.



Robert Firkins who currently resides in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Rob joined the branch in June this year. Rob served in the Corps for 24 years from June 1980 until March 2004. Robert first served with 58 Fd Sqn (EOD) in 1998 seeing service in Bosnia and in 1999 while serving with 49 Fd Sqn (EOD) was in East Timor.

Gavin Townsend of Cambridge. Gavin was recruited at the 33 Engr Regt re-union back in May of this year and was official placed in the branch on the 3rd of July. Gavin served for 10 years in the Corps and saw service with 2 Troop, 58 (EOD) Sqn



Tay Taylor of Lincolnshire who joined the branch on the 22nd of October. Having completed 22 years in the Corps in which he served three tours with BD. From Dec 1998 – March 2002 with 21 Fd Sqn (EOD) then from March 2002 until April 2004 with JSEOD in the Falklands, followed by RETDU (EOD Trials) from April 2004 until June 2008 having completed his military service.

The branch would like to extend a warm welcome to all our new members.

Branch Subscriptions.

Members will have received with this copy of BD News, an invoice for their branch subscriptions due for 2009 which will be £5.00p. Some members will have received an invoice for more than this amount due to falling into arrears with subscriptions. We would ask all members to complete the enclosed form in full and return to the branch secretary along with your remittance made payable to the REA Bomb Disposal Branch.

Those members who wish to be sent a Standing Order mandate should contact the secretary who will dispatch the required form.

BRANCH CLOSURES

It is with regret that HQ REA announced the closures of the following branches: Liverpool North, Coventry, York and Bridgend & District Branches.

NEW BRANCH

A new National REA Branch was approved in January 2008, Commando Engineers.

BADGE OF MERIT

HQ REA announced the award the Badge of Merit to:

Mr A Calvert – Newcastle and District Branch

Mr M A Crooke – Potteries Branch

Mr T Finigan – Gosport Branch

Mr J W G Wynne - Portsmouth & District Branch

Mr J Y Guthrie – Edinburgh Branch

The branch would like to extend our congratulations to these recipients.

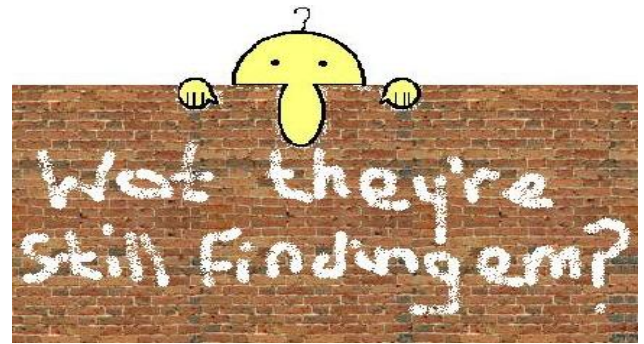
CAN YOU HELP

Sarah Murphy has written to us to request help in tracing her Grandfathers military history with Bomb Disposal. His name was Douglas Allen McAdam. He was commissioned from a WO1 in 1940 and served with BD in the Earls Court area. Any one with any information on Douglas can contact:

Sarah Murphy
20 Amelia Close
Portland
Dorset. DT5 1HE

Another 'Can You Help' was received from Wayne Henry. Wayne asks if any of our members have any information on Sgt Frederick Henry (1865959), who joined the Corps at Catterick in 1933. Frederick served in BD during WW2.

Wayne can be contacted at
17 Ruxley Lane
Ewell
Surrey. KT19 0JB



BERLIN

On Wednesday 15th of July, about 5,000 residents were evacuated after an unexploded Second World War bomb was found in Berlin. The British device was discovered during construction work in the German capital's western Wilmersdorf district. Tram lines and major roads were shut down and residents barred from their homes for



16 hours. The city mobilized a large-scale deployment of police, fire department and rescue workers that included some 400 emergency

vehicles to help secure the neighbourhood. Water and gas companies were also alerted.

Bomb experts had initially hoped to defuse the bomb on site but decided to transport it with a special vehicle to the nearby Wilmersdorf park thus voiding an evacuation of a nearby hospital.

