



Issue 19 The Newsletter of THE ARMOURERS' ASSOCIATION 2012

President:	Mr. E. D. Stratford
Chairman:	Mr. E. Briscoe
Vice-Chairman:	Mr. N. Brown
Secretary:	Mr. R. D. Cotter
Deputy Secretary:	Mr. C. Dennis

58th ANNUAL REUNION

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

Date: Saturday 01 September 2012
AGM: 17:30hrs (El Alemein Room)
Dinner 18:30hrs for 19:30hrs (Bar opens at 17:30hrs)
Venue: The Victory Services Club
The El Alemein Room
63/69 Seymour Street
LONDON
W2 2HF
Cost: £30.00 per person

(Please make cheques payable to "The Armourers' Association" in Stirling only)

***Travel Note:** The nearest underground station is Marble Arch. Leave by the Oxford St. North side exit, turn right and after walking about 150m turn right into Edgware Road. Turn left into Seymour Street at the first set of traffic lights, approximately 100m. Car parking is available at Q Park Lane underground car park; members may have their ticket franked for a 50% discount when entering via Park Lane, drive through the car park to the Marble Arch end. The congestion charge does not apply at weekends or 6:00PM-7:00AM weekdays.*



The Armourers' Association 58th Annual Reunion

Menu

* * *

*Devon Crab and Prawn Salad with Crisp Leaves &
Maria Rose Sauce, Fresh Lemon & Paprika*

.....

Chicken Curry Buffet with condiments

.....

Chocolate & Cherry Bomb

&

Coffee/Tea/Mints

Note: Vegetarian alternatives are available for those who require them

* * *

Security

Please be prepared to show VSC membership cards or prove identity at the door.

Dress

Gentlemen: Lounge Suits/Jacket and Association tie (available from the Secretary).

Ladies: Appropriate to the occasion.

Guests

Guests are limited to one per member.
LADIES ARE MOST WELCOME

Overnight Accommodation

Accommodation is available at the Victory Services Club for VSC members and non-members attending functions. Those wishing to stay the night should contact the Club.

Reservations: Phone: **020 7723 4474**;
Fax: **020 7724 1134**; or e-mail:
res@vsc.co.uk

The cost is approximately £42.95 per night in the Old Club House, 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 Single 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 provide up-to-date information for members who are out of touch with the Association please



feel free to do so and please pass on the Association's contact details to them.

Assisted Attendance

Thanks to the generosity of our members, the Association is able to offer assistance to any member who is unable to attend the reunion for financial reasons.

All requests are treated in the strictest confidence and assessed on the merits of the individual case.

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

Annual General Meeting

There will be an AGM in the Al Alemein Room commencing at 17:30hrs. An opening address by the President, will be followed by the Chairman presiding over the following motion:

- Alternative venues for the Annual Dinner

Please come prepared to have your say and influence the future of our Association.

Reunion Returns

Numbers attending this year's reunion **MUST** be finalised by **FRIDAY 17th AUGUST 2012**

Please ensure you avoid disappointment by returning your reply to the secretary as soon as possible. The MAXIMUM number we are able to accommodate is 90. Places will be allocated on a FIRST Come FIRST served basis; so don't delay your reply.

Reply Form

The Reply Form is attached to the newsletter and in order to save on costs

replies will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

Return the forms to:

The Secretary
The Armourers' Association



Annual Dinner Cost

Even though we have received a most generous gift from one of our members, the cost of the dinner is still rising. Had we paid for the hire of the venue through our own funds, the true cost to each person attending this year would be £34.20. This is based on 50 people attending, though the numbers have only reached the low forties for the past few years. Therefore the full cost of the dinner for next year will be approximately £35.00, but this is dependent upon attendance and venue. The VSC do not offer an "A La Carte" menu, we must choose the same meal for all. The only exception to this is for vegetarians.

President's Notes

A Word From The President

Oh! Dear! I can hear you say. Here he is, 'Swinging the Lamp' again. I apologise to those who would like to read something more exciting but I have found in the past few years my thoughts go back to the past rather than to the future. Like most of you I have many





memories, happy ones, sad ones, family, army and civvy street. I am very fortunate to be able to share memories of the past 66 years with Betty and we often reminisce and laugh over some amusing episode. Right! Enough of nostalgia.

