



THE ARMOURERS' ASSOCIATION

Arms News

Issue 26

May 2019

The News Letter of The ARMOURERS' ASSOCIATION

Annual Reunion Dinner – 2018

Last year's annual dinner, once again, took place at the Marsh Farm Hotel, Royal Wootton Bassett, which is near the Defence School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (DSEME). After the dinner we had a talk from our guest of Honour; Maj P. Hockley, OC Basra Company DSEME.



40 members and their guests attended the dinner, thoroughly enjoying an excellent evening, even though our guest of honour won the star prize at the raffle, a pewter 81mm mortar.

The dinner was preceded on the Saturday with a visit to the Armourers training wing, where we “played” with some of the weapons and viewed the multimedia system.

Read about this year's dinner inside



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Your Committee

President	Mr. C. Dennis	president@ukarmourers.org.uk
Chairman	Mr. N. Brown	chairman@ukarmourers.org.uk
Secretary	Mr. R. D. Cotter	secretary@ukarmourers.org.uk



Annual Reunion Dinner - 2019

65th ANNUAL REUNION

You are invited to attend this year's reunion dinner

Date: Saturday 07 September 2019
AGM: 17:00hrs – Jury's Inn Hotel, Nottingham
Dinner: 19:00hrs for 19:30hrs
Venue: Jury's Inn Hotel
Station Street
Nottingham
NG2 3BJ
Cost: £32.00 per person

Menu

Starters

Pea and spinach soup with blue cheese croutons
Duck and port Pate with sourdough crostini and plum chutney
Rose of cantaloupe and honeydew melon with blueberry and mint compote

Main Course

Chicken supreme filled with chorizo, crushed new potatoes and Mediterranean vegetables
Cod fillet with sundried tomato and basil crust, crushed new potatoes and Mediterranean vegetables
Spinach, pine nuts and butternut roulade with cherry tomato ragout, crushed new potatoes and Mediterranean vegetables

Dessert

Glazed lemon tart, raspberry sorbet and orange cream
Belgian chocolate cheesecake, mango and lime syrup
Stilton, cheddar and brie, celery and crackers

Followed by

Coffee / Tea

THE TOASTS

“The Queen” – Mr Vice

“The Armourers” – The President

“Honoured Guests” – The Chairman

“Absent Friends” – The Secretary

NB: Port will be served for the Toasts

A salad or vegetarian option is available on request

If you have something suitable for the raffle, please bring it along with you



Dress

Gentlemen: Regimental Blazer and Slacks or Lounge Suit, not forgetting your Association tie.

Ladies: Appropriate to the occasion.

Guests

Guests are limited to one per member.

Overnight Accommodation

Jury's Inn hotel has rooms reserved for us and you can book on-line using the promo booking code: **JITHEA060919**. This will give you our preferential room and board rate. This promotional rate expires on 6th August, so don't miss out! Full details are on the web site and the dinner reply form.

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.

Reply Form

Numbers attending this year's reunion **MUST** be finalised by **FRIDAY 09th AUGUST 2019**.

Please ensure you avoid disappointment by returning your reply to the secretary as soon as possible.

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]

Tel: [Redacted]

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

secretary@ukarmourers.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

There will be an AGM at the Jury's Inn Hotel, starting at 17:00hrs. If you have a specific item for discussion, please let any of the committee members know so that it may be included on the Agenda.

Don't Forget

The cut-off for our promotional rate at the hotel is Tuesday 06th August 2019.



News Letter

Last year we asked those members receiving the news letter by post to confirm that they still wished to receive it using the postal system. 65 news letters were sent out by post last year, and of those only 6 responded and said that they would like to continue receiving it via this method. Sadly, this means that the other 59 members who did not respond, will not now receive the news letter as we do not have an email address for them. All is not lost though, as the news letter is published on the web site for all to read.

Gary's Challenge

For a number of years now, Gary Holden has been lobbying for the annual dinner to be held in Nottingham. Last year at the AGM he finally got his wish and he has organised the whole event for us. Full details are on page 3, but Gary has also issued a challenge to all members of the Association.