Police reported that the bomb was successfully defused via a controlled detonation early on Wednesday morning. A Police spokesman said, "Unexploded wartime bombs are still found frequently in Germany". (Go figure! - Ed)

BUDAPEST

On Wednesday the 16 July experts defused a 500-kilogram WWII bomb which had been discovered during earth works in Budapest's 13th district earlier in the day. The Tahi Road-Tatai Street residential area was evacuated and several thousand people were moved to nearby sports halls and schools where water, food and medical services were provided. Streets were closed to traffic and public transportation was rerouted while *artillery* experts inspected the bomb, which

proved to be an American GP fragmentation device.

Defence Minister Imre Szekeres arrived at the site early in the evening to survey the evacuation of the neighbourhood and operations. Colonel Gabor Hajdu, commander of the unit in charge of the operation, said that the bomb, which contained 300 kilograms of TNT and amatol, "could destroy the whole neighbourhood"

CHESIL BEACH, DORSET

Monday 22nd of September 2008. Part of Chesil Beach was closed after a suspected unexploded bomb was found on the water's edge. Dorset Police said the area was cordoned off after the device was spotted near the visitor centre car park yesterday evening. Portland Coastguard was notified of the find after a diver discovered the submerged device and alerted staff at the Chesil Beach Visitors Centre. A controlled explosion was carried out by a bomb disposal unit from the Royal Navy. It is still not clear exactly what the object was, but it was thought to be an unexploded Second World War bomb.

KENT

On the 29th Of September a Royal Navy Bomb Disposal team from Portsmouth blew up a huge German Second World War mine off the north Kent coast. The 1,800lb, eight feet long device was caught in the nets of a fishing vessel about a mile off Sheerness.

A four-man navy team took the mine out to the safety of open waters and disposed of it in a controlled explosion, nine metres below the surface. A one-mile exclusion zone was put in place during the operation but shipping lanes in the area were not affected.

Chief Petty Officer Sid Lawrence, who led the team, said: "These mines were the biggest the Germans made – they were designed to destroy ships the size of aircraft carriers and they caused severe damage to British ships during the war."

The One That Got Away!

VIENNA,
Austria (AP) - Austrian authorities say what initially appeared to be a small earthquake that rattled Vienna turned out to be the explosion of a large World War II-era bomb.

The explosion left a massive crater in the rear garden of a Vienna home.

Investigators think the bomb weighed up to 500 kilograms (half a ton)



Hungarian Soldiers Killed

A Team of experts left for Afghanistan on Thursday the 17th of July to investigate the circumstances of the deaths of two bomb disposal experts who died five weeks previously.

András Nyitray, Fidesz Member of Parliament's defence committee, said that the Hungarian participation in the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan was inevitable, but it is a minimum requirement that soldiers be issued the most advanced technical equipment available.

The body of bomb disposal expert Captain Krisztián Nemes, who died while attempting to defuse a bomb in Afghanistan on Saturday the 12th of July had been flown back to Hungary where the coffin was given a reception with military honours.. Nemes 32 had been sent to Afghanistan only weeks earlier to replace Lieutenant Gyula Kovacs (30), who died under similar circumstances just weeks earlier.

Christopher Howes QGM

Readers may remember that in the Spring Edition of BD News we ran a belated obituary to Christopher Howes, with whom a number of our members had served with during their time at 33 Engr Regt (EOD). Chris, after leaving the Corps, went on to work in civilian mine-clearance and in 1996 was kidnapped and murdered by members of the Khmer Rouge. The alleged perpetrators of Chris's kidnap and murder went on trial at the beginning of October this year.

Former Cambodian guerrillas described to a court the final moments of Christopher's life. The five former guerrilla fighters, facing trial in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, and all denied taking any personal part in the killings of Chris and his translator, Houn Hourth, and instead blamed the crime on two other guerrillas who are believed to be dead.

Both Chris and Houn worked for a British charity, the Mines Advisory Group and were kidnapped as they were clearing mines from countryside close to the Cambodian temple complex Angkor Wat, in March 1996.

Their remains were discovered after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge in 1998, but it was only this year that five men charged with the crimes were arrested. They are: Khem Ngun, Puth Lim, Sin Dorn, Loch Mao and Cheap Chet.



Twenty other members of Chris's team were also taken hostage but released after Chris agreed to remain with the captors as surety for a future ransom. Sadly both Chris and Houn were shot dead within a week after being given a last meal of apples and the tropical fruit durian, according to prosecutors.

