

The Listening Post

The Newsletter of the Langeleben Reunion Branch, Royal Signals Association



Issue No: 32

June 2018



25th Anniversary Celebrations.

Coming soon is our AGM and Reunion in Königslutter

24th - 27th August 2018

Important: Booking closes at noon on Sunday 5th August act now if you want to be included

The response from our members for this years' reunion in Königslutter has been fantastic. Your eagerness to attend makes all the hard work and planning that is required worthwhile. Thanks in the main to JR, we now have most of our ducks in a row, so all we need now is for even more of our members to join us in Königslutter. So if at this time you are weighed down by indecision, then it's make your 'mind up time.' Get your flights/ferry booked, fill in the attendance form then let the celebrations begin.

We are looking forward to seeing you all in Königslutter, for what promises to be an unforgettable weekend.

VP/Chairman
Rod Goddard

Who's going so far? (75)

Charlie & Jud Charlesworth
Farmer Vaughan
Bob & Lynda Oldfield
Dick Pickup & Martina Tait
Dennis & Jennifer Weir
Tom Allum
Pat Seymour-Smith
Chris Jones
Michael & Irene Braham
Garry Melding
Daz Middleton
Bob Weeks
Tom & Helen Neal
John Evans
Ken Vipond
Ernie & Sheila Callaghan
Gerry & Janet Kane
Jim & Erika Husband
John Holt
Harold & Beryl Hirst, Jennifer Hirst, Stephen Rawson
Dave Garner
Tim & Sally Inshaw
Gail Baldwin
Frank Pye
Rod & Eileen Goddard
Ian(Jock)Stirling
Phil Cork
Bob & Cath Crockart
Chris & Gloria Baines
Ted, Dot & Katy Roberts
Jeff Thomas
Chris Greenhil & Christine Morrison
Ron Stephen
Mike & Pip Shail
Harvey Grainger
Jim & Dagmar Hayes
Peter Ellis, Christopher Ellis, Jay Cee Ellis, Chloe Ellis
Paul & Elaine Anderson
Brian Cowling (Sam)
Ingrid Sands
John & Ingrid Richardson
Robbie McCallum
Bob Kay
Ron Mason
Peter Hailey
Neil & Fe Mapp
Donald Aitken
Henry Jones

"To foster and keep alive the comrade spirit of all those who served at Langeleben."

Bill Russell remembers

In May 2017 I decided, never having been to Dresden or Leipzig, that it was time I visited both cities and, reluctant to drive in Germany, decided not to hire a car but take the train. Looking at the rail map I realised that Braunschweig was close by – the last time I was there was when I was at Langeleben in 1959, one of the Russian linguists pretending to be in the Signals, eavesdropping on what was going on across the border. We went to the opera – Rheingold I think. It was a hideous production of whatever it was.

So off I went to Königslutter only to discover to my horror that I recognised nothing. Given that the church must have been there in 1959 and the town square with the market and shops, although it may have changed in some respects, was also there it was a surprise. The young woman in the tourist office woman had heard of the Association and had information about its visits. She was very vague as to where exactly the camp was situated but said I could take a taxi. The driver was stumped by my request to go to the camp site, but she was far too young to remember it although she knew where Langeleben was. She dropped me at the old folk's home there where the residents seemed rather too glad to see me, and the supervisor directed us where to go. I looked at the woods and the remaining roads and recognised nothing.

I searched in town for the swimming pool where we had held a gala but that too had long gone – there is now a smart sports centre. It was the asparagus season, my hotel in a village just outside town was lovely, and it proved a far from a wasted visit.

I was part of an intake who were sent to JSSL at Crail in early 1958 to learn Russian. We came from all sorts of army units – I was in the Cameronians, a long gone Scottish rifle regiment. After Crail it was a stint in Cheltenham at GCHQ, a period at Loughborough and at the Intelligence Corps base at Maresfield before we shipped out to One Wireless at München Gladbach. It was there that we were distributed either to Langeleben or Berlin and became “members” of the Signals.