Gary wrote: ***"How would it be if each one of us made contact through LinkedIn or Facebook or another social media thingy and invited just one old colleague?"***

A very simple challenge, but one that all of us should embrace. You don't even have to use social media, just invite an old colleague/friend. It would make this a very special event if we can equal or exceed the numbers that we normally have. Perhaps this can then become a regular venue for our dinners!

President's Notes

The first thing I need to do is thank those who need thanking, particularly Bob, our secretary, who



continues to ensure the associations profile remains high and coordinates the organisation necessary to make the annual dinner happen. He is ably supported by Nigel who in his role as a small arms instructor at Lyneham makes sure that all armourers, be they new, upgraders or equipment course students and artificer weapons students are aware of the association and what it does. This year we can add to the list Gary Holden who has done all of the ground work to arrange the dinner being held at the Jurys Inn Nottingham. Gary has also come up with 'Gary's Challenge' basically a simple way of trying to get more of us at the annual dinner, see the previous article.

Our thanks to all of you.

After years of umming and ahhing the vote was taken at last year's AGM to make the investment in a cold cast bronze figure of "THE ARMOURER". Whilst the wait has been too long it has been worth it. Feedback from the initial sales has been excellent with all recipients praising its quality and value for money.

Passing of Members

It is quite natural that in an organisation like ours we will lose some members each year. On a personal level we have lost 2 members this year who I had the



greatest of respect for. You will all have noted the loss of Eric Stratford who did so much for the Association as both Chairman and President. I was pleased to be able to attend his funeral and equally pleased to be joined by 2 other Association members, Roger Traves and Andrew (Eric) Briscoe. Our presence was noted and appreciated. More recently we have lost Jim Newton (Arborfield 51B). Jim was my Sergeant when I was a L/Cpl with the Lifeguards Armoured Regiment in Detmold in the early 1970s. With hind sight Jim was a great bloke to work for, though Monday mornings were always best treated gently. Jim always ensured his L/Cpls got plenty of experience dealing with the paperwork and it wasn't until many years later, at an association dinner that he revealed that his dyslexia was the reason why we got to gain all that paperwork experience!

Summing Up

I hope to see a good turnout in Nottingham where we can raise a glass and put the world to rights. If you are unable to attend, please let Bob know so he can at least keep the records up to date.

Best Wishes to you all.

Chris Dennis

Secretaries Notes

Another year passes and I am now in my 10th year as Association Secretary. The change in our rules for tenure, mean that at the next AGM the post of Secretary will be up for election. It is well overdue as the



rules now state that an election should take place after 5 years in office. If any of you wish to take on the duties of Secretary, then please put your names forward. Use the comments space in the dinner reply form to do so.

Membership

Our membership has again increased over the past year and we now have over 673 active members, with overall membership increasing by 54 during last year. This is despite the fact that we have sadly lost a number of our members during the past year.

Association Accounts

A copy of the balance sheet for the period 1st January to 31st December 2018 is on the last page of this issue. Please indicate your acceptance, or otherwise, of these figures in the space provided on the dinner reply form.

Association Web Site

Our web site address remains the same www.ukarmourers.org.uk and don't forget that you can have your own Association email address, just let the Secretary know your preferred name.

During the past year we have changed the contract with our web host 1&1 IONOS. We have now moved to a different plan which is considerably cheaper. Our annual fee is £60.43, after that we will also pay an additional £10.00 for the domain name. This is a dramatic change from the previous fee of £187.04 per annum, which was paid in quarterly increments.

Bob Cotter



The Armourer Statue

At the AGM last September, we agreed to purchase a statue based on 'The Armourer' by Gaudex. This is a life-sized statue which resides in the Armourers and Braziers Hall in London and is our Association logo.

The statue was commissioned through a company called Present Arms. The same company which provides our pewter star prize at the annual dinners. Many of you will remember our Guest of Honour walking away with the excellent pewter 81mm mortar at last year's dinner.

In December of last year, we published pictures of the master mould on the web site. In January of this year, the President and Secretary inspected and passed the master mould for production. For the making of the master mould we paid £750. We then took delivery of the first 10 statues on 12 February and all were sold within 4 weeks.