A joint investigation by Cambodian and Scotland Yard detectives suggested some ten years ago that Loch Mao was responsible for the killing. However the accused man insisted that his senior commander, Khem Tem, had ordered a soldier named Nget Rim to carry out the murders.

"Howes fell backward. It was one single shot," Mr Loch said. "Khem Tem then ordered me to fire more shots. I walked up with the intention of firing a shot into his chest, but Khem Ngun [another of the defendants] yelled, 'That's enough, he is already dead'." Mr Khem, who subsequently defected from the Khmer Rouge and who had been a major-general in the Cambodian Army at the time of his arrest last November, said: "Another Khmer Rouge soldier close to Ta Mok [a senior commander]

ordered the shooting of Howes in the head, then I turned my face away and felt shock."

One of the alleged murderers, Mr Nget, was reportedly killed in 2004 by a landmine and another Mr Khem died in a road accident.

Another of the accused men, Put Lim, said that Chris was killed at night and his body was cremated on a wood fire.

Chris, from Backwell in North Somerset, served seven years in the Royal Engineers before working for the Mines Advisory Group in northern Iraq and then Cambodia. For two years after his kidnap his fate was unknown. Chris's remains were eventually found and returned to the UK. Chris was awarded the Queens Gallantry Medal for his bravery.

The Verdict.

Khem Ngun	Guilty, 20 years imprisonment
Loch Mao	Guilty, 20 years imprisonment
Put Lim	Guilty, 20 years imprisonment
Sin Dorn	Guilty, 10 years imprisonment
Cheap Chet	Acquitted.

LEGAL AID

Two Iraqis, Faisal Al-Saadoon and Khulaf Mufdhi, accused of the 2003 murders of SSgt Simon Cullingworth and Sapper Luke Allsop have been granted legal aid to fight a decision by the British to hand the pair over to the Iraqi



authorities for trial. Their British lawyer has launched a High Court legal challenge saying a trial in Iraq would breach their human rights.

SSgt Simon Cullingworth and Sapper Luke Allsop

(pictured) were members of 33 Engr Regt (EOD) serving in Iraq when their vehicle came under sustained attack by rocket grenades fired by the Fedayeen Militia. The pair were eventually captured and dragged injured and bleeding to the local Ba'ath party headquarters. From there they were



taken to an Iraqi military intelligence compound. Footage of the two soldiers dying from gunshot wounds they received while in Iraqi custody were shown on al-Jazeera TV.

Paul Shiner of Public Immunity Lawyers and who is acting for the two accused Iraqis believes the pair would not face a fair trial in Iraq and could face the death penalty if found guilty. Mr Shiner also believes his clients could be tortured and abused whilst in custody. Shiner confirmed that by claiming that to allow the two accused to be put on trial in Iraq would breach their human rights under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. (*Words fail me – Ed*).



News from 33 Engr Regt (EOD)

The branch would like to bid a warm welcome to the new RSM of 33 Engr Regt (EOD), WO1 Justin Spreadborough. Justin joined the Corps in September 1986 as an apprentice welder. After 2 years at the AAC Chepstow and on completion of his Cbt Engr training he was posted to Long Marston as a Welder. Justin then served two years with 33 Ind Fd Sqn in Northern Ireland. During this time he completed his Class 1 Cbyt Engr and a JNCO cadre and was subsequently promoted to LCpl.. Justins promotions progressed as he served with the following units: 36 Engr Regt, Maidstone, 28 Amph Engr Regt in Hameln, 28 Trg Sqn RE at ATR Bassingbourn, 34 Fd Sqn (Air Sp), Battlefield Engr Wing and 48 Fd Sqn (Air Sp).

Justin has seen military tours in the following countries, Canada, Germany, Northern Ireland, Kenya, Cyprus, Oman, Falkland Islands Iraq and Afghanistan. Justin has been married for 17 years to Diana and has 3 daughters and one son.



101 (City of London) Engr Regt (EOD) (V)

The branch would like to warmly welcome Lt Col Aiden Smyth TD RE (V), who has recently taken command of 101 (City of London) Engr Regt (EOD) (V), in Catford. Aiden enlisted into the University of Wales Officer Training Corps in 1987 and was commissioned in 1989. From 1991, he served with 73 Engr Regt and later with 101 Engr

Regt as a Troop Commander. In 1997 he was posted to the University of London OTC as OIC of the RE Wing, before returning to 101 Engr Regt in 1999 as the Reigate Troop Commander. In 2000, he was appointed 2IC of 579 Fd Sqn.