Before I launch into my piece however, I would like to say something on a more serious note. I wish to say how well our secretary, Bob, has done in a job which in the past year has raised such a major problem, namely a change of venue for our reunion, due to the increased cost of the VSC. This has been discussed several times before but it has never been satisfactorily resolved. I ask that as many of you that can attend the reunion do so, join in the discussion and come prepared with suggested alternative venues if you know of any. It is important that all avenues are explored and a decision arrived at. So thank you Bob and I wish you a successful outcome in September. Our thanks are due also to the generous benefactor who stepped in to save this year's do.

The following account was brought to mind by this year's important landmark in the country's history, namely the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen's reign. I am sure I am not alone in thinking that the celebrations planned are well deserved and hoping that no unpleasant incidents take place to spoil the occasion.

It was within the first month after enlistment that I, along with over a hundred other boy apprentices, and many more men recruits were lining the London to Portsmouth Road outside the barrack gates of the RAOC depot. King George V was travelling by road to Portsmouth to review the fleet at

Spithead on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee and we were there to pay our respects as the royal car passed by. In due course the open-topped car came in view and slowed as it passed us. Seated in the car was the King accompanied by Queen Mary and two of their sons. I'm not sure at this stage who they were but I feel sure one must have been Edward Prince of Wales soon to become King himself and the other the Duke of York, later George VI. The sentries, lined up in front of the barrack gates presented arms and the car moved on towards the naval dockyard a few miles further on where they would board the Royal Yacht, the Victoria and Albert.



*HM King George V & Queen Mary Passing
Hilsea Bks in 1935*

The fleet assembled at Spithead was a most impressive sight, 160 ships (we had a navy then) five battleships and three aircraft carriers. Also in the review there were many warships of foreign navies and during the week before and in the days after, the streets of Pompey were a mixture of our own and other naval and marine uniforms all distinctive and unique to the nationality of the wearer. The Review must have been a wonderful sight, the V & A proceeding



along the lines of ships all of which would be dressed overall with the crew lining the decks. This sight we were not able to see but as darkness fell the ships were all lit up, rigging and hull. We could get an excellent view of this by taking a walk up Portsdown Hill a mile or so away. From this vantage point it was really a spectacular sight. With many of the boys there that day I was to repeat the experience two years later, not a jubilee but a coronation review when we saw King George VI and Queen Elizabeth pass by. Those two occasions were my only brush with royalty or ceremonial parades so I reckon I got off lightly.

Eric Stratford

Chairman's Notes

Firstly I must apologise to you all for not supplying a list of all dates for this year's visit programme to go into the newsletter. It is my intent though to arrange revisits to the SASC Collection at Warminster, the London Proof House and West Mercia Constabulary Firearms School. In addition I hope to arrange a something at the National Firearms Collection (formerly the Enfield Pattern Room) in Leeds. As soon as details are known, then they will be published on the website. I know that does not help those of you that do not have internet; but local libraries have access and are usually quite helpful.



I was disappointed by the turnout at last year's dinner and was surprised at a few

of the regular faces that were not there; I suspect some of the reason may be explained in the next paragraph. Notwithstanding that, it falls to those younger ones of us to encourage our peer group and those even-younger to attend and become the future of the Association. I appreciate their reluctance to attend; I was once young with better things to do myself but that doesn't hide the fact that as someone who passed out of SEME Bordon in 1986, I'm still one of the junior members present. We made some progress with this with the invitation to the top students from SEME to attend the dinner at our expense, sadly neither did, however the offer is extended for a second year and I will shortly be inviting the top students from the 11/12 Training Year.

