



Arms News

Issue 16 The Newsletter of the ARMOURERS' ASSOCIATION 2009

President: Mr. E. D. Stratford
Chairman: Mr. A. Briscoe
Vice Chairman: Mr. N. Brown
Secretary: Mr. C. Dennis

55th ANNUAL REUNION

You are invited to attend this year's reunion details are:

DATE: Saturday 5th September 2009
TIME: 1830hrs (Bar Opens 1730rs) Dinner 1930hrs
VENUE: The Victory Services Club
The El Alamein Room
63/69 Seymour Street
LONDON
W2 2HF

Travel Note: Nearest Underground station is Marble Arch. Leave by the Oxford St. North side exit, turn right and after walking about 100yds turn right into Edgware Rd. Turn left into Seymour St. at the 1st set of traffic lights, approx 75yds. Secure parking is available at Cumberland Place, approx 400yds away. A discount is available to those who stay overnight at the VSC. The congestion charge does not apply at the weekend.

COST: £27.00 per head.

Please make cheques payable to: **"The Armourers' Association"**

Please Note: Cheques made payable to any other payee creates accounting problems. The introduction of the Euro mean we now have to pay a handling charge on "Eurocheques" and we have yet to deal with our first payment in euros.

SECURITY: Please be prepared to show membership cards or prove identity at the door. If you wish to have a membership card sent to you please inform the Secretary.

CATERING: Cold Meats Salad
(Seated Buffet) Or
Chicken Curry with Rice, Poppadoms & Condiments

Followed by:
Cheesecake or Gateau & Coffee

DRESS: Gentlemen Lounge Suits/Jacket and Association tie (available from the Secretary).
Ladies: Appropriate to the occasion.

GUESTS: Limited to one per member. **LADIES ARE WELCOME**

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION:

Secretary's Note: I have been in contact with the Reservations Office at the club and they assure me that if you are not a member but are ex-services and attending a function at the club, subject to availability, you will be allowed to book a room for the that night

Accommodation is available at the Victory Services Club for VSC members and non-members attending functions. Those wishing to stay the night should contact Club Reservations: Phone: **020 7723 4474**; Fax: **020 7724 1134**; or e-mail: res@vsc.co.uk

The cost is approx £55.00 per night for a single standard room including breakfast for VSC members. Non-members are welcome, when attending functions, but must pay at the time of booking. En-suite, double and twin rooms are available.

Membership details are available at their web site: www.vsc.co.uk Annual Membership is currently £20.00

ABSENT FRIENDS:

If you are unable to attend the dinner but would like to pass on a message to your friends please inform the secretary when replying. If you are able to pass on up to date information of other members who are out of touch with the Association please feel free to do so and pass on the Association's contact details to them.

ASSISTED ATTENDANCE:

Thanks to the generosity of our members, the Association is able to offer financial assistance to any member who is unable to attend the reunion because of prohibitive costs. This assistance extends to all aspects of the reunion including travel, accommodation and the cost of the function. If any member feels they would be better able to attend the function accompanied by a guest then help to defray the costs incurred by the guest will be considered. There is no minimum or maximum amount each request being considered on it's own merits.

All Requests Are Treated in the Strictest Confidence

Please write to, or phone the secretary, if you feel we may be of help.

This scheme is a reflection of the Associations membership wish to help, many of the donations received specifically mention the Assisted Attendance scheme. It is felt by all that we would be letting down any fellow member who was unable to attend for purely financial reason

ASSOCIATION FUNDS

The President and Chairman, on behalf of all members, would like to thank all those who made donations during the last year. It is your continued generosity that allows the Association to run on a no subscription basis. It also allows us to offer the Assisted Attendance which means that no member is excluded from the annual reunion for purely financial reasons. You should feel rightly proud of your part in the successful running of your Association.

Charitable Donations: 'Eric' the Chairman has asked that we review our policy with regard to making donations. He will present his new ideas to the members attending the dinner in order to obtain feed back

If you have any observations or comments on this please make them known through the Reply Form. A formal vote will be taken at the Annual Reunion.

Likewise if you have any suggestions as to where we might make future donations please let the Secretary know.

ASSOCIATION ACCOUNTS

A copy of the balance sheet for the period 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2008 is attached. Please indicate your acceptance, or otherwise, of these figures in the space provided on the reply form.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE REPLY FORM

In order to save on costs replies will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

ASSOCIATION TIES & PARPHENALIA

The secretary holds a stock of Association ties, lapel badges, plaques and glassware. A list of the most popular

items, with prices is shown on the reverse of the Reply Form, which may be used for ordering. Please contact the Secretary if there are any items you feel we should offer.

The steep rise in the cost of the Pewter Tankard reflects the costs of raw materials that our suppliers have to pass on.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP LIST

An up to date copy of the Association Membership list is available on request, please supply a stamped S.A.E. (Size C5) with your request.

