

The Listening Post

The Newsletter of the Langeleben Reunion Branch, Royal Signals Association



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Langeleben



Our Christmas Toast

“Brought to us this year by Peter Ellis.

To the men and women who have served at Langeleben and from whatever arm of the services they have belonged, A very merry Christmas and a happy new year to you all.

Memories, events, reminiscences, lasting friendships, laughter and sincere thoughts, these are all snapshots of happenings in our lives within the membership of the association. Above all of these I value the bonds of comradeship and understanding between us who have had the privilege of serving together at the place known to us all as Langeleben.



Indeed whilst many of our members have passed on and those of us who remain within the association from its original conception formed as a result of a meeting held on the 7th April 1993 and by the efforts of Frank Mitchell and others.

It would seem to me that our unity grows stronger even as we ourselves grow older. To many of us I am sure that the passage of time since the original 101 wireless troop founded in 1951, up until the closure of the camp in 1992, still seems like only yesterday. I would like to pay tribute to all the committee who over the years have

worked so hard to foster and arrange meetings and events, for being there whenever we had a question or complaint and also to Tom's diligence in running the website and keeping us all informed whenever we have logged on to the forum.

May we continue to grow in strength of purpose as an association who truly value the bonds of friendship and shared memories of a very special place which has formed a great part of our lives.”

Welcome to our new members:

Allen Hindmarsh	Royal Signals	1979-82.
David Etherton	Royal Signals	1967-70.
Rob White	Royal Signals	1983-86.
Philip Ashworth	Royal Signals	1985-88.
Rodney Briggs	Int.Corps	1961-62.
Russell Thomas	Int.Corps	1957-58.

Another year and another Reunion. Our thanks, yet again, to a splendid Committee who arranged everything. Now it's time to look forward to the next one - but not before Gail and I grab this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas.

Peter Baldwin



101 Wireless Troop
Christmas Dance 1956
Deutsches Haus

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

Rod Goddard

Our newly elected Vice-President



Early in September 1962 I climbed upon a steam train to begin a long journey across England and on to the Junior Tradesman Regiment (JTR) Rhyl in North Wales. We were

accommodated in pre WW1 huts. JTR Rhyl would be my home for the next 2 years, during this time I would train to be a Driver Radio Op. Then move on to 224 Sig Sqn to begin my Spec Op training. Our squad instructor was non-other than Tom Neal.

In December 1964 having successfully passed my A3 Spec Op course it was off to 13 Sig Regt. On my first day I managed to upset the SSM, needless to say I came off worse and within 5 days I was off. A punishment posting to Langeleben was in the wings. As I was checking in at the Guardroom the Orderly Officer entered, a Capt Dan Bailey and to my amazement he offered to carry one of my bags! I thought this was a punishment posting! Well perhaps Christmas was not going to be so bad, hopefully the New Year would continue in the same manner. Needless to say it did and I would go on to enjoy a wonderful 2 years in Langeleben, and be left with the indelible mark of life in Langeleben.

From Langy it was back to the Regiment, promotion to Cpl and then via Blandford it was off to Gibraltar to “monitor” the 1967 referendum in Gibraltar. January 1968 and it was time for a reality check, 223 Sig Sqn Barton Stacey called. Back to wooden huts, coke fires, a fearsome military regime and a 9 mile journey to our ops room in Flowerdown Winchester. For me this would prove to be a roller coaster of a posting. During which, I married, we had a baby daughter and then in June 1970 after long running and serious disagreements with the regime, I decided that it was time for a change. So with the OC’s words ringing in my ears, “something to do with bin men being well paid” I left.

I spent the next 6 months doing odd jobs. With very little chance of finding permanent employment and the birth of our son, it was time to sign on again. So in January it was off to sunny Catterick Garrison. April arrived and with it my posting to real sunshine in 9 Sig Regt Cyprus. During this tour I was promoted to A/Sgt, and then in Dec 1973 I left the sunshine of Cyprus for 30 Sig Regt Blandford. The average time spent away from the unit was in excess of 6 months per annum. No matter what our politicians say, some things will never change. In Jan 76 I was selected to attend the Supv Radio course in Loughborough and then it was back to Cyprus as an SSgt Supv Radio. For this tour we would have

to be satisfied with living in Dhekelia Barracks, because following the Turkish invasion in 1974, New Famagusta would be no more. Cyprus was now divided into two distinct parts.