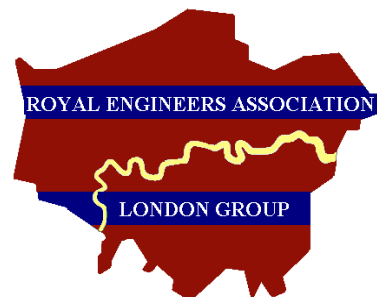
In Jan 2003, Aiden was promoted Major on appointment as OC 221 Fd Sqn and in May 2003, was mobilised for Op TELIC 2 where he served as a SO2

Engr Ops with HQ 3 (UK) Div. On demobilisation in Feb 2004, he was appointed OC 579 Fd Sqn and in 2005 attended the Joint Reserve Command and Staff Course in Toronto. In Jan 2006 he was appointed 2IC of 101 Engr Regt and shortly afterwards was promoted to Lt Col on appointment SO1 RE TA at HQ EinC(A).

He assumed Command of 101 Engineer Regt in Aug 2008. Lt Col Smyth is married with one daughter. He is a search consultant in his civilian career and is currently completing an MSc in International Human Resource Management (Defence) at the Defence College of Management & Technology.

Thank you

A letter of thanks has been received from Sgt J Friel, of 2 (Surrey Yeomanry) Troop, who along with other members of 101 regiment received 'Red Cross' parcels from London Group towards which the branch made a donation. The men were on a voluntary tour in Helmand province of Afghanistan. All the members of this team have now returned safely.



REA LONDON GROUP

Visit to Royal Hospital Chelsea.

September saw members of the branch join other members of the London Group for a tour and get-together at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The members met at the hospital on a rather wet day

but spirits were kept high and the tour, conducted by an In Pensioner, was very successful. After the tour members gathered in the In Pensioners social club to socialise. After a wonderful buffet those who wished went next door to the hospital for a visit to the National Army Museum.

Those who attended would like to thank the RSM of 101 Grant Mackintosh, and Eddie Briggs for organising another successful event.

<http://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/>

ANNOUNCEMENT

REA LONDON GROUP Annual Dinner, February 21st 2009.

London Group are again organising a group dinner to be held at the Union Jack Club in Sandell Street, London on Saturday the 21st of February 2009. The cost of the meal is £27.50p per head.

This year diners will have a choice of starter. Those members who wish to attend should contact the branch secretary.(details at the back of BD News) to book your place and to let him have your order from the menu below All returns have to be in by the 31st of January 2009. Cheques should be sent to the secretary and made payable to **London Group REA**

Starter: Prawn Cocktail **or** Melon with Mango Coulis

Main Course: Chicken Chasseur served with seasonal vegetables and Cretan potatoes or Vegetarian Option (available on request)

Pudding: Apple Tart Bonne Femme served with fresh cream

Followed by Cheese and Biscuits served with Coffee and Petit Fours. Your meal will be accompanied by fine Red and White wines and followed by Port. Please highlight any nut allergies or special dietary needs.

Return to Burnham



Further to the story of branch member Albert Homes' pilgrimage to Branscombe printed in the Spring Issue of BD News, we continue with Albert's travels back to Burnham On Sea.....

as reported in the Burnham and Highbridge Times on the 27th of June 2008.

A bomb disposer who prevented a device going off in Burnham during the Second World War returned to be thanked by the mayor and mayoress. Albert Homes aged 83, met Mayor Peter Clayton and Mayoress Jo BurrIDGE for lunch at the town council building. Albert was 17 when his squad from 7 BD Coy RE was sent to the town to defuse a bomb on the beach in 1943. Now living in Welling in Kent Albert had travelled to Burnham from the RBL Somerset House in Weston. Mr Homes said "It was great to meet the mayor as I could see people had made such an effort to see me. "It was good to be back in the town and I enjoyed walking around and speaking to people about my experiences."