The statues, as pictured here, are for sale on the web site at a cost of £83.50 + p&p of £13.14. The reviews from those who have bought one are very favourable. Go to the Association web site to read them for yourselves.

The statues are delivered by Parcel Force within 2 working days. You can track the delivery and full insurance is included in the cost, should you need compensation for a lost or damaged item.

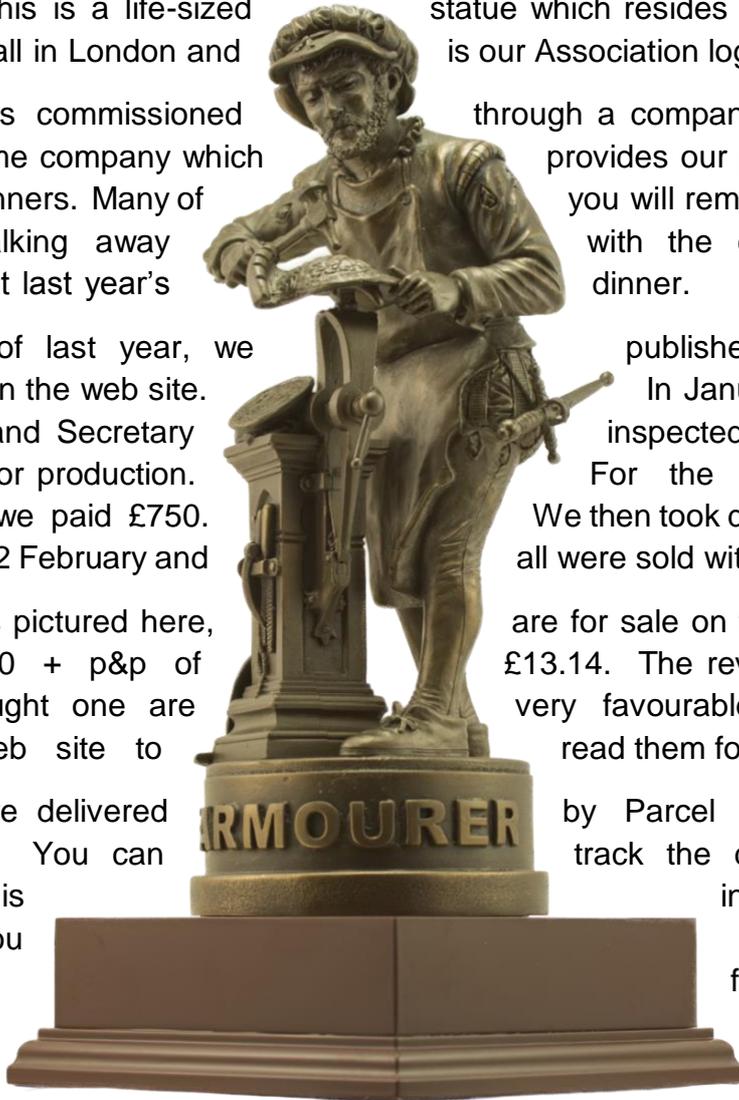
Alternatively, you can collect them by arrangement with the Secretary.

As an optional extra, we can also supply a miniature cap badge. This would add the finishing touch to a magnificent presentation piece.

Car Sticker

Also, we now have a car sticker for sale in the shop. Proudly tell everyone that you are an Armourer.

The stickers cost £2.00 each including postage to a UK destination.





Election of Secretary

At the AGM in 2018 we voted to change the rules for the tenure of committee posts to 5 years. After that time an election is to take place for the post. The current Secretary has been in post since 2009, so at the next AGM will have been in post for 10 years. Therefore, on 7th September 2019 at the AGM, an election for the post of Association Secretary will be held.

Members are invited to send in nominations for the post of Secretary. You may use the response box in the dinner reply form, email or post. Address details are on Page 4.

You may nominate yourself or another person, but please make sure that if you nominate someone else you have their permission, otherwise the nomination will be invalid.