RETURNS

**Numbers attending this year's reunion
MUST be finalised by**

FRIDAY 21st AUGUST 2009

**Please ensure you avoid
disappointment by getting your reply
back to the secretary as soon as
possible.**

**The MAXIMUM number we are able to
accommodate is 90. As they will be
allocated on a FIRST Come FIRST
served basis don't delay in getting
your reply sent.**

OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that we have to inform you that we have learned of the passing of the following Association members since the publishing of last years newsletter.

E.G Ted Hare December 2008
Hilsea 1939

Phone call from Nick Farrant

C. J. Charles Hill December 2008
Melton Mowbray 1942

Phone call from son

Charles Hill: Chas joined up in 1942, training at Melton Mowbray as part of the ER Squad. On completion of his training he was posted to East Africa, where he served in Kenya and Somalia. Completing his service with the British Military Mission in Ethiopia. On return to UK and demobbed in 1947 he became the Senior Examiner, SA & MG at 37 Base Workshops. He transferred to the Directorate of Ammunition Production in 1964 moving on to D.G.W.A. (*Secretary's note: Can anyone translate*) where he remained until he retired. Unfortunately he suffered a stroke in 1995, from which he never fully recovered. However he refused to let this slow him down and turned to a previous love of his poetry, having several pieces published in various anthologies. One piece entitled 'The Armourer' was included in our newsletter of 1998, which is reproduced at the end of this newsletter. With the assistance of his son, Stephen, he was able to join us at two more reunions, both of which he thoroughly enjoyed.

Chairman's Notes

It has been 8 months since I was elected to the Chair at the the last dinner. I had 3 objectives for my first year in chair - to launch a website, to hold another function

and to increase membership of the Association. I see 2 out of 3 as a partial success. I still believe that our prime weakness is an inability to attract and retain serving members; so if you are serving member, use DII to pass the newsletter among the other armourers that you know and spread the word - it is your Association too.

If anybody has any pictures or stories that they would like to spread around then please pass them to Karl Hamilton-Cox. He'll get them put up on the internet and increase the depth of involvement.

Above all get your returns in for the Reunion Dinner; I hope to see a lot more of you there. Until then:

"make all sure."

The Association Website

Just to ensure everyone knows, thanks to the efforts of **Karl Hamilton-Cox (SEME 1981)** we now have our own website at:

www.ukarmourers.org.uk

There is an opportunity to have your own Armourers e-mail address, for the princely sum of £1.00, this will help off set the running costs.

Officers (that sounds posh) of the Association will have an address that will remain with the post. The secretary's is:

secretary@ukarmourers.org.uk

Please help make the website a success by contributing to it, stories, anecdotes photographs anything that will make it interesting

Spring Fling 2009
SASC Weapon Collection, Warminster

Most of you who read the last newsletter will be aware that a trip was organised to the SASC Weapons Collection at the Land Warfare Centre in Warminster on Saturday 4th April. The trip was hosted by the Technical Assistant to the Collection, **Peter Laidler (Carlisle 63A)**. Peter's rather enviable job involves spending his working day surrounded by a functioning example of just about any military small arm you can mention. His role is to keep the collection in working order so that it can serve as a reference library for SASC instructors and other specialists.

The collection is spread through 5 rooms ranging chronologically from the longbow to the SA80 prototype and early production models. In size it ranges from small .22" 'Zip' guns and the 'disposable' .45ACP Liberator pistol to a 17pdr anti-tank gun and 120mm Soviet heavy mortar via pistols, rifles, machine guns, and other support weapons. Each of the 5 rooms having a theme, Assault Rifles, Machine Guns, Support Weapons, etc. The beauty of the collection is that although the atmosphere in the building is humidity controlled and many of the items are in glass cases, all of the cases can be opened up and each weapon can be got down from their place on the wall.

About 15 of us visited, arriving between 10 and 11am. Pete had the kettle on and after a round of fat chewing, we moved into the collection proper. Peter walked us through the collection explaining the different aspects of the collection. After a tour through pistols and rifles it was time for a bite to eat. Peter had booked us into the Sergeants Mess for lunch where a hot buffet was available for the princely sum of £3.50. Suitably fed, we returned to the collection.

We now passed through machine guns, into assault rifles and after a brief trip into

anti-tank weapons we ended up in support weapons. Peter had some very interesting thing to say, particularly about flame-throwers!