In December 79 it was back to 13 Sig Regt. The only part of this tour that I was looking forward to was the over generous rate of LOA and the opportunity to own an indisputable duty free car. During this tour I was promoted to A/WOII. This was followed immediately with a 6 month Op Banner tour. I would arrive at my new post on Friday evening, and then due to an RTA on Saturday morning I would come round in hospital and spend the next 3 days there. Otherwise this would be a relatively uneventful 6 month tour. In July 83 I was promoted to WOI and began a 2 year tour with HQNI Lisburn. Due to one thing and another, this posting turned into 3½ years long and would transpire to be my most rewarding. In Jan 87 I returned from HQNI to 224 Sig Sqn, renamed to Comms & Sy Group (UK). In April I was off to HQ Land Forces Salisbury, July to Buckingham Palace, (just for the day) then on to Blandford to attend a commissioning course. In August it was down to the Falkland Islands to take over as OC JSSUFI. I would return from there extremely fit, having experienced 1 hour of “Beasties PT” every night for 4 months. On a boat trip to Walkers Creek, I met up with the notorious Fred Simpson and his wife Vera. They invited us to stay, for what would prove to be a hearty, intoxicating lunch. The dreaded Elephant Beer. It is a good job I was not responsible for steering the ship home.

In Dec 87 I would depart the Falklands and head off to 14 Sig Regt (EW) Celle, to be employed in the Regimental Ops Room and as the SO3(EW) to HQ 3 Armoured Div. In my spare time and very much to my pleasure, I was appointed as the OC of Langeleben. So when I got fed up with the Regiment, I had somewhere to escape. After 3 years in 14 Sig Regt I would be returning to Comms & Sy Group (UK) as the Senior Instructor Radio Wing. After a few months and at the end of the first Gulf War I would be deployed to Saudi Arabia, as the OC of a small detachment. This would prove to be a demanding and yet, wholly enjoyable 4 month tour. Then it was back to the humdrum life at Comms & Sy Group (UK). Then in 1993 I was promoted to Major and would begin, what would turn out to be my last tour. This would be at the newly formed Director General Land Warfare (DGLW) in Upavon Wiltshire, as the SO2(EW). From here, after 34 years service, I began to sample civilian life which is another ‘story.’

Newsflash—The UK military's long march out of Germany has begun when the Ministry of Defence announced details of a pullout that will eventually cover all 20,000 British troops there. Under the plans, 1,800 will leave by January, and then there will be a steady return home of another 8,200 by 2015. The rest will be back in the UK before the end of the decade – 15 years earlier than first proposed.—Michael Braham



Scharfoldendorf tales

Prior to the move to Langeleben I spent time at Scharfoldendorf (via AAS Harrogate and the factory at Catterick). I had arrived at the Railway station at Eschershausen as a very young Signalman (Electrician Driver) wondering what on earth I had got myself into. I was there from 1965 to 70 (I think prior to 225's move to Langeleben. Firstly it was an outstanding posting for me as it was my first as an Electrician Driver straight out of Catterick. Prior to us using the place it was used by the RAF for a similar purpose to us, except we were mobile and the RAF were not (at that time). As it was approaching the height of the Cold War era it was in some ways I suppose real time working for part of the unit. But not being an operator that was not part of my brief.

Summer times were great and walking back to the camp from Eschershausen was a real route march, but as the rate of exchange at the time was I think 15 Marks to the pound for the princely sum of 5 Marks you could have a very reasonable night out.

During WW2 the camp was used as a rest camp for the Luftwaffe (so rumour had it). Prior to that it was used as a training camp so that the Germans could familiarize people with flying by the use of gliders. In fact there is/was supposedly a



place where a glider had crashed and a plaque placed.

In Squadron headquarters there was a library run by one of the wives, but I do remember that

once it was found that there was a chair there that had a German Eagle beneath a Swastika, the seat was quietly placed in the corner and not used. As with Langeleben plenty of the social life existed around the NAAFI block, at the time little Paddy Boyle was Manageress, with Erika and Marian (shown above) as staff. Paddy Boyle was an outstanding manageress and as a Squadron we used to run out of Carlsberg bottled beer on a regular basis. But Good old Paddy was not averse to "lending" us a crate of "charlies" till payday.

