

The Listening Post



The Newsletter of the Langeleben Reunion Branch, Royal Signals Association

Issue No: 2

August 2009



REUNION SPECIAL



The day had finally arrived, Saturday 13th June 2009, three years of planning depended on the weather!



The inauguration ceremony went like a dream, thanks to the meticulous planning and choreography of assistant secretary John Richardson. We were entertained by the great music of The Heavy Cavalry and Cambrai military band and supreme marching by some 60 of our more able members headed by our five smart standard bearers led by Tom Neal who looked as though he had never left the army.

See page 2

Prior to the event

Two days prior to this special event, on the morning of Thursday 11th June, seven of us had made our way to the site to watch and supervise the erection of the ton of York stone that had arrived in Germany ten days before. The footings had been laid a week earlier and had set hard on a level base. Despite some heavy showers within an hour all was complete, the stone was covered with a raincoat of plastic sheeting and we made our way back to Königslutter praying that the weather would improve for the ceremony on the Saturday morning. Friday 12th brought more heavy showers and hailstones as big as mothballs; a lot more praying and we awoke to the miracle of a beautiful sunny Saturday morning that stayed with us throughout the day.

All went well

The whole occasion was enjoyed by 140 of our members and guests who were joined by local dignitaries and many of the townspeople. We had a great deal of media attention and subsequently a very good reaction from the local press who covered the occasion in great detail. To round off a great day we all enjoyed a riotous night at the Schützenfest beer tent, where, when the free beer ran out at about nine o'clock we inadvertently donated a 50 litre barrel of beer to all and sundry which made us very popular with the locals, but this is another story.

In all a very memorable and emotive weekend that will certainly live with me forever.

Ernie Callaghan.

A shock for Neil Mapp

Fe and I had a wonderful few days at the Reunion. We were glad to see so many of the "Old Boys" who put in the effort to come.

The exhibition in the Rathouse was brilliant, though I would have preferred "my uniform" to have been on a Male manikin and not a Female one - and the pose looked a bit less "Royal Corps" than I would have hoped!



Still a bit of friendly rivalry going on perhaps?
Neil Mapp (1975-to 1989 with some gaps!)

We marvelled at the skill...



“The latest Reunion, in Königslutter, was special in so many ways. The highlight was, understandably, the installation of the Memorial. We all marvelled at the skill that went into the design and creation of the stonework. Mention must also be made of those who contributed to its cost and the expense of moving it to Germany and 'planting' it.

Our thanks to the Committee for organizing the parade and those who supported us. I think the special aspect was also contributed to by the willingness of the local people to accept us in their midst and to welcome us to their events. I hope that warmth continues for many years, “it is very special.”
Peter Baldwin (1951)

How we made this an event to remember

Following the election of John Richardson at the Loughborough AGM and the formation of a sub-committee, he, Dave Thomas and I, had worked on making this an event to remember.

Were we being over-optimistic in thinking that we could get hold of a military band to lead the Parade at the unveiling Ceremony? Dave was willing to ‘have a go’ through his contacts. After all what was there to lose by asking? Could we put together an exhibition that the Town was willing to house in the Rathaus? Why not!

The Group hasn't got a bottomless pit of money so could we raise any money? Again, let's have a go. After all, we were probably unique in erecting our own memorial stone and, what other Group had a stonemason of the calibre of Paul Ellis – one of the family as well – to produce it?

Somehow or other our 'story' appealed to Kneller Hall and we were on the list for a band; possibly the Ghurkhas or the Cambrai. Whether they would turn up was quite a cliff-hanger.

The money was not quite so easy. We were rejected outright by the RSA but, after pleading our case, obviously successfully the Intelligence Corps gave us a grant of £480. They also loaned us equipment for the exhibition and it is only right that the infamous 'legless' mannequin/Op Spec who worked tirelessly in Königslutter is now proudly part of an Intercept exhibit in the Int. Corps Museum, on display for the first time this week-end.

Was it all worthwhile? Well as I stood with my old mates, too many to list, waiting to march off behind the band - yes, they did turn up, I was both proud and emotional. We'd done it!