The chaps from my Crail group who ended up living in the woods with me were Jim Paton, a Trooper, Chris Nunn, a Sapper, and Ken Hughes who started in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Life was pretty relaxed – we did shifts, had sleeping days, and days off, sunbathed, went drinking in the nearby Gasthaus or in town and had at least one camping trip at which one of those bright young second lieutenants who had signed on asked why clever chaps like us did not do as he had and get sent to university on the army after national service. It could have been

Ken, but someone replied – “But, Sir, we’ve all been.” Collapse of second lieutenant.

Jim Paton remembers that the camp cook died and he was rejected as a pall bearer for not being the right height, that the camp had a resident dog, small and of unknown origin, called Shitty which was pretty ferocious. It liked to attack the RSM when he did inspections of the billets and we kept a record of how often this happened on our sleeping days, for good reason.

I remember being called in by the Commanding Officer because they discovered I had written some articles for a Scottish local newspaper – nothing to do with the army – as journalism was the career I wanted to take up. The fear was I might be telling all about what we did. They were actually local history tales about Lanark, where I came from, so I was chided, but not stopped.



One highlight of our time there, which was from early spring 1959 to the end of August, was the swimming gala held in the town pool, a kind of making friends with the locals affair. Our room formed one of the teams in a relay race – I swam last in the four man group on the basis that the others, who consisted of Jim, Ken and I think Frank Rowley, would have lost the race by the time I entered the water. They had voice traffic in East Germany, and occasionally to British Forces Network as it was broadcast on a frequency below the one on which the Russian tanks communicated. Supervision of what we were up to was lax and the officers had absolutely no idea.



We would take the tapes we had recorded of the Russian troop movements to the American base near Helmstedt for analysis, a trip much enjoyed as a day out since the driver was always intent on stopping for a drink along the way. The precious tapes were stuffed under a jacket on the back seat all the while.

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The sun shone – it was a good summer – and the Cold War really did not impinge. We would spend our days off sunbathing in the woods – money was tight after all. The day they held one of their practice alerts was notable for the fact that the people in the woods did not hear the siren, or so they said when they returned to camp. It was also the day the officers inspecting the kit of those caught in camp discovered that the contents of the backpacks contained nothing of military use – I think I had a typewriter in mine. Jim recalls that at one point they tried to get the linguists to do fatigues. That failed. But on the door of our hut we pinned a notice about the Royal Corps of Gardening and the duties thereof.

All soldiers know about skiving, but linguists were I think in a class of their own when it came to getting out of doing something unacceptable. We learned it at Crail where the excuse that doing this or that affected out studies always worked. I suppose one has also to add certain arrogance as we clung to those still new shiny university degrees.

Since the rifles were locked up in the lobby of the hut with the listening in equipment we always reckoned that by the time the key had been found and we had worked out how to use the guns the Russians would have been coming through the door anyway. I for one had not touched one since I spent some four horrendous months doing basic training in the Cameronians at the end of which I was still no rifleman, although that was my designation.

I remember being in some Gasthaus in town with some of the squaddies and telling one of them he was a bastard for some reason or other. It did not go down well. I could have used other four letter words and no offence would have been taken, but bastard – very university graduate sort of word – was possibly too close to the truth. It is as near as I have ever been to getting a pint glass smashed in my face and I was swiftly removed from the scene.

Among the detritus of the past I found in a cardboard box on top of the wardrobe were a Signals cap badge, two Signals shoulder flashes – our Intelligence Corps membership was concealed - and three beer mats dated 6 August 1959, 22 August 1959 and 31 August 1959 which record what we drank in that gasthaus on the way to town. The signatures include Ken “the Pot” Hughes, James H Paton, Frank “the Belcher” Rowley, Fred the Red, Jim McLoughlin, J Allan, Bernie, Griff and Derek “Chinee” Redrup. Nicknames were common. Ken got his from a unique ability to inflate his abdomen when lying in the grass sunbathing, Frank’s is self explanatory and Derek’s was because he had studied Chinese at university.

I confess I cannot put faces to Jim McLoughlin, J Allan, Bernie or Griff. Other names from the camp were Mark Kramer, from Glasgow, and Roger Simons, a Londoner, who were in the Signals. But I remember them.