There was also a Squadron Dance there, this was the social event of my time as there was a bus load of Nurses from BMH Rinteln there – that's all I am going to say on that topic.

I also remember Dave "Curly" Moore quietly sitting by the swimming pool (in reality emergency water supply). As it was a hot day I felt sorry for him sat at the poolside in uniform. I must have been duty driver as I had gone out on the Polle run (to married quarters there) by the time I had come back he was grinning from ear to ear. He waved me over and showed me a length of string with half a dozen bottles of Amstel attached to it. Around the house I still have a huge beer stein from Jurgen Funke's bar (but I suppose everyone has a similar memento.)

When we were there (seems like yesterday to me) it was not uncommon to bump start the trucks off the Mountain when going on exercise, the down side to that was if you missed a gear in an Austin K9 (which had a crash gearbox) you coasted all the way to the bottom.

Winter was always special (bloody cold and snowing). To this end the O/C managed to borrow a digger (Bray) and a driver to clear the snow. I was



fortunate that he was pretty easy going and I was able to learn how to drive and operate the machine. Good driving experience.

Bill Fry

Note from Neil Mapp– Reference an article in a previous copy of the Listening Post about The Vicar "Was it Mick Ryan - (The Vicar) that we could not remember the name of? Just seen on an item in Spec Ops Home. I shared a caravan with him in NI years and years ago. Regards to all from Neil"

Our next copy of The Listening Post will be in or around March 2012 and your short stories are needed (especially from you youngsters among us who were in Langeleben in the 80's and 90's.)

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IMPORTANT - If you have received your copy from one of our volunteer 'buddies' please do let them know you have, and that you are safe and well. We don't want to cause distress in families where a member has moved on for some reason or even sadly passed, nor send you anything you would prefer not to receive.

Fylingdales R. A. F. Visit



Recently, three Northern Members of the Langeleben Branch joined with York Branch, RSA on a visit to the United Kingdom B M E W S (Ballistic Early Warning Site) above Whitby in Yorkshire. On arrival we were given a light meal of tea and sandwiches before a "PowerPoint" presentation, which formed an introduction.

We were then taken on a tour of the site. First stop being the SPUR (Solid State Phased Array Radar) housed in the iconic pyramid building, which replaced the once familiar "Golf-balls". At the time of our visit the gates of the SPUR building were being given an overhaul, which entailed us abseiling down the front.

Later in the visit we were shown the control room in which the R.A.F. personnel monitor the skies for Satellite, Comet or Rocket activity. An additional chore is the tracking and recording of Space Debris, which can include pieces of metal or an astronaut's discarded glove. *(32,000 objects to date).

Finally we were given a tour of the powerhouse, where energy for the station's use is generated, both gas and diesel powered engines being used. Ear Plugs were necessary, some of the engines being the type used to haul mile long American Freight Trains - Some Power!

At the conclusion of our visit we marvelled at the advances made since lighted beacons were the means of giving warning of an approaching object.

Clive Inman



Then and Now



Where is this?
Can you remember?

Why not send us your memories.



Were you in the JSSL?

The Joint Services School for Linguists was, like Langeleben itself, a child of the Cold War.

In the nine years of its existence, at Coulsdon, then Bodmin, and finally at a disused airfield at Crail on the coast of Fife, JSSL taught Russian to some 5000 servicemen. Most were National Servicemen, and most had previous experience of learning a foreign language.

The course lasted for seven and a half months, and brought men (they were all men in my day!) roughly up to university entrance standard. The best students were then cherry-picked for the more advanced interpreters' course. Those who did not make interpreter grade received further training in Soviet radio procedures before being posted to operational units. A lucky few ended up at Langeleben, surely one of the best postings in the British Army!

I regret that my fellow Russian linguists have not been active visitors to the Langeleben website, but perhaps the new section in the gallery, and Marlene's hard work in compiling the Newsletter may encourage them to share their own experiences and also any photos of those years.

Gordon Peacock



Clive Inman