I, like many others felt that the level of service provided by the VC has been going consistently downwards over the last 10 years; the comment is not aimed at the waiting staff on the night who have been, and continue to be, excellent. Rather, the choices and amount of food has been in steady decline while the price has been in steady increase. Spurred on by the ever-vocal minority, the committee investigated alternate venues and formats including the Corps Mess, other Messes, Legion branches, local hotels and other meeting venues in different parts of the country. We put our ideas out in sample mail-shot and survey received very little feedback, which was upsetting. We did receive an offer from an ex-Apprentice to donate the room-charge that the VSC had requested in advance; with that in mind, the Secretary booked the VSC [again!]. The committee are intending to hold an open meeting prior to the Dinner to discuss future options; please make every effort



to attend so we can discuss the future of the Reunion Dinner and Association.

Please all of you get out there and spread the word about the Dinner and the visits and the AGM. Lets have a much better turn-out this year and wider cross-section of members attending.

On a positive note, I would like to express my thanks to our Secretary, Bob Cotter, for doing all the work that you're reading about now. Without his efforts and badgering then very little would happen at all.

See you at the AGM, Dinner and visits.

Andrew Briscoe

Secretary's Notes

Membership

Since taking over as Secretary and setting up our web site in 2009, we have had a steady stream of new and re-joining members. Below is a breakdown of our membership and it is very noticeable that we are not receiving many requests for membership from the younger members of the Corps. If you have the opportunity, please make every effort to encourage our younger members to join; they are after all the people who will continue our traditions long after we older members have passed on.



Active	306
Inactive	2
Deceased	10
News Letter Returned	14
Total	332

Of the above total, below are the numbers of new/re-joining members by year, since the inception off the web site:

2009	11
2010	28
2011	19
2012 (so far)	9

Association Accounts.

A copy of the balance sheet for the period 1st January to 31st December 2011 is attached. Please indicate your acceptance, or otherwise, of these figures in the space provided on the reply form.

Association Website

Our address: www.ukarmourers.org.uk

In the past few months I have revamped the web site, hopefully to make it look and feel friendlier. We are still receiving about 1,000 hits per month on the site and it is doing its job of making people aware of whom we are and what we do.

Association Email Address

Apply for your own unique Association email address

["yourname"@ukarmourers.org.uk](mailto:'yourname'@ukarmourers.org.uk)

The uptake has been slow so far, but there are plenty available for all.

Association Shop

The shop can be found on our website and sells Association memorabilia such as Ties, Plaques, Mugs, Glasses and Badges. The reply form has details if you wish to order anything.

Bob Cotter



Visits 2012

Last year our Chairman worked hard to provide us with some interesting places to visit. We will arrange some visits again this year, so if you wish to attend contact The Secretary for details:

Potential visits for this year are:

- West Mercia Police, Firearms School – **Date: 16 June 2012**
- Royal Armouries, Leeds – **Date: 21 July 2012 (TBC)**
- London Proof House – **Date: 20 October 2012**
- SASC Collection Warminster – **Date: TBA (Possibly Mar 2013)**

The visit to the West Mercia Police Firearms School will include the following:

Greater time with the Firearms Simulator, display of Police Ballistic Protection plus the usual weapons display and waffle. Many thanks to Chris Dennis for making the arrangements and giving up his time to host us.

The visit to the Royal Armouries, Leeds will cost £10.00 per person, including a minimum charge of £150.00, **so we require at least 15 people to attend** with the maximum being 20. If you put your name down for the visit please make sure that you **can** and **do** attend. The £10.00 will need to be paid in advance and will only be refundable if the visit is cancelled due to lack of numbers. This is a worthwhile visit as we will have one of the curators as a guide and will also be able to handle selected pieces from the pattern room.

Ancestry Research

Many of us have carried out some form of research into our family history, whether it is just talking to family members or full-blown research using the wealth of facilities available through local and national archives, books and web sites. I have been interested in family history for a number of years, but sadly took it up too late to talk with some of the older family members. This has meant that a lot of my research has been through anecdotal discussions and on line archival records.

My Grandfather, on my Mother's side, particularly interested me because of his participation in WWI. Not being able to talk with him directly meant that I had to talk to close family and also do a little bit of digging on the Internet.

He was called up to the Cambridgeshire Regiment and served in France, where he was injured and returned to England for rest and recuperation.



Fred Minett circa 1915

I was only able to confirm the story as told to me after finding his medal record.