In the comments box in the dinner reply form, you may also nominate the Chairman as your proxy vote. This can either be a named person or left to the Chairman's discretion.

Quote of the Day

You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough

Mae West

Obituaries

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

Ian Houghton (SEME 1961) who passed away August 2017

(Editor's Note: This is a belated entry; we were only informed of Ian's passing last June)

Richard John Manning (Arborfield 45B), who passed away 25 March 2018.

(Richard was Secretary 1976 – 1982)

Eric Stratford (Hilsea 1935), who passed away 25 September 2018 aged 97.

James (Jim) Thomas Newton (Arborfield 51B) who passed away 29 January 2019.

Eric Stratford 1921 - 2018

Eric was born the youngest of 3 brothers in Croydon, surprisingly as the sons of a Royal Field Artillery gunner all three joined the army as boy soldiers (apprentices), the



Eric 2005, at the Worshipful Company of Armourers and Braziers Dinner

eldest as a mechanic in the Tank Corps at Chepstow, Eddy the middle brother as an Armourer at the RAOC Depot, Hilsea, to be followed by Eric about a year later, in April 1935. At this time the army only recruited armourers as boys from the age of 14. The course would be four years long producing very competent tradesmen with a wide range of skills.

On completion of training in 1939 Eric was posted to the 2nd Bn. The



Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire) Regiment, in Bordon. With war looming and Eric not yet 19, the age at which he could be sent on active service overseas he was posted to the Depot Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders as a L/Cpl. He soon became the only armourer in the depot, anyone old enough and qualified was rapidly absorbed in to the BEF. The 4 years of training proved its worth Eric survived and flourished until August 1941 when he was posted to No. 1 Army Ordnance Workshop RAOC.

The workshop was deployed to Iraq as part of PAIFORCE, raised to protect the allies oil interests in Persia and Iraq. It also supported the little-known land convoys carrying equipment to Russia. It was during his time here that REME was formed and all the relevant tradesmen were theoretically rebadged. Theoretically! Because there were no REME badges available. Using available pictures, the Instrument Mechanics made a die and badges were produced locally from copper plate. The soldierly skills of the tradesmen who were drafted in to fill the gap of an ever-expanding army may not have impressed the Guards but producing a cap badge was meat and drink to them. With very little happening in terms of the war, PAIFORCE was at the bottom of any priority list for spares and equipment. In this situation the workshop became expert in maintaining the vehicles that helped supply Russia.

Eric went on to serve in Palestine, Egypt and Greece before returning to

the UK at the end of the war. Transport home was a Halifax bomber from Greece to Italy and then Wellington bomber for the remainder of the journey.

Shortly after returning to the UK Eric met Betty. Betty was in the ATS and had spent her war as a member of a mixed Ack Ack battery, where she was in charge of a team working with early, primitive radar equipment. Betty was demobbed in 1946 and they married in August of that year. Their first son Rodney was born in 1947 and not long after Eric was posted to Egypt initially with 2 Base Wksps, Tel el Kebir and later as Brigade Armourer with 8 Inf. Bde. Over a year later Betty and Rodney joined him and in due course their second son Douglas was born.

Returning to the UK aboard the troop ship HMT Empire Windrush, Eric was posted to HQ Central Inspectorate at Chislehurst for three years writing inspection standards for infantry weapons. Eric's next move was to Trieste where the area was still under the occupation of British and US forces. In October of 1954 the dispute over the Italian, Yugoslav border was resolved, and Eric returned to the UK. After a short period, he was posted to Malaya, where, serving with the Malay Regiment he worked in the south of the country whilst Betty and the boys were quartered in Ipoh, about 250 miles away. Sadly, Douglas became seriously ill and the posting was prematurely terminated. Various interesting postings in UK followed



including a period at the Proof and Experimental Establishment, Pendine.

Eric finished his service in 1964 as the Armourer Sergeant Major (ASM) in charge of the Armourers Shop, 27 Command Workshops. Despite many achievements in his 29 years of service it was here that as captain of the unit shooting team, they were successful in the SW district shoots, but the highlight of the season was winning of the Armourers' Trophy at the REME Corps shoot at Bisley, 40 plus years later he was still happy to tell young armourers of this achievement.