My personal favourite was to see and handle the German Fallschirmgewehr 42 (FG42) or Paratrooper's rifle 1942. The FG42 was a truly stunning weapon and was the first assault rifle. The FG42 fired a full size 7.92mm round similar in size and power to a .303 or 7.62mm NATO round. It had a unique operating system that allowed it to fire from a closed bolt in single shot mode but it fired from an open bolt in automatic. It was fed from a detachable 20-round box on the left hand side. It had an integral bipod and a bayonet that stowed beneath the gas cylinder. The internal mechanism was copied by the USA when they produced the M60 machine gun. Only about 7000 were made; the Paratroopers in the German ORBAT were part of the Luftwaffe so Herman Goering allowed and promoted production of the weapon. However Adolf Hitler did not like it so it never went into mass production or get issued to the wider German forces.

Perhaps one of the joys of the visit was the wide spread and overlap of experience present. My own service from 85 to 2007 covers the SLR, SMG LMG, GPMG and SA80 family; I also used the .303 No4 rifle as an Army Cadet. Some gents present worked through the 60's and 70's and so had not see the SA80 family. One or two had not served passed the bolt-action era and so even the SLR was an unknown, never-before handled beast. Quite a few went all misty eyed when their hands moved with familiarity over fine lines of a Rifle, 7.62mm L1A1. Others were able to tell all about Vickers Guns and one member was able to answer some of Peter Laidler's questions on the 'Flame-thrower, roasting Nazis for the use of, Mk1*'.

I'm hoping that Peter will host us again next year for a similar visit, because I for one have not finished in there...

18 Willowslea Road
Worcester
WR3 7QP

Next Trip

A visit has been arranged to the Firearms School of West Mercia Police, just outside Worcester. This is where Chris Dennis, the secretary, plies his trade, at least until a lottery win comes along! There will be an opportunity to see and handle, unfortunately not fire, a range of weapons typically held by a U.K. Police Force. An opportunity to have a go on the Firearms Training Simulator (FATS) and see TASER light up a 'Baco Foil' target.

Although we won't be able to offer any hospitality beyond a 'brew', if enough people are interested we can find a local hostelry that won't put up to much of a fight about taking our money. Directions to the school will be sent to those who reply in the positive, but if you need to know where it's at before you make a decision we are just off Junction 6 of the M5.

The maximum number we can accommodate is 20, so please get in quickly.

DATE: 18 July 2009

TIME: 1100hrs (ish)

LOCATION: West Mercia Police HQ

DIRECTIONS: To be sent on request to those attending

Please contact Chris direct if you wish to come along:

01905-331713 (Work)
01905-755334 (Home)
e-mail: willow18@tiscali.co.uk

Snail Mail:

SECRETARY'S NOTES

Job Opportunity

After 15 years as the secretary to the Association I have decided to call it a day and hand over to a new set of brains. Many of you will have noticed that recently I have been guilty of taking my eye off the ball, this is something that you have tolerated but in all honesty I believe you deserve better. I make no excuses, save that I'm not getting any younger and find the day job makes increasing demands on my time.

What the Association needs now is a **WILLING VOLUNTEER** to take over the administrative running of the Association. In reality an iota of IT skills, access to the internet and a bucketful of enthusiasm will do the trick.

I am quite happy to see the logistics of this years reunion safely tucked away and allow the new Secretary as long as he feels he needs to settle in.

If you feel you would like to take on the task, please contact me, or 'Eric' Briscoe, if you would like to discuss it before the dinner.

I would like to thank every member for their support over the years and your willingness to forgive my errors along the way. In particular I must offer special thanks to our President, **Eric Stratford**, who has supported me throughout, and indeed that of **Betty (NCO i/c Raffles)**. Their wholehearted unquestioning support, not only of me, but the Association as a whole mean that I for one know we have the right man in the post and that behind the throne we are lucky enough to have Betty. Without

them the work of the Secretary would be a much harder task.

A REAL JOB OPPORTUNITY!

OCCASIONAL JOB OPPORTUNITY

Having recently met and worked with JOSS SKOLTOWE the following offer has been made.

Joss owns "The Armoury Department Ltd" providing weapons and associated technical support to the film industry. Amongst his credits are 007 and Lara Croft films, and many others.

Joss occasionally needs additional help, from reliable people who are technically competent and confident around weapons, particularly SA & MG. Any member, with a current passport, who would be interested in this type of work, and available, possibly at very short notice, should contact the secretary with a very short CV at: willow18@tiscali.co.uk for forwarding to Joss.

Still Thriving.....

Carrying on with the history of the Armourers and their titles I would like to thank **Bryan Adams (Arborfield Oct. 1942)** for sending a copy of the 1954 REME Seniority Roll, Armourer Section. This shows that indeed all the senior ranks had 'Armourer' as part of their i.e. Armourer Sergeant-Majors (Warrant officer Class I) however by the 1956 Seniority Roll the 'honorific' of Armourer had been dropped. Is this the first case of the Corps hierarchy trying to stamp on their perception of 'elitism'?