Paul Crosson (1955-1956)



Meeting old friends over a bier

At the Schützenfest bier tent I met Jim Hayes (1958-1960) for the first time and after the first 15 beers we were best of pals! Pauline and I really enjoyed the weekend - it was well organized by the team. All the best from

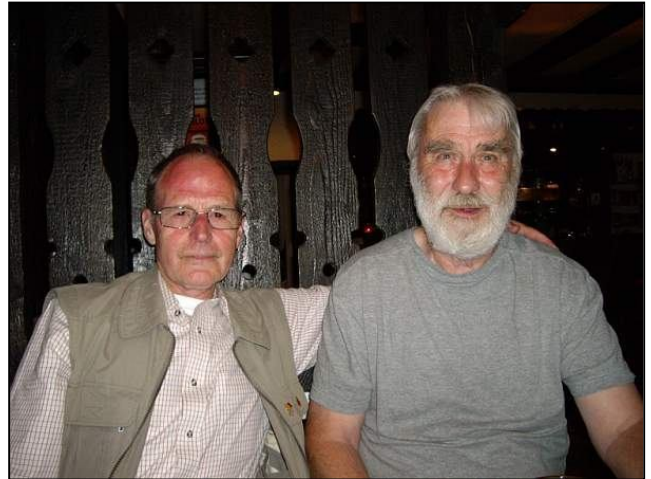
Pauline and Rick Coxon (1965-1966)



While in Königslutter I met a German friend I hadn't seen in 40 years, Christel Griess Bischoff (above) who still lives in the town. We were good friends in

those days and used to meet in the Deutsche Haus. She joined us for the celebrations and after the reunion I stayed an extra week and spent some time with her family in Rabke. The family took me to the Harz Mountains where we took a steam train to the top where the aerals were placed during the cold war. It was great to talk about old times and spend some time together.

Robbie McCallum 1968-1972



Tom Neal and Ted Vert meet up again at last

A while ago Ted Vert left a message on our guestbook. As it is an unusual name and I had served with a person of that name in Dannenberg in 1956 I contacted him and it was the same person. We exchanged a few emails and he joined our association.

The last time I saw him was just a quick few words at 1 Wireless Regt when I had come back from Langeleben to go on a posting to Cyprus.

As you know Ted now lives in Hungary and when I booked into the Avalon he was the first person I saw, and needless to say we had quite a lot to talk about over a few beers.

I was also very proud to lead the Standard Bearers on parade for the Dedication Ceremony and I believe the other bearers were equally as proud to be carrying the standards.

Tom Neal 1956-1957

It's no secret!

Security Alert at Manchester Airport

A member attending the Reunion caused a bit of a flutter when the security staff couldn't identify the strange device showing on the x ray of his hand luggage. The officer had never seen a Morse key before but, when it was explained to him, he took it 'behind the scenes' to enlighten his colleagues.

Border Memorial

We all know of the Berlin Wall and have heard many stories of escapes and failed attempts made over the years. The sense of oppression and isolation felt by the people on the other side was brought home to me during the Reunion weekend.

On the Sunday morning Graham Browning took us to see the Border Memorial at Hoetensleben. A section of the cold war border has been preserved as a protected historical monument and demonstrates the lengths to which a totalitarian regime will go to control the population. To cross from West to East a person would have to negotiate a wire fence, a minefield, an open area with watch towers, dog patrols. Tank traps and if you made it that far a very high wall. There are some pictures of the memorial on the Langeleben web site but if you get the chance it really is worth the visit. Only a few miles from Langeleben through pleasant country roads.

One touching news report was of the people from Braunschweig, standing at the border on the first Christmas Eve after the wall was built, singing carols to their relatives whom they thought they would never see again.



And we thought it was secret

Some of our members were dining at a place near Lelm and got into conversation with some German visitors. They asked who we were and we explained that in an earlier life we had worked at Langeleben. "Oh yes," said one of the visitors, "You're the fellows with the big ears!"

Ron Berg 1954-1957

I travelled to Germany with Ken Vipond, Stuart McLeod, John Newband and Ian Johnstone in Ken's car. They picked me up at Hull on Monday June 8th and we travelled across on North Sea Ferries to Rotterdam. We had decided to visit the old Birgelen site on route and we reminisced about some good

memories of 50 years ago. We re-traced our steps along the road to the Dutch border and had a couple of drinks at a pub just before the border. One of the locals in the bar even bought us a round. We must go back again to return the favour.