Eric had not wasted his time whilst serving and had gained an ONC (Mech Eng), equivalent to an A level. This together with his extensive service career enabled him to join Tech Group REME in Woolwich as a technical author. With a job in London he and Betty settled in Swanley Kent.

For the next 8 years Eric was involved in the writing of EMERs (Electrical & Mechanical Engineering Regulations), the fore runner of AESPs. Promotion moved him to REME Publications Centre as a Technical Editor where he was to be involved in the production of AESPs before he retired in 1985.

Eric was, quite rightly, immensely proud of his service to the Crown, both as a soldier and a civilian he had served for 50 years under 4 Monarchs.

Eric was never going to retire to a life of leisure and a sample of his involvement in local and national organisations is a lesson to us all who claim to be busy.

Residents Association, member of the twinning committee, a retired author and editor was always going to produce a good newsletter. A member of the local Masonic lodge including a spell as president. Armourers' Association; Chairman (18 years), President (18 years) & Vice President (5 years). President of the Italy Star Association, President of the local Royal British Legion, member of the Canal Zoners, the Corps Sergeants mess, The Old Grey Horse club the list is almost endless and always supported by Betty who belonged to many of these organisations in her own right as well as some that weren't Eric related.

Eric and Betty were married for over 70 years and derived an immense pleasure from seeing their family grow and flourish. The loss of Betty in late 2017 was a grievous blow to Eric and the whole family.

Eric will be deeply missed by his family and all those who had the privilege of knowing him.



The Armourers' Association Statement of Accounts

01 January- 31 December 2018

INCOME

Reunion Income	£	1,240.00
Donations	£	211.00
Raffle	£	278.00
Bank Interest 2018	£	3.39
Post & Packing	£	43.80
Sale of Ties Old Type)	£	115.20
Sale of Ties (New Type)	£	38.40
* * Lapel Badge	£	10.00
* * Tie-Tac	£	5.80
Total Income		£1,945.59

Cash @ Bank (B/F 2017)	£4,369.42	
SUB-TOTAL:		£6,315.01
Less Expenditure		£1,862.98
Income/Expense Total		£ 4,452.03

ASSETS

Cash @ Bank		
Current Account		£1,266.93
Deposit Account		£3,185.10
Assets Total		£4,452.03

Stock	Qty	
Ties Old	16	£ 204.80
Ties New	18	£ 230.40
Lapel Badges	47	£ 117.50
Tie-Tacs	3	£ 8.70
Plaques	18	£ 369.00
Glass Tankard	3	£ 48.00
Pewter Tankard	5	£ 105.00
Stock-Total		£1,083.40

President's Badge		£ 600.00
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TOTAL ASSETS

£ 6,135.43

Notes

- 1 Port purchased prior to dinner
- 2 Engraved glasses for guests of honour
- 3 Flowers for Maj Hockley's wife
- 4 Includes £46.76 from previous years fees

EXPENDITURE

Reunion Lyneham 2018	£1,195.32	
Printing of News Letter	£ 47.00	
Cfn Magazine Subscription	£ 24.00	
Raffle Prize	£ 40.00	
Wine For Dinner	£ 191.40	
Port For Dinner	£ 20.25	1
Gifts	£ 41.88	2
Flowers	£ 40.00	3
PayPal Fee	£ 9.89	
Web Site Fee	£ 187.04	4
Postage & Packing	£ 66.20	
Total Expenditure		£1,862.98



Association Items for Sale



Armourer Statue
£83.50 + £13.14 p&p



Old Style Tie
£12.8- + £2.90 p&p



New Style Tie
£12.80 + £2.90 p&p



Glass Tankard
£16.00 + £3.95 p&p



Plaque
£20.50 + £3.95 p&p



Pewter Tankard
£21.00 + £3.95 p&p



Car Sticker
£2.00 Inc p&p



Lapel Badge
£2.50 + £1.50 p&p



Tie Tac
£2.90 + £1.50 p&p

See web site for ordering details or contact the Secretary