

The Listening Post



The Newsletter of the Langeleben Reunion Branch, Royal Signals Association

Issue No: 1

March 2009



1951 - 1992



At last a warm welcome to the very first issue of The Listening Post which is being brought to you 2 or 3 times a year using the unique method of utilising the internet to send the copy to all who have a computer, and 60 volunteers, to whom we are indebted, are printing off copies to post to those without access to the internet. We have so much that we would like to bring you and it has been difficult to decide what goes in and what will need to wait for another time, we hope you approve of our choices.

Front page news of course must go to our Reunion in June and the excitement of the unveiling of the Commemorative Stone, more on that in our next issue.

Your comments are very welcome.
Marlene Brooks, Editor



Langeleben Reunion Branch Royal Signals

For forty years we had a presence at Langeleben, initially as 101 Wireless Troop, as an occupying force, housed in tents, remote from anywhere, in primitive conditions. Over the years this evolved into a shared responsibility for mutual defence in quite comfortable accommodation. Maj. Gen. Peter Baldwin, then a Lieutenant, found the site, a relic of the Berlin airlift, in 1951, since when, hundreds of us served there in various capacities. John Richardson finally handed the Camp back to the local Authority in 1992.

During the week-end of June 12th to 14th immediately after the 65th anniversary of the D Day landings, the Langeleben Reunion Branch of the RSA will be unveiling a stone to commemorate and celebrate the time we all spent at Langeleben. The theme of our celebrations will be that 'WE CAME AS AN OCCUPYING FORCE AND LEFT AS FRIENDS'. We have teamed up with the Konigsfutter Civic authority and the local Schützengilde which, together with the exhibition of "All things Langeleben" in the Rathaus, will make a fabulous weekend for those who served there.

Paul Ellis a mason at Lincoln Cathedral is carving the commemoration stone; he is the son of one of our members whose Mother was a native of Konigsfutter. You might like to learn more of the event or even join us! If so log onto: Langeleben Reunion Branch Royal Signals Association www.langeleben.co.uk or contact Ernie Callaghan, 12 Carisbrooke Avenue, Bexley, Kent DA5 3HS.

Source: Shutter Telegraph March 2009

Cartoon (left) courtesy of
Clive Inman

LOOKING FOR 'THE VICAR'



I have absolutely no idea of the date in 1958 when 'THE VICAR' (seen here third from the left) arrived at Langeleben and joined "D" watch. He was billeted in the last room on the left, at the end of the top corridor, along with Bob Graham, Denis Parr, Henry Morris and Jake Todd.

I do remember he looked even younger than the rest of us at 19/20, and then we found out that he had VOLUNTEERED to serve his time EARLY, because he wished to commence his ecclesiastical training to join the Church of England. I must admit that rather set the tone of his welcome and he very quickly settled into the gang. There was the inevitable 'ribbing', but he seemed to avoid the lengthy and very serious 'gripping' process suffered by all other 'red-arsed joskin' new boys.

He was different, he did not swear, curse or blaspheme every other word, but he did smoke and drink and he was quite a regular on the reccy. truck for a night in 'Slutter. He might not have appreciated much of our language and other extremes but it never separated him from the rest of the lads. He played football for 'D' Watch and he was always on the weekend truck to the Harz Mountains – definitely one of the boys.

I never remember hearing his name, and yet he must have been on Pay Parade! When we spoke to him, it was always 'Vicar', when we spoke about him, it was always 'The Vicar', but without doubt he became one of the most popular members of the Watch.

During one of our recent reunions, Peter "Mick" Hatton, Denis Parr (and our ladies of course), we went over all the old ground, but no one knew his name. After Marlene was looking through the 58/59 photos, the only question she posed, "What was the name of The Vicar?"

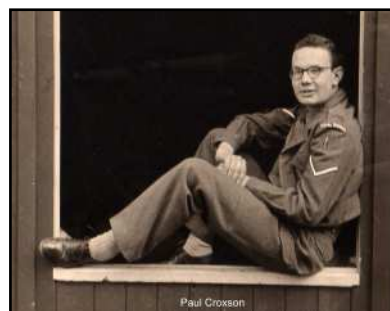
So we would like anyone who can help, please do you remember The Vicar, and what is his name? Has anyone



kept in touch with him? It is obvious, but even if he were a member we would not know him!

