

The Listening Post

The Newsletter of the Langeleben Reunion Branch, Royal Signals Association



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CHRISTMAS PAST

This is a welcome opportunity to lay aside my copy of "GCHQ" and focus on the coming Christmas season. Gail joins me in wishing you all, and your loved ones, a very happy Christmas and our hope that 2011 is a pleasant one for each one of us. We start "fifteen love up" because we already enjoy an additional family which, I know from experience at our Reunions, we value greatly.

We plan to be in Königslutter at the end of May and look forward to meeting you all.

Peter Baldwin



Sledge we built in 1955 from the landrover



"Life, although hard, was good in Langeleben in the fifties and most of us were happy to let the married men go back to the UK for Christmas; the Deutsches Haus and Schumann's holding more attraction than the 'Horse & Groom' and the 'Kings Head'. "Sorry, Mum, I can't get home for Christmas" was written with many a tongue in cheek.

1955 was the first Christmas under a proper roof at Langeleben and we intended to celebrate in style. Lt Jenkins possibly instigated the idea, which was rapidly picked up, of making a sledge and to distribute sweets to the children in Königslutter. Jim Dean, a graduate of Hornsey School of Art, took over and, armed with the extraordinary toolbox from under his bed which he took everywhere, we started. There was plenty of timber around left from building the huts to make the frame and from somewhere we acquired (probably helped ourselves) some wire netting and canvas. Goodness knows where we got the red and white paint from. Apart from myself and Jim, sadly I don't recall who else was involved. Jim concentrated on the bodywork and painting whilst I tried to create a reindeer, our own tame 'Bambi' not relishing the task!



Although surrounded by trees they were all conifers and I recall we had to scavenge to find two matching branches for the antlers.

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Continued from the front page

The normally dapper Jenkins covered his 'dago' like moustache with white whiskers and donned the Father Christmas outfit. He was the only one of the Group licenced to drive and off we set for town in this bizarre looking vehicle! At first there were few people about and, disappointingly, even less children but driving around, hooting away, we soon started to attract attention and had a great time throwing sweets. The Jeep had to be stripped back to normal pretty quickly to allow Keith K to have his chauffeur driven transport back. Reading my letters to my sister at the time I find that I also had the job of writing the unit Christmas cards – I fancied myself then as a bit of a calligrapher. It was a damned cold winter, I do recall and the photo of the icicles outside my hut window proves it. Water in those brown enamel bowls would be cold just carrying it from the old cookhouse to the so-called bathroom in the huts. Who, by the way, remembers Capt. Jim Prescott taking the first bath?

Paul Croxson



Cartoon by Clive Inman

My Duties as a Storeman at Langeleben in 1955. By ex Signalman Keith Kerby

In mid 1955, the first building was erected to house the Canteen, Stores and one or two other rooms for recreation etc. Capt Jim Prescott, the OC at the time, asked me if I would run the stores for him. This I agreed to as it got me off listening to Morse on irregular hours in back to back wagons. Also, better than sleeping in tents. My duties involved, sleeping in the stores, having a GSO driver take me to Brunswick five days per week and occasionally doing Guard Commander to the MSO, who patrolled the camp.

The trips to Brunswick were to the East Surrey Regiment to collect our rations, including cigarettes (20 per day each), take anyone on sick parade to the MO and make any other calls as requested by Capt Prescott. Wednesday was a day when I did not have to go to Brunswick as my vehicle was required for the Bath run to Helmstedt in the afternoon. This day was therefore used occasionally to act as guard with an

empty sten gun, on the Courier run to our colleagues on the American base. I quite enjoyed the trip to Brunswick as I would sometimes meet up with a guy from the East Surreys in the snooker room and we would have a couple of frames. He was quite a good player particularly as the cues had no tips and chalk was applied by pushing the cue into the ceiling. My highest break was 26 on low scoring balls, I remember being quite pleased. Another task I had whilst there was to take boots, for repair, to the Quarter Master's Office. His secretary, a local lady, was a smoker and I would fill the boots with cigarettes and she would pay me in Deutsch Marks. Cigarettes at that time were a shilling for 20 Players or Senior Service and 9p for Woodbines.



On occasions, Capt Prescott would request I call at his house in Brunswick, to collect something or other. Whenever I went, his wife was never there only his maid. It was rumoured that Capt Jim selected her after seeing her dancing on a bar table. My bed in the Stores was the most important one on camp as under it was the cigarette rations together with the camp's ammunition, a wooden box with approximately 100 rounds sealed with brown sticky tape signed by Capt Prescott.

I was lucky enough to gain a leave in the UK over Christmas 1955 but enjoyed my time on camp so much that I did not take it and stayed as Storeman until the end of January 1956 when I returned to Birglen ready for demob at the beginning of February.

Thanks to our contributors and also a special thanks to our buddies who print and send out this newsletter to members without a computer. Without you this newsletter wouldn't be possible with rising costs etc. PLEASE If you have received your copy from a volunteer 'buddy,' let them know so that they, and we, know you are still with us. Thank you.

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Our mystery 'reader's wife' J writes:

A Moving Experience

Being a forces wife was not always plain sailing (as it were) My first intimation of this was around the New Year 1963/64 in Cyprus. When families had an option to be evacuated during a troubled time in Cyprus. Instruction were sent out for each wife and child to make their way inconspicuously through Famagusta to the port, carrying a mattress per person. Celia, who lived above us, had some concerns about her ability to follow these instructions with three children and four mattresses !!