The photographs I have from my time at Langeleben show some of us at play – holding a mock funeral



although I cannot for the life of me recall why – and I cannot supply names for some of the faces. It was a long time ago. Ken insists he remembers nothing, Jim is better at remembering and some of these memories are his. We did after 40 years start to hold bi-annual meetings of the Crail intake, but these also have stopped. Chris Nunn, who became a hospital administrator, died quite young, and I have lost touch with the others apart from Jim and Ken, whom I still see. Langeleben – Cold war or not - was a good time, a fulfilling experience and for me.

Memories...

Ah, memories of arriving at Langeleben, moving from Scharfoldendorf and down the hill, motor right past the gate, fortunately we turned around before the border crossing and went back, I recall there was not a lot of room for a mobile squadron to park the many vehicles, another army game we played in the days before the satnav eh????

regards

Pete Shoreland (career signalman)

I liked Marlene’s note on Lelm in the last Listening Post. The only time I can remember going there was when someone persuaded me to join him on a cross country run. We stopped at a place in Lelm for a rest. While enjoying the beer we tried the Juke box. It didn’t matter which record you selected as it only played one song.

There were no ladies working at the camp when I was there. The nearest lady was Frau Grahn in the Gasthaus, where I often enjoyed Spiegelei mit Schnitzel for a late supper.

Very best wishes

Ron Berg

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a very warm welcome to new members:

RON STEPHEN who served in Langeleben 1969-73

PAUL CULLUM who served in Langeleben 1981-85

GDPR

All members have been contacted by either e-mail or letter about **General Data Protection Regulations** and the responses continue to arrive. Of the 439 members on file, 111 members have confirmed by e-mail and 38 by letter that they agree to the Association holding their personal data and can be contacted either by e-mail, letter or phone. A few members do not wish to be contacted and we have identified some members who have moved away and we no longer have their current address. If you 'do the math' (as they say in America) only a quarter of our members have responded thus far. If you have not responded, and wish to receive ongoing communication from the Association do **PLEASE** respond to the communication you have received as soon as possible. This is your last chance!

LAST POST

We are sorry to have to report the loss of six of our members:

24310007 **ADRIAN SAXBY** –Passed away February 2014

Membership 474 – Served Langeleben 1975-77
23395713

WILLIAM MEINERTS-HAHN – Passed away 18 May 2015

Membership 78 Served Langeleben 1958-59

Committee Members

President:	Tim Inshaw
Vice President?Chairman	Rodney Goddard
Treasurer:	John Rosson
Secretary:	Charlie and Jud Charlesworth
Assistant Secretary (UK):	Richard Pickup
Assistant Secretary (DE):	John Richardson
Standard Bearer:	Robbie McCallum

IMPORTANT

If you received this newsletter from a volunteer buddy, please do let him know it has been received and whether you still want a copy. Please do keep your memories coming in.

Editor

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PS. More photos from Bill Russell are on our website gallery, please see the year 1959

23531496 **NORMAN MELLING** – Passed away 8 Oct 2015

Membership 193 - Served Langeleben 1960-62

23764772 **PETER RIGBY** – Passed away 24 January 2016

Membership 126-Served in Langeleben1960-62

24183554 **CHRIS SINNETT** – Passed away March 2018

Membership 354 - Served 14 Sig Regt

24183208 **TOM DALY** – Passed away March 2018

Membership 441 – Served in Langeleben 1973-74

REST IN PEACE

Editorial note: As you see, we have only just been advised of the passing of four of our members as a result of Charlie's need to contact all members. Please do ensure that your nearest and dearest are aware of your membership with the association and can let us know if anything happens to you.

25TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION 24-26 AUGUST 2018 IN KÖNIGSLUTTER

Plans are taking shape and, so far 75 people will be attending this special reunion. It's still not too late to sign up. All of the details are on the website: <http://www.langeleben.co.uk> or you can contact your Secretary, Charlie Charlesworth, on 01423 771935 for any information. To mark this occasion, specially designed, high quality, 100% silk ties have been produced and are available for purchase now by post (via your Secretary) or at the Reunion at a cost of £20.



Cartoon: Clive Inman