



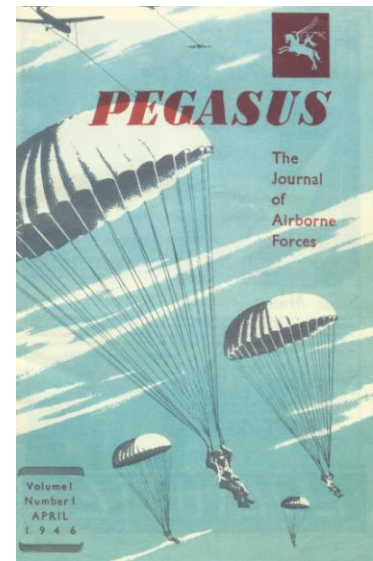
# Aldershot Branch Report For the Pegasus Year Book 2021



I am sure that you will all agree that this year has been unlike any year other year. Like all other Branches we have had to cancel all of our functions since March, but we have some interesting articles, involving Branch members, that you may like to read.

In early February eight members travelled to Saalbach in Austria for the annual skiing holiday. We went to Saalbach last year and enjoyed ourselves so much that we returned again this year and we were not disappointed.

In February, Brian Buddle, went to a car boot sale and picked up an item and along with two other items paid £1 for the three of them. He didn't tell the stall holder that one of the items was the very first edition of the Pegasus Journal. In the top corner was "Volume 1, Edition 1, April 1946. It probably wasn't worth much to the stall holder, but to Brian it was priceless.



After leaving the army serving in 216 Para Signals, Jonah Jones served for 24 years with the Fire Brigade based in Farnborough. He then moved to Penperlleni in Wales and joined the ambulance service as a paramedic. During this time he is also part of the volunteer mountain rescue team and he also joined Team Rubicon, a disaster response team. They received a call from the Australian government on the 4<sup>th</sup> February in response to the wild fires that were raging all over the south east of Australia. Along with the team he flew out to Adelaide and spent a few weeks using his fire fighting and medical skills, supporting the people in Adelaide Hills.



On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, ninety-two people assembled in Pennefather's Road, Aldershot to commemorate the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Officers Mess bombing. The wording on the current memorial is incorrect so along with Stace and Tommy, the Branch is going to arrange for a new memorial to be in place for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022. Two airborne benches, one either side, will also be unveiled at this time.

The President David Taylor and the Vice President Mike McRitchie announced that after 40 years they were both retiring. The committee decided that we could not let them go without a presentation. A special certificate was produced for the both of them and they were also presented with a letter opener in the shape of a ceremonial sword with the words "Utrinque Paratus" engraved on the blade. Due to social distancing the certificate and letter opener were presented to David and Mike in their front gardens.

The Branch Chairman, Iain Rodgers, contacted PRA Headquarters in Colchester and asked if a certificate could be presented to Richard Stacey and Tommy Simpson. This is for the hard work in raising the money and commissioning the Airborne Soldier Statue that was unveiled in Aldershot on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2019. The Parachute Regiment RHQ readily agreed and it was proposed that LT General Lorimer would present the certificates. Unfortunately, due to the strict restrictions in meeting up this was not possible and the certificates had to be posted. We are hoping that this can be rectified in the New Year when the restrictions are lifted.

Stace and Tommy are always looking for new challenges and they came up with an idea to place two airborne benches on the top of Flagstaff Hill on the training area. After discussions with the relevant authorities they obtained permission and commenced the design and build of the benches. The two benches were put in place in May with one looking out towards Camberley and the other looking at the Hog's Back. The wording on the benches reads "Red On..Green On..Go" and "Prepare to Double".



From Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August to Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020, a team of four veterans – Paul Moore, Charlie McColgan, Tony McKie and Phil Damant rode around the UK by motorbike visiting the gravesites and memorials of men who lost their lives in the Falklands war in 1982. The total distance of 2437 miles was covered in 8 days. They arrived at the Military Cemetery in Aldershot on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> August and were joined by Branch members. A short service was held at the Falklands graves.

Spud Murphy carried the Branch Standard and John Moffat laid a wreath at the V. J. Day service at the Cenotaph in the Municipal Gardens in Aldershot on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August.

I mentioned earlier that Stace and Tommy are always looking for other challenges. This time it was Stace and Charlie McColgan. They thought that it would be nice if the Flower Children who lay flowers on the graves in the Oosterbeek Military Cemetery during the Sunday service on the commemoration weekend, could receive recognition. They came up with an idea of a badge using the design on the memorial opposite the Hartenstein Museum. The design shows a young girl holding orange flowers in one hand and the hand of an airborne soldier. The badge is all in black except the orange flowers and the soldier's maroon beret. They are standing on a base in maroon with the dates 1945 – 2020. It was in 1945 that the Flower Children first laid flowers in the new cemetery. Charlie went over to Arnhem and presented over 1,500 badges to the children



from all of the junior schools in the area. They were delighted and couldn't wait to go home and show their parents. Stace and Charlie will produce the badges every year from now on with an updated year change.

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September Chris Chambers, carrying the Pegasus Flag, attended the memorial service at Double Hills, near Paulton, Bristol. It was at this place that a glider split in two and all those onboard were killed. They were the first casualties of the Battle of Arnhem.

When the Airborne Soldier Statue was unveiled the concrete base was covered with Astroturf as there was not enough time to arrange for a granite covering. Tommy and Stace agreed in October and selected black Rhodesian granite at a cost of £6,000 to cover the base. The new granite covering was in place ready for Remembrance Sunday. Since then two airborne benches have been placed either side of the statue.



Our final duty of the year was attending the Remembrance Day services. Unfortunately due to the Covid rules only the Branch Standard Bearers and wreath layers were allowed to attend. In total we covered 5 services over the weekend.

Stuart McLaren  
Secretary  
Aldershot Branch  
Parachute Regimental Association