



Issue 20 The Newsletter of THE ARMOURERS' ASSOCIATION 2013

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

59th ANNUAL REUNION

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

Date: Saturday 07 September 2013
AGM: 17:30hrs (Trafalgar Room)
Dinner 18:30hrs for 19:30hrs (Bar opens at 17:30hrs)
Venue: The Victory Services Club
 The Trafalgar Room
 63/69 Seymour Street
 LONDON
 W2 2HF
Cost: £35.00 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 59th Annual Reunion Menu

* * *

Classic Prawn Cocktail, Maria Rose Sauce, Fresh Lemon & Paprika

.....

*Chicken Korma or Beef Madras Curry Buffet
With*

Pilau Rice, Onion Bhaji, Garlic Naan, Poppadom and Side Dishes

.....

*Apple Pie with Cinnamon Ice Cream
&
Coffee/Tea/Mints*

Note: Vegetarian alternatives are available for those who require them, please let the secretary know your requirements e.g. vegetarian curry or salad

* * *

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 do so and pass on our 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 Trafalgar Room commencing at 17:30hrs. The members attending will address the following business:

- Election of our new President
- Venue and format for the Armourers' Association 60th Anniversary Dinner 2014
- Official Guest(s) for the 60th Anniversary Dinner
- Change to our Constitution to permit Armourers from other Services to join our Association (e.g. RAF & Navy)

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 16th AUGUST 2013**

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
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The IT savvy amongst you may simply return the reply form via email to the following address:

secretary@ukarmourers.org.uk

Annual Dinner Cost

This year one of our members (Peter Laidler, Carlisle 63A) has most generously paid £400.00 towards the hire of the venue. Our President, Eric Stratford has donated the remaining £60.00. This follows on from the anonymous donation to pay for the hire of the venue last year and shows that we have some very committed members out there.

The cost of the dinner, whilst slightly higher than last year, is still less than would have been and will greatly reduce the burden to the majority of our members.

Please remember that 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

This is my last contribution to the Arms News under this heading. For me, the end of an era. Being President of this Association has been a rewarding experience affording many pleasurable and memorable occasions. In recounting some of those occasions I feel that a brief review of the earlier days would not be amiss.



In the mid 50s the senior armourer at EME 7 at the War Office, Lt Col Ted Smith, aided by Major John Dean, HQ London District, initiated the Armourers' Dinner Club. Although the first dinner was held in the December of 1955, it was decided to hold future dinners in May. This was to take advantage of the presence of the many armourers in the country as competitors in the REME Rifle meeting at Bisley. This pushed the numbers attending up to about 150. For many years the venue was the Green Jackets Drill Hall in Davies Street, near Bond street underground station, which despite its basic facilities and décor suited us well.

During the first few years I was abroad twice, Italy and Malaya, and in distant parts of the UK in between, so was unable to attend. It wasn't until I was discharged and working in REME Tech Group at Woolwich that I was recruited to the committee and have attended every reunion since. The committee met in the Civil Services Club in Whitehall. We had several commissioned armourers, AIAs (Assistant Inspector of Armourers) in the area; one at London District HQ being the Secretary. These were able, through their normal contacts, to disseminate information relevant to the reunion to the many local units. However, with the retirement of personnel, defence

cuts and changes in army establishments this valuable facility was lost. This did mean that attendance numbers fell, but the succeeding secretaries have done their best to retain interest and spread the word.

Among the highlights of those first few years that comes to mind are the following landmarks; Col Smith made contact with the Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers in the City of London. This proved very useful as visits to the Armourers Hall were arranged and the Company instituted an annual award of a medal to be presented to the best armourer competitor at the REME Rifle Meeting. It was about this time too that donations were requested from armourers and a fine trophy was commissioned for presentation to a winning team at the annual shoot. It is a large cup, silver I believe, on a rectangular base with a figure of a soldier at each corner. You will understand that attendance at the annual shoot at Bisley figured largely in the aspirations of most armourers. This was because it provided an excellent opportunity of meeting old friends, and there were many of them, as well as testing your shooting skills. In the pre-war days at Hulsea, with approximately 130 boys together in one barrack block during a period of more than four years, many strong friendships were forged. AIAs figured prominently in the administration of the meeting and supervision of the ranges. Armourers names were always to be seen on the leader boards. The champion shot in many years was an armourer. My last appearance at Bisley was in 1963, the year before my discharge; I was pleased that as the captain of a team from 27 Comd Wksp at Warminster, I received the Armourers' Trophy along with several others as reward for our efforts.