It is also interesting to note the numbers of Senior Rank Armourers in 1954. A total of 432: 22 ASMs; 63 AQMS'; 100 S/Sgts and 247 Sgts. I wonder if we've got that many Armourers of all ranks now?

Following on from **John Ashwell's (Arborfield 53B)** article about the Corps of Armourers in last years ArmsNews. Below is an image of the Corps of Armourer Sergeants Cap Badge, formed by Royal Warrant in June 1858 and absorbed by the Royal Army Ordnance Corps by Army order No. 96 Of 1895.



A Bit More History

Secs Note: Many of you will have realised by now my choice of reading material is somewhat limited (Some might say 'SAD'). However I noted this snippet from the above and it got me thinking

From "TOMMY" The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914 – 1918
Author: Richard Holmes
ISBN: 0-00-713752-4

"A soldier-barber would expect two Woodbines for a haircut, and a piece of gauze, used by Armourers to clear rifle-barrels but much sought after by soldiers who were expected to use boiling water ('not easily procurable') followed by flannelette, was worth a whole packet."

Does todays Armourer know what gauze is? Do they still issue a double pullthrough? And have you only put enough 'effort' into it when the instructor is unable to leave his hand on the barrel because of the heat generated?

For those of you who don't know and those who have gone misty eyed at the thought the following is from:
www.great-war-assoc.org/care_clean.htm

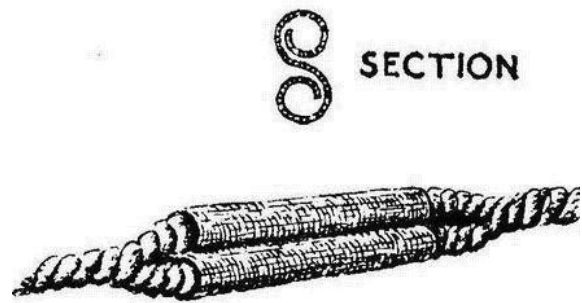
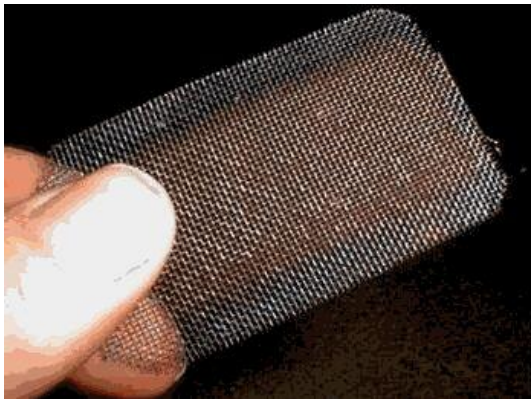


Fig 9.—Wire gauze on a pullthrough

This is the "wire gauze" and it was used to clean rusty bores. It could only be used with the specific permission of an officer because it **"WILL"** damage the bore with continued use. If you have one of these, keep as a curio and go buy a nice, modern bronze bore brush to clean your rifle.

e) Wire gauze, in pieces 2½ inches by 1½ inches, is supplied, and except on active service, should only be used with the permission of an officer for the purpose of removing hard fouling or rust.

In attaching it to the pull-through the following method will be adopted;

- Fold the gauze as in diagram, Fig. 9, so that the longer sides take the form of an "S".
- Open the first loop of the pull-through and put one side of it in each loop of the "S".
- Then coil each half of the gauze tightly round that portion of the cord over which it is placed until the two rolls thus formed meet.

The gauze must be thoroughly oiled before use and care taken to ensure that there are no loose strands of wire which may scratch the bore. The gauze should fit the bore tightly and will, if necessary, be packed with a small piece of flannelette or other soft material to ensure it so fitting.

The gauze should not be allowed to remain on the pull-through except on active service, when it will provide the normal means of cleaning the bore.

No material other than that issued from store is to be used in cleaning the rifle, and the use of cutting or gritty materials such as emery powder or bathbrick is forbidden. Care should be taken to prevent any unnecessary rubbing of the browned (blued) portions of the rifle, since the browning is a preventive against rust.

Armourers at Work



Armourers of the Royal Canadian Army Ordnance Corps, Salisbury Plain August 1914.

From the book, "The Worlds Worst Weapons" The author berates the Ross Rifle for its poor performance in the trenches. Two of the Armourers are posing with Ross rifles, but of interest are the Portable Tool Box/Bench and the Corporal in the background working on a bicycle.

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PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH

Even if you are unable to attend this years dinner please complete and return the Reply Form to the Secretary at:



Or e-mail to either:

willow18@tiscali.co

or

secretary@ukarmourers.org.uk

Please use the form for any messages you may wish to pass on or to order any Association items.

NEXT YEARS REUNION

The reunion for 2010 will be held on the **4th SEPTEMBER 2010** at the Victory Services Club. Please make a note in your diary and endeavour to be there.