Name	Regt.	Rank	Regt. No.
MINETT	* 1/1st Camb. R.	Pl.	2808 325953.
First			
Medal	Date	Page	Remarks
Victory	* 11/10/16	1568	Decorat.
Service	do	do	
15 Years	11/1/58	25	
Theatre of War described in <u>W. France</u>			
Date of entry theatre <u>10.7.15</u>			

This led to the recovery of his medals and remounting them for display. The ribbon above the medals is the original worn by my Grandfather.

Then one day in discussion with my father, I found that my Grandfather had given him his Regimental cap badge.

So now I was able to bring his pictures, cap badge and medals together



A brief history of the 1/1st Battalion The Cambridgeshire Regiment in France

On the outbreak of war in August 1914, the 1st Battalion was at full strength and had just returned from Annual Camp. From it was formed the 1/1st Battalion for overseas service. It landed in France on 15 February 1915.

The 1/1st Battalion served continuously in France and Flanders from 1915 to 1919. The Regiment also raised the 2/1st, 3/1st and 4/1st Reserve and Drafting Battalions, the Depot, the 62nd Provisional Battalion for Home Service and three Volunteer battalions for guard duties at Home.

A total of 77 Officers and 789 Other Ranks were killed in action or died of wounds and 3,299 all ranks were wounded. The 1/1st Battalion earned 27 Battle Honours for the Regiment and received over 300 awards for gallantry.

Probably the most outstanding exploit of the 1/1st Battalion was the capture of the Schwaben Redoubt in October 1916. This strong fortress dominated Thiepval and the Ancre and successive attacks by the 18th Division had failed to take it. 1/1st Cambridgeshires with 4/5th Black Watch finally gained it on 15 October after hours of bitter fighting and severe losses. The action was the subject of a special commendation by Field Marshal The Earl Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, who referred to it as 'one of the finest feats of arms in the history of the British Army'. In the course of the battle a reconnaissance aircraft dropped a message at brigade headquarters saying simply 'Cambridgeshires going over as if on parade'. This achievement cost the Battalion 13 Officers and 200 Other Ranks killed or wounded.

An incident illustrating the fighting spirit of the 1/1st Battalion occurred at the end July 1917, during the offensive at St Julien. C Company had attacked and captured Border House, its objective, beyond the Hanebeek but, at a later stage, the position was outflanked and the survivors of the Company were ordered to fall back. A Runner with a



bandaged head brought this message to Battalion Headquarters;

'I received a message by Orderly to retire, but as Capt Jonas, before he was killed, said we were not to retire without written orders from the CO, I am holding Border House. There are only three of us left alive and two of those chaps is wounded. I am holding Border House until I get written orders to retire. (Signed) Private Muffet. 7.30 pm.'

The Cadre of the 1/1st Battalion returned home in May 1919 to a civic reception given by the City of Cambridge, where the wife of the Lord Lieutenant dressed the Colours with Victors' wreaths of laurel. The battalion was greeted with wide acclaim throughout the County.

If you have any questions about researching your family history and would like some assistance then you are welcome to contact me and I will do my best to assist.

Bob Cotter

The Lewis Gun



The Lewis Gun (or Lewis Automatic Machine Gun) is a World War I – era light machine gun of American design that was perfected and widely used by the British Empire. It was first used in

combat in World War I, and continued in service with a number of armed forces through to the end of the Korean War. It is visually distinctive because of a wide tubular cooling shroud around the barrel and a top-mounted drum-magazine. It was commonly used as an aircraft machine gun, almost always with the cooling shroud removed, during both World Wars.

US Army Colonel Isaac Newton Lewis invented the Lewis Gun in 1911, based on initial work by Samuel Maclean. Despite its origins, the Lewis Gun was not initially adopted by the American military—most likely because of political differences between Lewis and General William Crozier, the Chief of the Ordnance Department. Lewis became frustrated with trying to persuade the US Army to adopt his design and so "slapped by rejections from ignorant hacks", as he said, retired from the army. He left the United States in 1913 and headed to Belgium (and shortly afterwards, the UK). He established the Armes Automatique Lewis Company in Liege to facilitate commercial production of the gun. Lewis had been working closely with British arms manufacturer the Birmingham Small Arms company (BSA) in an effort to overcome some of the production difficulties of the weapon.