In 1980 when the reunion was in its new venue, the Victory Services Club, the



association was honoured to host the first Director General Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as our guest. The association was also honoured to host, on separate occasions, two masters of the Armourers and Brasiers Company.

In 1983 it was decided that the association would provide a book to be awarded to the top armourer apprentice at the annual passing out ceremony. I was honoured to be asked to present the first one. It was a great day for Betty and me and also a first for me never having had my own passing out. A brief inspection and a few words to a small group as we were ready to go to the station to catch our train to our new unit was all we got. In 2005 Chris and I were invited to a dinner at the Armourers Hall. It was a glittering affair in a really splendid setting (see the web site).

As President I have had good support and help from our Secretaries, especially Chris who introduced ideas that provided fresh interest among members. With the introduction of modern technology our current Secretary is making the association more widely known and more accessible. To them all, I give my thanks. I also wish to thank those members whose services or financial support has been so important to our programme of visits and our reunion. These thanks include those who so kindly send a donation for the benefit of those who for reasons of distance or cost of accommodation cannot attend. It is much appreciated.

I've enjoyed my reunions, it's like being in a family. I have met and still meet, or keep in touch with, even now, some from my apprentice days, so long ago. Along with others I was especially pleased when ladies were invited as guests in 1980. Betty, who has always shared my armourer's life, could come and meet many armourers she knew

already and many that she had only heard about.

I leave you in good hands. I feel sure that under the present team and with your support the association will not fail to attract new members. My best wishes and thanks to you all.

Eric Stratford

Chairman's Notes

Greetings to all the Association Members and Armourers out there.



As you may already know, following the planned resignation of our long-standing President, Eric Stratford, the Committee has elected former Secretary Chris Dennis to the post. Chris is President-elect until ratified (hopefully) at the Reunion Dinner.

Thanks go to the members who have made donations to the Association to enable us to book the VSC long before we have to ask you, the members, to pay for dinner.

I hope that the presence of the Association on Facebook will bring an increase in attendance at this year's dinner. There are certainly a few members that I only recognise from the Dinner, that I see regularly on Facebook, so there is hope. Facebook also reaches the younger members, many of whom have combat records not dissimilar to our WW2 veterans.

As a member of the TA, I know that the variety of Small Arms now in service is unmatched since the second World War. An 8-man section typically has 4 rifles (2 with a 40mm grenade launcher), two 5.56mm Light Support Weapons and two



5.56mm Light Machine Guns. But they may also have a 7-shot 12-bore shotgun, 7.62mm 'Sharpshooter' rifle and/or 7.62mm GPMG. Variety is the spice of life and 7 different weapons in an Infantry Section – eight if you count side-arms - makes for a very spicy Spares Battle-box! A constant topic on Facebook and other forums has been the older serving members bemoaning the lack of engineering hand-skills among the newer tradesmen. However the newer tradesmen do have rather full plates in terms of the sheer number of small arms, other weapon systems and ancillaries that they are supposed to be competent in maintaining. In addition to 'traditional' support weapons like the light mortar (was 2", then 51mm, now 60mm), 81mm mortar, GPMG SF equipment, they also have to know 40mm Grenade Machine Gun, .50" Browning MG and 7.62mm Chain Gun, plus all the sights and sighting systems for the above. Depending on posting they may also be hands-on tradesman on the 105mm Light Gun, 155mm AS90 and the 120mm main armament on the Challenger. I appreciate that those of us who became Artificers were effectively dual traded, but if we are honest very few opened a toolbox on a regular basis once we had acquired that status. I have chosen not to mention cooksets, bicycles, compasses, laundry units and sundry engraving machines.

Those of you coming to the dinner, should aim to take advantage of Richard Mabbitt's guided tour of the London Proof House. It is a fascinating and worthwhile visit. On the subjects of visits, attempts to arrange a visit to SASC Weapon Collection have been stymied by the – hopefully – temporary closure of the Collection. It remains to be seen what access can be granted to the REME's own weapon collection that used to grace the Armourers' Hall at Bordon (and possibly other places besides). I intend to be able to answer that question by the time

of the Dinner. The weapons assembled in the Enfield Pattern Room are now the National Firearm Collection (NFC) and are held at the Royal Armouries in Leeds. Access to the NFC requires pre-booking and a fixed fee of £150, so this requires quite a few members to attend to reduce the cost to an acceptable level.