In February 1967 reorganisation meant that my husband was transferring from Scharfoldendorf to Langeleben (his second stint there). We were informed of the date for this whilst I was in BMH Hanover having just given birth to our second daughter a month early. This had followed a night in the Sergeants Mess watching the film of England's victory in the 1966 World Cup, then a 60 kilometre drive through the snow to hospital in the early hours.



After a week in hospital, when our daughter had reached 4lbs 14ozs, I was allowed out providing I kept up three hourly feeds. A week to go to the move, no problem mum-in-law was flying in to help. Unfortunately as soon as she arrived she had to take to her bed with a bad dose of flu!

On leaving married quarters we had to undergo the dreaded "marching out" where every piece of WD equipment had to be laid out for inspection, from teaspoon to blanket. Any damage had to be paid for. At the same time we packed crates of our personal belongings.

So, with a bedridden mum-in-law, a lively two year old and a baby needing three hourly feeds day and night, there was less than a week to achieve this. With the help of friends we did it, we didn't have to pay, and we arrived at our new quarter in Wolfenbittel with a sigh of relief.

We were young then!

'Scouse' Holmes looks back

The black and white photo right was taken outside the Gasthaus Wunderling (Dorings) Rabka in July 1969- is of Jutta Spierling, Jim Burke, Mike Kavanagh, myself Larry (Scouse) Holmes and Bill Fry.

The colour photo was taken in Kleiners Königslutter and is of Cliff Davies, Frank Wyatt, Mick Green, Paddy Graham, Mick Ford, myself and a local who I think was Bernie The RQMS Bill couldn't remember was "Jimmy Shand" who I think took over from Roy Blease

Best wishes to all

Larry (Scouse) Holmes 225-1965 to 1970

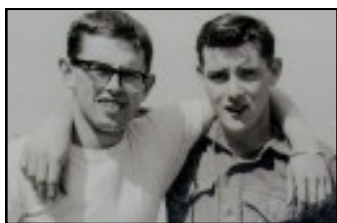


Right: Naafi bar 1969 shows Scouse Holmes being served by Mick McGuire and Ray Irving. Paddy Graham looking at the camera.



Photo by Marlene.





Then and now – Ernie Robertson and Geordie Robinson

The first photo was taken in 1959 during our spec. op. training in Garats Hey and the second photo was taken a few weeks ago when we met in Gateshead, the first time we had seen each other since our happy days in Loughborough. Readers of The Listening Post will remember Geordie Robinson as he was quite a character and had a great sense of humour. I do not contribute to the newsletter very often but look forward to all matters concerning Langeleben, a place I will always look back on with affection. I recently met with Col. Ron Brodie who was at Garats Hey in the early 60s maybe someone remembers him?

Ernie Robertson



OUR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR TOAST



After attending the Langeleben Close Down in June 1992 and having met up with so many old friends. It was decided to go one step further. So, on the 7th April 1993 a



meeting was arranged in Banbury attended by Tom Perkin, Frank Mitchell, Terry Wright and myself. This was the day that the Langeleben Branch was born. We formed a committee, with Tom as Chairman, Terry as Secretary, Frank as Assistant Secretary and yours truly as Treasurer. Before long due to Terry's work commitments his and Frank's roles reversed. Frank spent many hours in his local library searching through all the telephone directories for more old friends, and placed adverts in newspapers all over the country. This was a success to say the least. All this without the aid of E/Mail and the Internet.

After a few years Tom stood down as Chairman and Jim Husband took over. Tom had by this time created our very successful web-site so was and still is our Web Master. Sadly in 1999 first Terry and then Frank passed away. At Frank's funeral I appealed to the many who had gathered for someone to fill his shoes, a hard act to follow to say the least! Ernie Callaghan volunteered, and what a grand job he has done ever since. There is one particular member that I first met at Loughborough in 1959. He has attended every re-union except one when he was indisposed. He said to me on one occasion that he didn't regard us all as friends or mates but as brothers. A remark I shall always remember and treasure.

So, as Christmas and a New Year approach I give you a toast.

"To all our brothers and sisters, A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A GOOD NEW YEAR"

Gerry Kane

Langeleben

Internet forum for Langeleben Reunion Members.

Forum's New Year's Toast



This year's Forum Toast will take place at 7 p.m. GMT on Friday, 31st December. The Toastmaster will be Dave Thomas, who will be hoping to reach Langy Branch Members throughout the cyber world. The idea is simple, the Toast will be posted on the Forum by our Webmaster, Tom Perkin and "locked" (i.e. "read only" mode) until the time stated above, when it is "unlocked". Then, the Forum members can drink a glass of their favourite tippie and send a message in reply. The idea is, for that moment in time, raising our glasses, we feel as one, wherever we happen to be.

To post a message, you must be registered on the Langeleben Forum, it takes a few seconds to register, full details are on the site, and if you experience any problems, good old Tom is there to assist. The Toast stays open for 24 hours, so if you can't make it at 7, then you can drop in and say hello later. Afterwards the Toast is archived, and can be read again at leisure. The old archived Toasts also contain posts by now departed friends, and this is a nice way of remembering them and their sense of humour. If you can get access to a computer on New Year's Eve then why not join us for what is a real Langeleben experience? Langeleben Forum URL is: <http://langeleben.myfreeforum.org/>

LAST POST

A Amos
L Morris
"We will remember"