From there we travelled to meet Ken's mate, Mike Braham and his family where they made us very welcome with a BBQ and plenty of drinks and good conversation. We had a great evening and my thanks go out to Mike and his wife and family for their generous hospitality. We were booked into a hotel just across the road from Mike's so we staggered back to the hotel late on and "hit the sack".

The following day, Wednesday, we set off for Königslutter and after a few strong arguments with the Sat Nav we arrived safely at the hotel. The rest of the week is a bit of a blur to me but I am told we met up with old comrades, shared many memories and had one or two beverages. I believe we had a pretty good time and who am I to argue with that.



The main highlight for me was the memorial stone unveiling ceremony. After the coach had dropped us off at the old camp site at Langeleben we were given some instructions as to how the parade was expected to march and some possible problems we might encounter on the way, especially the "right turn" into the car park. Marching behind a military band makes you feel 10 feet tall and as I am 5ft 6 inches in my stocking feet this is a great achievement. To me the march went superbly and I think everyone involved would agree especially as many of us had not marched for maybe 50 years or so. Even the turn into the car park and the "dog's leg" halt went superbly.

Some of the members wives were heard to say that the parade brought a lump in their throats and tears to their eyes which surprised me because I thought we were quite good. Never mind, I think everyone enjoyed it, and it was good to see so many of the locals present to witness our big day.

Ian Trowhill (1959-1960)



Bill Owen “famous for his number two’s”

We were forming up for the Schützenfest parade and I heard a voice making a gentle enquiry about the Langeleben old boys, because I am a highly trained operator I recognised the voice even though I had not heard it for more than 25 years. Mind you, it WAS Bill Owen, famous for his numbeerrrrr two engine in his locker, how nice to see someone turn up for the first time, especially after such a long period, a great feeling. Also swapping stories with other strange faces that I didn't know, but do now. Also worth mentioning I feel, is the accidentally bought barrel from the Saturday night. Although the actual buying of it was a misunderstanding, I could not help but feel it was a reminder of some etiquette that we seem to have forgotten, where we used to take a collection and do just that sort of thing for our drinking partners as a form of bar manners. It would not do to take our friendship with the Germans for granted. What fantastic hosts they have been.

cheers all

(Farmer) Vaughan (1976-1980)



As a new member of the Association this year, I travelled out to Germany with mixed emotions. Would I know anyone? Would anyone remember me after 30 years? Would I be too depressed to see the Langy I had known so well reduced to a few square metres of paving totally overgrown by weeds and shrubs? The initial omens were not good - diverted off the Autobahn because of a serious accident and arriving late at the hotel after the AGM. As a former OC 1 Squadron this was not the way I had intended to renew my acquaintance with the old and bold!

Eventually we found the hotel - amazing to find a place with 200 rooms and 17 function rooms in Königslutter. We explored the town and the Schützenfest tent on the first evening then collapsed into bed. The ceremony at Langeleben on the Saturday morning was an emotional experience. We assembled in the driveway of the old camp with the cavalry band to lead us - 70 old comrades in blazers, berets and medals, and marched the 200 yards to the car park where a moving service of dedication of the memorial took place overseen by Major General Peter Baldwin and the Mayor of Königslutter. To see 41 years of continuous occupation commemorated so well was an emotional experience and a real credit to the organisers. It was truly the best tour of my 26 years in uniform and I was delighted to meet about 10 of my peers from 1978-80.

After lunch we headed for the old IGB near Schoningen where a section of the old border defences has been maintained exactly as it was during the Cold War - a chilling reminder of what service between 1945 and 1989 was all about. Then on to Quedlinburg - a gem of a town with over 500 timber framed houses all fully restored after the wall came down and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On the Sunday we took a nostalgic drive down the Reitlingstal to Wolfenbüttel then back to Königslutter for the Schützenfest parade at 2pm where the Old Comrades had the singular honour of being second in line behind the home Gild on the march through the town. All in all a great weekend and a fantastic trip down memory lane!