I think that's enough from me. See you at the Dinner!

Andrew Briscoe

Secretary's Notes

Membership

Wow, what a year 2012 has proved to be for new members. On looking at the membership list and counting up, there are 62 new and re-joining members for the year. Half of them joined after the annual dinner in September, when we linked in with the Facebook Armourers forum and provided a membership application form on the web site. So, total membership is up on last year and will hopefully continue in the same vein this year. Membership figures are as follows:

Active Members	357
Inactive Membership*	38
Total	395



* Members who are:

- Deceased
- News letter returned unopened
- Email address no longer exists



Below are the numbers of new/re-joining members by year, since the inception of the web site:

2009	11
2010	28
2011	19
2012	62
2013 (so far)	9

Association Accounts.

A copy of the balance sheet for the period 1st January to 31st December 2012 is on the last page. 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

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. You will see that we now have some adverts on the web site, when you click on these it earns the Association a few pence. This can potentially be a source of income, which could make the site self-sustaining with regard to running costs. So, get clicking, you don't have to buy anything if you don't wish to, but the click will still be registered to earn us some income.

Association Email Address

Apply for your own unique Association email address

{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 dinner reply form has details if you wish to order anything.

Bob Cotter

Eric Stratford

A Tribute

Chairman: 1976 – 1994

President: 1995 – 2013



As Eric steps aside to take a well earned rest it is only right that we pause to take a look at what he has done for our Association over the past 37 years.

As a long time supporter of the Armourers' Association, Eric's attendance at the annual dinners and his involvement in its running is unlikely to be bettered or exceeded. In 1976 the office of president was created and Lt. Col. (Retd) E.F. Smith was unanimously elected to that office in recognition of his long service to the association as its first chairman. This left that post of chairman vacant, and again unanimously, Eric was elected to fill this post. His first major task in 1978 was to canvas for and approve the design of a Badge of Office for the president, by the end of 1980 the approved badge was manufactured in Birmingham and accepted by Eric, at the 1981 dinner the



Guest of Honour, Mr. Basil H. A. Chambers, Master of the Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers, presented the badge.

In 1995 our incumbent President, Maj. (Retd) Marshall Chetwynd, announced that owing to ill health he would be standing down, Eric had also expressed a wish to step down from the office of Chairman and this coincided with Bill Thorne, the secretary, stepping down from his post. What could have been a crisis for the Association was managed in the way armourers have managed for many years and a smooth transition was achieved. Eric agreed to stand for, and was unanimously elected to the office of President. Bill stood for and was elected Chairman and a new secretary, Chris Dennis, was also elected. Once again the cool hand of Eric steered the Association through a turbulent time.

Eric's time as President has, I'm sure he would agree, two major highlights. In 2000 reorganisation within REME led to the announcement that the two weapons trades, armourer and gun fitter, would be combined into a single Career Employment Group (CEG) to be known as a Weapons Mechanic. Fur had been ruffled! Indignant letters were sent to various holders of high office but perhaps the most telling was that of Eric to H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh. Clearly stating that we did not seek to change policy but pointing to the historical part that the holders of the title Armourer had played in history and continued to play in the modern forces. The letter was duly acknowledged by an Equerry and in November a letter was received from His Highness' private secretary informing us that the trade title of Armourer was to be retained.

In 2004 the Association celebrated its 50th dinner at the VSC where 90 members sat down to dine with their guests. The Guests

of Honour were Brigadier Stephen Tetlow, DEME(A) and Mr Anthony Pontifex, Master of The Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers, accompanied by his wife Jan. Presided over by Eric the evening was a great success culminating in the presentation of suitably engraved decanters to the Master and DEME(A).

To record all of Eric's service to the Association would involve the production of a mighty tome. However it is worth pointing out that whilst Eric has given so willingly of his time and expertise to us he has continued to be an active member of many other organisations, his local Royal British Legion, the REME Association, the Italy Star Association, the Old Grey Horse Club and I'm sure many others all of whom have benefitted from his willingness to be involved.