The return trip came about after Albert wanted to discover who gave him an ice cream as thanks for defusing the bomb which, had it gone off, 'would have caused massive damage'. After an appeal in the local Burnham newspaper it was discovered that it was an American who had supplied the ice cream as they would have been the only ones with ice cream at that time. The name of the generous person is still to be found. Cllr Clayton said "I was delighted to welcome Albert back after so many years away.

He is a tremendous character and told us of the work he undertook.

Unlike the recent incident on Burnham beach, Mr Homes explained they did not blow up unexploded bombs, they had to be defused.

I was pleased to offer him an ice cream, which was of course what prompted his return."

Albert remembered the incident and said "Burnham had a bomb sticking out of the sea and on the beach upright.

It seemed to be in the centre of the promenade, so we defused it and dragged it off the beach.

We heard cheering and clapping, there seemed to be hundreds of people there.

I remember we all got a very large ice cream and people were all congratulating us and saying well done – that will always remain with me."



Gerald Fielding, known as Gerry, was born in March 1927.

In 1945 Gerry received his calling up papers. He had to report to Goojerack Barracks Colchester to the Ox' 'n Bucks Light Infantry in April 1945. After training for Burma warfare, he was posted to "D Coy 1st MT Depot RE. Gibraltar Barracks Aldershot for training as a heavy goods driver, he was then posted to No 22 Bomb Disposal HQ Harlow old town. His next posting was on detachment Beaconsfield Bucks with two other sappers. A 3000lb bomb was found 8ft



deep near a local mansion. Gerry being a driver had the job of dragging the bomb to the mansion where the gentleman lived, he was so relieved he gave everyone £2. Another bomb was found and retrieved from a golf course at Amersham Bucks.

This bomb was 250lb, which was a lot to handle. Along with other sappers he was posted to Broxham village near Chelmsford. Gerry was a driver to the CO Major Knight. Once in Southend-on-Sea a bomb was located underneath a house. When visiting the police station we were given kippers, jam and toast and they were very grateful as cafes were scarce. After a spell of dragging the beaches for mines in Great Yarmouth no 22 BDS disbanded. He was then posted to No 9BDS Hyton Liverpool, while on detachment in Moseley Manchester he and other sappers had to guard 600 German prisoners-of-war when not on bomb clearing.



The worthiest prisoners were allowed to work on digging out the bombs which they were not too keen on doing. After two months No 9 was disbanded so he was posted to Wyke Regis near Weymouth this was also a bridging

Company, HQ were at Verne Prison Portland which the RE left in 1948. He served three years.

Gerry and his wife Joyce having lived in various parts of the country eventually settled in Wakefield in West Yorkshire in 1976.

Gerry formed the REA. Wakefield Branch in 1989, after visiting the Wyke Regis training establishment in 1987, when he joined the BDS Association in London.

The Beginning of Bomb Disposal

By Harry Beckingham.

In APRIL 1940 the War office became aware of the problems that unexploded bombs could cause'. In April 1940 the first bomb disposal parties were set up by the War Office who had realised that after an air raid there could be a number of bombs dropped which had failed to explode either by design (delayed action) or due to a fault in the fusing system.

These bombs would have a severe disorganising effect both on essential services and impede the war effort. These parties consisted of a Lance Corporal, one Sapper and a driver. I was one of the first members of such a party. My party of

three was detached from 256 Field Coy. RE at Camforth and posted to Sheffield early in May 1940, where we were instructed in the following drill. It was assumed that after an air-raid any UXB would be found lying on the surface. To deal with this bomb one built a sandbagged wall



around the bomb leaving a small crawl hole in the wall, corrugated steel sheeting was placed on top of the wall and four layers of sandbags placed on top. One then went via the crawl-hole and placed a Gun Cotton charge on the casing of the bomb. It was then detonated in-situ.

We were issued with an Austin car and were instructed to carry out a thorough reconnaissance of the city. We also had to arrange for suitable

dumps to be sited around the city where we could store picks, shovels, sandbags and explosives securely.

In August 1940 we endeavored to re-establish contact with our unit but to no avail, we had been forgotten and left to fend for ourselves. Our salvation came at the beginning of September when a Lt Godsmark arrived in the city with 15 men from the training Battalion designated as No35 Bomb Disposal Section RE. The strength of this unit was increased to 32 men on our arrival in London, on Monday 9th Sept 1940.