He is there for all to see, have a look in the 58/59 Gallery, and for those with no access, here he is (left) with 'D' Watch and above on parade with Derek Hill.
Geoff Buckley

LANGELEBEN OUR LIVING HISTORY



It all started when I went to the Imperial War Museum to research holders of naval VC's for a book that I was writing to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the award. No! It did not: it all started

that May evening in 1955 when in the pitch black I first arrived at Langeleben. No – it did not... That's the thing about history there is no start to it and no end and this is why I wanted to call it a 'Living History'.

I recorded my own recollections of a boy living through the Blitz, V1's and V2's in South London at the Museum and, whilst waiting for Ian Hislop to finish filming for his series, I got talking to the Staff. Amazingly they have very little 'history' on the Cold War and were fascinated with what I could tell them about Langeleben. They now have a copy of JR's book (almost as rare now as a Shakespeare first folio) and, thanks to Gerry, the entire book on CD which they intend downloading and printing. A hearty 'Well done' to all those who made a contribution. Now, those who have not as yet done so, it is not too late. This is the joy of it. It is noticeable that the bulk of the contributions came in from those who served in those early days and a lot from us part-timers, the National servicemen. May I also whisper that there is a predominance of Int. Corps chaps amongst the authors/contributors; those whom Pete Ellis would refer to as the 'Fairies'. Perish the thought that I should try to introduce a spirit of competition into this project but it is important and anything is worthwhile trying. Surely outnumbering us by some ten to one this imbalance can be reversed; we

know you can all read and write – I watched (up-side-down)* you doing so for 15 months in Langeleben. As Eric Morecombe said about his piano playing when criticised by Andre Previn, “I know all the notes but it is just a question of getting them in the right order”. If this is a problem don’t worry I’ll do my best to sort out the grammar and the spelling and try to make it readable.

We have this magnificent library of photos too and the next stage is to get these off the website and off to the Imperial War Museum too. Think how dull those WWI and II programmes we are now watching would be without the photos! It won’t be long before pushy little programme makers will be fossicking around the records and surely one of them is going to come across our efforts. You will be able to say (in between sips of cocoa) to your great grand children. ”I was there you know”.

Oh, by the way, Tom Perkin has never been given the credit he deserves for getting the ‘History’ up, running and readable on the net. So, Tom, ‘thank you’.

Don’t forget, too, that Gerry has offered to let you have a CD if you do not have the luxury of broadband and want to read it. He would like a small donation which is very reasonable.

*The ability to read up-side-down that I acquired has come in useful so many times over the years, particularly when being interviewed for jobs.

Paul Croxson

Left to right 1969

Marlene, Jim Thornton, Baz Wright



Just before the NAAFI was decorated with the brick look-like wallpaper the lads put up themselves



In 1970 the lads decided enough was enough and began to decorate!

Decorating NAAFI Bar 1970

Langeleben Reunion 2009

Bully Tin

Commemorative Stone

The contract with the Forestry Commission allowing us to erect the commemorative stone on their land has been signed.

Standards

Loughborough Branch RSA and Garat’s Hay Branch RBL have kindly agreed to their Branch Standards being paraded at our Reunion. Other suitable local branches are also being approached so that we should have a respectably-sized Standard Bearer Party fronting us in style. Anyone else who has a Branch Standard in his attic, or knows of a suitable one which could also be paraded, please contact us.

Exhibitionists

Have you an old pair of army socks (preferably washed)? Mess tins, perhaps? Or a green wooli pully? An exhibition will be held in the Town Hall foyer, on the theme ‘A small town in Germany – where occupiers became friends’ using pictures from our gallery and radios with other artefacts from private collections. We are short on items of uniform and military life. Anyone who has photographs or old bits of kit which could be of interest should contact us. The exhibition will be opened on the Friday morning under a blaze of publicity with a glass of champagne, courtesy of the town council.