Finally it would not be right to acknowledge Eric's contribution to the Association without mentioning his good lady Betty. Betty has always supported Eric both in his military and civilian careers. Always by his side it is difficult to think of them as two separate entities. Like him she always wants to be actively involved. Her support for the Association has perhaps earned her the accolade 'First Lady of The Armourers' Association'.

It is difficult to imagine the Association without Eric's active involvement and guidance. However he has earned the right to relax and enjoy his membership and bathe in the heartfelt thanks of every member of the Association who owe him so much.

Anon



Visits 2013

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:

Visits arranged for this year are:

- West Mercia Police, Firearms School
 - **Date: 22 June 2013**
- London Proof House
 - **Date: 07 September 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 **London Proof House** visit will take place on the day of the annual reunion dinner (07 Sept) and will be hosted by Richard Mabbitt, Proof Master. By holding the visit on the day of the dinner we hope that it will encourage more of you to attend and also make a day of the visit to London enabling us to spend that bit more time with comrades and friends.

President Elect

Last year, as you are aware, nomination forms for the post of President were sent out to all members. The following nominations were received:

Chris Dennis

Proposer: Roger Traves

Seconders: Brian Rae, Arthur Maddock, Nigel Brown and John Buckland

Roger Traves

Proposer: Lloyd Letiec

Seconder: None

As only one valid nomination has been received, the committee has decided unanimously that our President Elect should be Chris Dennis. This is to be ratified by a vote at the AGM on 7th Sept in lieu of a formal postal vote.

The AK-47

A Short History of the AK-47, also known as the Kalashnikov or AK



AK-47 Type 2

The Germans were the first to pioneer the assault rifle concept, during World War II, based upon research that showed that most firefights happen within 400 meters and that contemporary rifles were overpowered for most small-arms combat. The Germans sought to develop a select-fire intermediate powered rifle combining the firepower of a submachine gun with the accuracy and range of a rifle. This was done by shortening the standard 7.92×57mm cartridge to 7.92×33mm and giving it a lighter 125 grain bullet, that limited range but allowed for more controllable automatic fire. The result was the Sturmgewehr 44.



Like the Germans, the Soviets were influenced by experience showing most combat happens within 400 meters and that their soldiers were consistently outgunned by heavily armed German troops, especially those armed with the Sturmgewehr 44 assault rifles. The Soviets were so impressed with the Sturmgewehr 44, that after World War II, they held a design competition to develop an assault rifle of their own. The winner was the AK-47.



Mikhail Kalashnikov

Mikhail Kalashnikov began his career as a weapon designer while in a hospital after he was shot in the shoulder during the Battle of Bryansk. After tinkering with a submachine gun design, he entered a competition for a new weapon that would chamber the 7.62x41mm cartridge developed by Elisarov and Semin in 1943 (the 7.62x41mm cartridge predated the current 7.62×39mm M1943). A particular requirement of the competition was the reliability of the firearm in the muddy, wet, and frozen conditions of the Soviet front line. Kalashnikov designed a carbine, strongly influenced by the American M1 Garand, that lost out to the Simonov design (scaled down PTRS-41), that later became the SKS semi-automatic carbine. At the same time, the Soviet Army was interested in developing a true assault

rifle employing a shortened M1943 round. Sudayev presented the first such weapon in 1944, but trials found it to be too heavy. A new design competition was held two years later where Kalashnikov and his design team submitted an entry. It was a gas-operated rifle, which had a breech-block mechanism similar to his 1944 carbine, and a curved 30-round magazine.

Kalashnikov's rifles (codenamed AK-1 and -2) proved to be reliable. The weapon was accepted for a second round of competition, along with designs by A.A. Demetev and F. Bulkin. In late 1946, as the rifles were being tested, one of Kalashnikov's assistants, Aleksandr Zaytsev, suggested a major redesign of AK-1, particularly to improve reliability. At first, Kalashnikov was reluctant, given that their rifle had already fared better than its competitors. Eventually, however, Zaytsev managed to persuade Kalashnikov. The new rifle was produced for a second round of firing tests and field trials. The Kalashnikov assault rifle model 1947 proved to be simple and reliable under a wide range of conditions with convenient handling characteristics. Production began on 6 July 1947 and in 1949 it was adopted by the Soviet Army as the "7.62mm Kalashnikov assault rifle (AK)".