On Saturday 7th September 1940 the Germans launched a devastating air attack against the East End of London in an attempt to destroy the Port of London. The afternoon saw 350 bombers escorted by 600 fighter planes making for London. The Luftwaffe pilots had no difficulty to identify their targets in the clear afternoon light.

Bombs were dropped on the East End warehouses lining the River Thames from Woolwich to Tower Bridge. At 20.00 hours the second wave consisting of 247 bombers returned to the target area. West Ham, Stepney Poplar and Southwark took the brunt of this attack. 330 tonnes of high explosive bombs and 16,000 incendiary bombs were dropped.

The 9th of September 1940 No.35 Bomb Disposal Section RE was ordered to London and was billeted at 41, Malford Grove, Wanstead, E11. No 35 Bomb Disposal Section RE was incorporated into No 5 Bomb Disposal Company RE. This Company was responsible for the area North of the River Thames whilst No 2 BD coy RE with headquarters in Balham was responsible for the area South of the river. 5 BD coy had dealt with 470 UXBs during the period 10th – 30th of September 1940 and still had 652 incidents to be cleared.

At this time the only piece of equipment we had was known as the 'Crabtree' Discharger.

The two pin discharger was placed over the boss of the fuse and in turn depressed the two plungers and earthed the electrical charge stored in the condensers in the fuse. After a short time it proved disastrous to use the Crabtree Discharger on any fuse other than a Number 15 Impact fuze.

Between September 1940 and the 11th of January 1941 air raids were a nightly occurrence. During this time 14,755 high explosive bombs and 40,860 bomb canisters containing Incendiary bombs were

dropped over the London area. Each incendiary canister contained 36 Incendiary bombs.

On the 3rd of October 1941 we moved to Gordon Avenue, Stanmore from where we continued digging for UXBs in Wembley, Kilburn, Harrow and Chiswick.

In November 1941 Lt Godsmark left us to join the Earl of Suffolk on experimental work and was replaced by Lt Richards MC. On the 11th of March 1941 the unit moved to Cadogan Gardens, Chelsea and the Duke of York's Barracks in Chelsea. From this location we were working in the West End, Victoria, Kensington, Chelsea and Fulham and on one occasion we dealt with bombs in Green Park and also one which had landed in the rear gardens of Buckingham Palace.

After twelve months of intense activity on the 3rd of September 1941 the Section moved to 60 Creffield Road, Acton, where the other Sections forming No. 5 BD Coy. RE were stationed (Sections 15, 17, 20, 21, 33, 38, 54, 60 and 64).

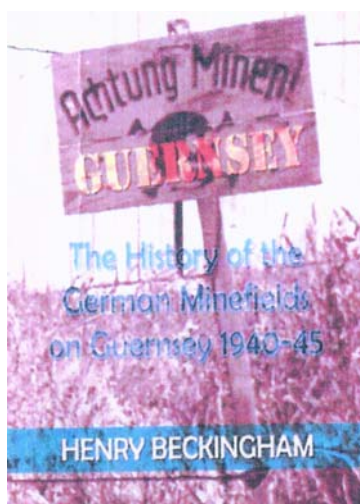
There had been no training carried out by any of the BD Sections during the period September 1940 to September 1941 so intensive weapon training and Field Engineering training was organised in Osterley Park and Richmond Park. The rifle ranges at Pirbright were also used. During this training period I was awarded my first stripe.

In 1942 Major W Parker took command of No.5 BD Coy RE and following intensive training programmes I found myself gaining rapid promotion. February 1942 promoted to Full Corporal March 1942 Promoted to Lance Sergeant April 1942 Promoted to Full Sergeant. After my promotion to Full Sergeant I was sent to the School of Military Engineering at Ripon on numerous courses.

In October 1942 Major Parker suggested that I Should give some consideration to the idea of applying for a commission. After giving his idea much thought and bearing in mind all my old friends had been posted to Northern Ireland, I decided to have a crack at it. I was taken by Captain Holland to meet Colonel Bateman, CO of No 1 BD Group, later I was called to attend a three day assessment course at No.11 War Office Selection Board (WOSB) at Golders Green. At

the termination of the course I was interviewed by a Brigadier who told me I had passed the course and that he was recommending me for a Commission in the Royal Artillery to which I replied. "No, sir if I cannot be commissioned into the Royal Engineers then I would prefer to return to my unit as a Sergeant. I will never know whether this was a test of my determination, but I did go to 140 OCTU RE at Newark where after eight months intensive training I received my Commission in August 1943.