Publicity

I have written a small article for ‘Soldier’ magazine, which should appear soon. This year’s Int Corps Magazine ‘The Rose & Laurel’ contains an article too. Word of mouth, however, still remains the best method to persuade the undecided to attend.

Contact either:

John Richardson - asstsecretary@langeleben.co.uk

Or Ernie Callaghan on 020 8300 7577

callaghanernie@hotmail.com

John Richardson

*****STOP PRESS FROM ERNIE*****

OSCAR or BAFTA

We have been fortunate in persuading a local professional cameraman Herr Erich Mayer to capture the weekend events on film and to edit and supply a master DVD from which to reproduce copies for sale to our members as a memento of this unique occasion, also for those of our members who could not make it to this years reunion. The titles will be in both English and German for the benefit of all our friends on both sides, we can perhaps present one to the Königslutter town council. Erich Mayer has offered his services on a cost only basis and all profits will be used to bolster branch funds to obviate the extra costs for this year’s celebrations.



Secretary's Report



The 16th AGM and reunion in June will mark my 10th anniversary as secretary having been volunteered as a 'stop-gap' in 1999 on the untimely death of the then secretary and founding member Frank Mitchell. In those ten years our membership has more than doubled, mainly thanks to promotion on our excellent website, word of mouth and the quality of our successful annual reunions. To me, these past ten years have been very rewarding and it remains a privilege to serve you the members of the Langeleben family.

As you all know our next gathering in Königsutter over the weekend 12th-14th June will be very special to our attending members with the inauguration of the Langeleben commemorative stone which has been made possible by the financial generosity of our membership and two years of hard work and planning by both the main committee and Assistant Secretary John Richardson's sub committee. We have applied to both the Royal Signals and the Intelligence Corps Associations for financial assistance and are still awaiting their decisions. Now for the good news, we have just received confirmation of the attendance of the Heavy Cavalry and Cambrai Military Band for the inauguration ceremony at no cost to the branch.

I look forward to seeing all those members who have already booked to attend over the reunion weekend and to those of you that have yet to book, (*the closing date has been extended to Friday 15th May.*) Confirmations of your bookings and the full weekend itinerary will start to be sent out in early April. (At the time of going to press we have 112 members and guests booked.)

Remember the continuing success of "The Listening Post" depends mainly on your contributions so keep those memories, articles and photos coming in, our award winning editor Marlene Brooks is relying on your future input and support.

Ernie Callaghan

Obviously there will be some disappointment (and some relief) at the articles which were or were not published but with only 4 A4 sheets twice a year I had to go with a spectrum of the years we all served. Our next copy will be in August and your short stories are welcomed. All I have already are stored safely and will be printed when space permits. Marlene Brooks (Editor)
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Email: langelebennews@yahoo.co.uk

Commemoration Stone Fund

Due to some very generous donations, including £925 from the family and friends of the late Paul (Lofty) Fildes, to date the fund stands at £5663. So far we have paid out £1,608.07; this is for the raw stone, bronze plaques and an interim payment to Paul Ellis of £500. We have also to pay for the groundwork at the site, and the first year's third party insurance. We haven't got a figure yet for the groundwork but the insurance will cost some €112, this of course will be on going, year on year.



So friends, if you haven't made a donation yet, please think about it. Cheques to be made out to 'Langeleben Branch RSA'
Thank You.

(photo shows the spot where the memorial is located)
Gerry Kane, Treasurer



LAST POST



**'Gone but not forgotten'
Since the last AGM...**

**June 2007. Michael Kenning.
Langeleben 1968-72.**

**March 2008. Graham Hanman.
Langeleben 1959-60.**

**June 2008. Barry Winson.
Langeleben 1960-62.**

**September 2008. John Keill.
Langeleben 1960.**

**September 2008. Mick Hopper.
Langeleben 1961-62.**

**September 2008. Paul Cook.
Langeleben 1961-62.**

**November 2008. John Croft.
Langeleben 1956-57.**

**November 2008. Alan Hughes.
Langeleben 1957-59.**

**February 2009. Mick Green.
Langeleben 1967-81.**

May they rest in peace.