The AK-47 is best described as a hybrid of previous rifle technology innovations: the trigger, double locking lugs and unlocking raceway of the M1 Garand/M1 carbine, the safety mechanism of the John Browning designed Remington Model 8 rifle and the gas system and layout of the Sturmgewehr 44. Kalashnikov's team had access to all of these weapons and had no need to "reinvent the wheel", though he denied that his design was based on the German Sturmgewehr 44 assault rifle. Kalashnikov himself observed: "A lot of Russian Army soldiers ask me how one can become a constructor, and how new weaponry is



designed. These are very difficult questions. Each designer seems to have his own paths, his own successes, and failures. But one thing is clear: before attempting to create something new, it is vital to have a good appreciation of everything that already exists in this field. I myself have had many experiences confirming this to be so."

There are claims about Kalashnikov copying other designs, like Bulgina's Tkb-415 or Simonov's AVS-31. In a History Channel special about the AK-47, an interviewer asked Mikhail Kalashnikov if he had been influenced by the Sturmgewehr 44 design at all. Kalashnikov became very irate and angrily refuted the idea that the Sturmgewehr 44 design had been an influence on him in any way whatsoever; however, it is known that Kalashnikov's team had direct access to examples of the Sturmgewehr 44.

Abridged Version, Courtesy: Wikipedia – The Free Encyclopedia (sic)

Obituaries

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

Jock Massie (Arborfield 55A)

After opening the News Letter, his Landlord phoned in June 2012 to say he passed away in July 2011

Keith Thomas (Arborfield 1955)

His Son phoned to say that sadly he passed away 18 Sep 2012.

Ron Jordan (Melton Mowbray 1943)

An email from his son, Russell, informed that he sadly passed away on 10 March 2013 peacefully.

Notices



Join the growing band of Armourers having their say on Facebook. Look for the Armourers' Forum on Facebook and request to join or put this link into your web browser:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/367442719974877/>

We hope some of you facebook members will join us at the dinner this year where you will be able to meet old friends and perhaps make some new ones.

Feedback from the 2012 AGM

Comments received on the AGM reveal that there is an appetite for holding a function further north than London. If anyone would like to volunteer to organise a function to test the waters, please contact the [Secretary](#)

(The above notice has been on the web site for several months now, with no response from anyone.)

Quote Of The Day

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965)



The Armourers Association Accounts
01 January - 31 December 2012

INCOME

Reunion Income	£ 1,230.00
Donations	£ 605.70
Raffle	£ 211.00
Interest	£ 0.86
Email Fee	£ -
Other Income	£ 1.00 1
Post & Packing	£ 20.55
Sale of Ties Old Type)	£ 18.00
Sale of Ties (New Type)	£ 7.50
" " Lapel Badge	£ 12.00
" " Tie-Tac	£ 5.00
" " Assoc. Plaque	£ 42.00
" " Glassware	£ -
" " Pewter Tankard	£ -
" " Pewter Wpns	£ 37.00
Total Income	£ 2,190.61

EXPENDITURE

Reunion VSC	£ 1,276.45
VSC Deposit	£ 460.00
Fd of Remem.	£ 59.50
Printing	£ 211.00
Cfn Subscription	£ 24.00
Postage	£ 199.49
Raffle Prizes	£ 12.00
Stock Purchase	£ 37.00
Website Costs	£ -
Total Expenditure	£ 2,279.44

Cash @ Bank (B/F 2011)	£ 3,239.39
SUB-TOTAL:	£ 5,430.00
Less Expenditure	£ 2,279.44
Total	£ 3,150.56

ASSETS

Cash @ Bank	
Current Account	£ 1,174.56
Deposit Account	£ 1,976.00
Total	£ 3,150.56

STOCK	Qty	
Ties Old	25	£ 225.00
Ties New	51	£ 433.50
Lapel Badges	90	£ 180.00
Tie-Tacs	21	£ 52.50
Plaques	2	£ 42.00
Glass Tankard	6	£ 90.00
Whiskey Tumbler	4	£ 30.00
Pewter Tankard	6	£ 120.00
Sub-Total		£ 1,173.00
President's Badge		£ 600.00
TOTAL ASSETS		£ 4,923.56

Notes

1 Bank refund after error on statement