Chris Hewitt 1978-80

A peep behind the scenes



Saturday. The alarm clock wakes me at 6 am. Up, shower, down to breakfast. Good job I avoided the bar and had an early night. At 7 I hop into the trusty Ford Transit and drive off to Braunschweig. At 7.30 meet up with Klaus the sound engineer and we load the PA system on board. Then we drive up the valley road and at 8.45 we are at the still deserted car park. Klaus starts setting up the loudspeakers and microphones. Although there are “No Parking” signs all over, some idiots have parked on our half. I put up the marking tapes round them. Then Klaus says that the power cable is too short. I ask the warden from the Youth Hostel, but he hasn't enough cable, so I jump into the van and drive down to Lelm, where the Fire Brigade are just loading up their truck. I explain the problem, and they lend me a cable drum, which I give to Klaus. By this time Jim and Ernie have arrived and are unwrapping the stone. Then we start carrying the benches across from the Youth Hostel, and set them up. Then I fetch some chairs for the VIPs. Just in time, as the busses are now arriving, and the wives and non-marchers occupy their seats. The Band's bus appears, and I scuttle across to welcome the Bandmaster and Sgt.-Major. We have a quick look at the car park, decide how they will march on, then we head for the Youth Hostel to get changed. When I emerge, there is an oik from the Bundeswehr waiting for me, he wants to present a plaque during the ceremony, I ask him if he could wait until afterwards, as time is tight, but he insists the photographer can't stay. Diplomatically, as I have enough to think about, I say I'll try and fit him in somewhere. In the distance we hear the band strike up, but as they do so the VIPs' cars appear, too early, I have to shoo them away, as the parade is not yet formed up. Then I see somebody trying to park in the reserved spaces

so I run over and ask the lady politely if she would mind moving, which fortunately for her, she agrees to. This doesn't give me much time to welcome the guests and spectators, as the head of the column is now rounding the bend. I take up position at my "command post", listen to my heart pounding, so.. I take a deep breath, cross fingers and the unveiling ceremony can begin...

John (JR) Richardson

Königslutter by Coach 2011



Recognizing that some people may not relish the long drive over and back and knowing that flying is not always convenient, we thought to provide an alternative. We have been looking into the possibility of arranging a coach for members and their guests to attend the next Königslutter reunion. The Idea is for one or two coaches to leave the UK on Wednesday, travel over, stay with us for the weekend, and bring us back on the Monday. Having a coach stay with us means that we could use it for site seeing or other trips as required.

In an ideal world, we could have one coach starting in Scotland, travelling south picking up members along the way, crossing the North Sea either from Hull or Harwich, then on up to Königslutter. The other would start somewhere in Wales or the West Country, travel across country to Dover, cross to Calais, then motor on up to Königslutter. We have tried a number of coach companies, all were interested and so far have one has provided a firm quote for the Dover-Calais route, which with four nights bed, breakfast and evening meal works out at £325 per person. We've had no takers so far for the Scotland start, but that could work out more expensive due to the overnight crossing and the need for cabins.

If only one coach is used, it will probably be sensible to start it from London, but it is very early days yet, and much depends upon how many use it. Besides providing almost door to door service, an added benefit of travelling by coach is that the reunion starts as soon as you board, and doesn't finish until you arrive back.

It would be very helpful to have some idea of how many people think they would use this facility. Please contact Dave Thomas: 01179 490840, dt007j0550@blueyonder.co.uk or 'live' on the forum if you prefer. For our non-internet members you can write to: 17, Northfield Avenue, Hanham, Bristol. BS15 3RB

SECRETARY'S STOP PRESS!

I have just signed a booking contract with Burleigh Court for next years AGM and reunion. Because of wedding and conference commitments we could not have our normal Spring Bank Holiday slot during the last weekend in May so we have had to settle for the weekend Friday 18th June - Sunday 20th June. The terms have been kept at the levels that we have enjoyed since 2006 and all rooms are of the executive type. I will be sending out full details and booking information sometime before Christmas.

Editorial note:

This newsletter has been produced and edited as simply as possible keeping in mind the unique way we have of circulating it. Without the help of the 60 buddies out of our membership the cost of printing and posting would mean a lot of money that is best spent elsewhere in our organisation, so to those buddies on everyone's behalf we are indebted to you and thank you.

If you have received this newsletter from a buddy could you please let them know that their efforts have been safely received and appreciated so that they know they have the correct address and that you also wish to receive it in the future?

Many thanks.

Marlene Brooks (Editor)