I reported to the CRE at Darlington who informed me that I was awaiting a posting to India, and arranged for me to go to Leeds and join No14 BD Company RE. On arrival in Leeds I found to my surprise that the OC of the Company was a Major Alec Cleghorn under whom I had served in London in No 5 BD Company in 1942. He arranged for my posting to India to be cancelled and appointed me OC No 11 BD Section RE. This section undertook the recovery of a UXB bomb which had landed in Saltcoates Road, Hull. On this bomb I used a seedling of Radium to photograph the Fuze pocket as the markings on the Fuze head had been scoured and were unreadable. On the 9th of September 1944 I returned to Leeds from the Training Camp at Staindrop and on the 18th of September I was posted to Command No.24 Bomb Disposal Platoon RE. I made my way down to Plymouth and found my unit billeted at Fort Tregantle, Cornwall. No 24 BD Platoon RE had been part of No 2 BD Coy RE in London and had been mobilised to form part of Force 135 a Task Force whose ultimate destination was to be the liberation of the Channel Islands at some date unknown.



www.woodfieldpublishing.com

You can read more of Harry's exploits by reading "Living with Danger" or, "Achtung Minen" both written by Harry and available at Woodfield Publishing, Babsham Lane, Bognore Regis, West Sussex. PO21 5EL (telephone 01243 821 234) or



Muppet of the Month Award December

At the trial of Michael Stone in Belfast on the 23rd of September 2008, art expert *Peter Bond*, a senior lecturer at St Michael's College, London, stated that having real nail bombs could "come under the ambit" of *performance art*, as long as there was no intention of setting them off. Stone denies attempting to murder two Sinn Fein leaders at Stormont in 2006. (*Well that's all right then, after all its only art - perhaps it will win the Turner! - Ed*) **STOP PRESS** – Stone has today been sentenced to 16 year in prison. The judge described his defence as "wholly undeserved of belief" and "hopelessly unconvincing".

Our Lad Ricky In this book the author Michael Ruston tells of his several abortive attempts made to join the Army, always failing due to his apparent weakness and ill health due to Asthma and how, on his fifth attempt and in desperation he persuaded his best friend Ben to travel with him to Wolverhampton and take the entrance medical in his place. Having been caught out the recruiters decided to turn a blind eye.



£7.49 per copy

The book high-lights the many precarious and often hilarious situations the author found himself in during the following 19 weeks of basic training.

The book can be purchased either from Michael online at www.crawldog.com/michaelruston/index.php or by sending your payments (payable to M A Ruston) to:

Michael A Ruston
27 Underhill Close
Newport
Shropshire, TF10 7EB

In Remembrance



Sidney John SKULL, known as Bob. (2069245 Sapper), of Shaftsbury, Dorset, who died on the 24th of August 2008. Bob's funeral took place in Salisbury on the 8th of September. Bob joined the Territorial Army in April 1939 at Chelsea Barracks, London and was called up in August 1939. He began serving in Bomb Disposal with 66 BD Section, number 8 BD Section in and around Cambridge and Norwich during World War II. Later in the War Bob was sent to Tunisia in North Africa with the 1st Army, where one of his duties was de-mining the beach at Sousse, where he returned in 2005 on a Heroes Return holiday. From North Africa Bob was sent to Italy to continue the clearance of mines and bombs until demobilised in May 1946. Bob retired in 1986 to Hasting and in 2001 he and Barbara his wife of 53 years moved to Dorset. We would like to thank branch member Walter Higgs for initially informing us of this sad news.



Leslie Charles Mark CLARKE, (2005516 Lance Sergeant), of Rainham, Kent, who died on the 25th of September 2008 aged 91. No further service details are available for Leslie. Leslie was married to Grace and they had four children Wendy, Rodney James, Graham and Dennis. Sadly Dennis predeceased his father in April of 2007. Our thanks to Leslies daughter Wendy Shand for informing us of her father's death

*The Branch Committee and the R E Association staff
convey their sincere condolences to the bereaved families*

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