Pan magazine as used on a 7.92x57 Lewis Gun



The Belgians quickly adopted the design in 1913, using the .303 British round, and in 1914, BSA purchased a license to manufacture the Lewis Machine Gun in the UK, which resulted in Col. Lewis receiving significant royalty payments and becoming very wealthy. The onset of World War I increased demand for the Lewis Gun, and BSA began production (under the designation Model 1914). The design was officially approved for service on 15 October 1915 under the designation "Gun, Lewis, .303-cal." No Lewis Guns were produced in Belgium during World War I; BSA in the UK and the Savage Arms Company in the US carried out all manufacture.



Recruits of the Singapore Volunteer Force training with a Lewis gun, 1941.

Although the two guns were largely similar, there were enough differences to stop them being fully interchangeable. The BSA-produced weapons were not fully interchangeable with other BSA-produced Lewis guns, although this was rectified during World War II. The major difference between the two designs was that the BSA weapons were chambered for .303 British ammunition, and the Savage guns were chambered for .30-

06 cartridges, which necessitated some difference in the magazine along with the feed mechanism, bolt, barrel, extractors, and gas operation system. Savage did make Lewis Guns in .303 British calibre; the Model 1916 and Model 1917 were exported to Canada and the United Kingdom and a few were also supplied to the US military, particularly the navy. The Savage Model 1917 was generally produced in .30-06 calibre; a number of these guns were supplied to the UK under lend-lease during World War II.

Specifications

Weight: 28 pounds (13 kg)

Length: 50.5 inches (1,280 mm)

Barrel length: 26.5 inches (670 mm)

Width: 4.5 inches (110 mm)

Cartridge: .303 British

.30-06 Springfield

7.92x57mm Mauser

Action: Gas operated

Rate of fire: 500–600 rounds/min

Muzzle velocity: 2,440 feet per second (740 m/s)

Effective range: 880 yards (800 m)

Maximum range: 3,500 yards (3,200 m)

Feed system: 47 or 97-round drum magazine

Sights: Blade and Tangent Leaf

Article courtesy of Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



Obituaries

Sadly we must say our last farewell to the following Armourers who have passed on since the last edition of the newsletter.

Cecil Ashford 19?? - 2011

Peter Ashford writes:

Sadly I must inform you of the death of my father, Mr. Cecil Ashford at Barking Hall nursing home on the 2nd of March 2011. My father was a member of the association, a past REME Warrant Officer who following his army career of 22 years joined H.M. Customs and Excise to complete a further 25 years. I believe that following his passing out from Arborfield he became the youngest army sergeant and whilst we as family were posted to Singapore during the insurgency he was involved in the tropical trails of the SLR. I recall learning at the age of 6 how to strip, clean, assemble, load and fire a BREN.

Joe Reynolds 1910 – 2012

Our President Eric Stratford writes:

It was with great sadness that I learnt of the death of Joe on 7th January this year. Joe is an old friend from our early days at Hilsea and will be sorely missed.

I first met Joe at the RAOC Depot in May 1935, we were both on the same intake of armourer boy apprentices and saw a lot of each other during that time. After passing out we lost contact, but met up a few years later at an Armourers reunion which we regularly attended as well as the Italy Star Association where we were standard bearers together one year.

Joe was a remarkable man, a man of many skills, wide experience and interested in many subjects. He made the most of life and grasped its opportunities. His two sons and their wives, Christopher and Avril, and Peter and Yvonne to whom we extend our deepest sympathy survive him.

Secretaries Note:

Eric has written a more detailed account of Joe, which he has sent to the Craftsman Magazine and will be published on the web site when available.

Notices

Mike Homard, who is known to some of you from previous requests, needs any tools; gauges; E.M.E.R's; A.E.S.P's; I.S.P.L's and user handbooks that you might have lying around. In addition, **anything** else related to our respected trade, including ordnance weapon related items, which would all be gratefully received. Please contact the Secretary in the first instance.

Quote Of The Day

I used to believe that anything was better than nothing. Now I know that sometimes nothing is better.

Glenda Jackson