



## **ADEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH** **NEWSLETTER 1 OF 2020 FOR FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL AND MAY**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

I am writing this report as Christmas approaches. I do hope that you have all enjoyed the celebrations and the festivities.

Our Christmas Lunch, held in the Orangery at Tortworth Court, was extremely well attended by our members as well as groups from the Grenadier Guards, Clevedon, Royal British Legion, and their Breakfast Club.

Jean Stublely, our Social Secretary, did a superb job organising the event. She was ably assisted by our raffle committee, Rose, Josie, Carol, Dorothy and Jane. who provided some wonderful prizes. Sheila Gibson spent many hours making individual boxes for the chocolates, which were given to the ladies. Denis Sparrow and Chris Blick set up our display boards at the entrance to the Orangery. Dennis Flamson organised, and conducted, the handover of our Branch Standard from John Longhurst to Robert Parrant. My sincere, and grateful, thanks to John for carrying our Standard, at a variety of events, during the last five years. I know that Robert will do our Branch proud on future occasions, able supported by his deputy Dennis Flamson.

Our Branch meeting, on 8<sup>th</sup> January, followed the traditional holding of our quiz planned and conducted by Jim Major. However it was also tinged with sadness that Ian Cooper, amongst others, will not be with us again.

I am sure that we can look forward to this year with great optimism. We have our "First Wednesday Lunches", Earthcott Green, the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Aden Veterans Association, the Weymouth Reunion and Parade, the National Reunion and Annual General Meeting to take place in Blackpool in September, as well as our own Service to remember our Withdrawal from Aden on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1967. These are just some of the events, amongst many, which will be published on our website.

I wish you all a healthy, happy and trouble free 2020.

Rick Rutter.

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

During the last four months all of the planned events have taken place, even if we had to make changes to the original plans. Most notable, was the withdrawal of the usual hospitality by Cheltenham Mayor's Office for the 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Service on 29<sup>th</sup> November, because the Mayor's Parlour was required by the Electoral Registration Officer

for the counting of postal votes prior to the Election. With the help of Jennie Ingram from the Mayor's Office, what had been organised previously, was un-organised, including the attendance of the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire.

Despite these changes, the determination of the Gloucestershire Branch members showed through, and so we continued with a smaller service with support from the Royal British Legion and the Member of Parliament for Cheltenham, Alex Chalk. Unlike last year, when the skies opened, we were blessed with good weather, so maybe our persistence was appreciated at a higher level!

I do not intend to duplicate the details of both Rick's and Chris's reports for each occasion, except for the National Remembrance Day Parade in London on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November, when I was the only Gloucestershire Branch representative. My impressions were firstly that for a lot of veterans, it is a lot of effort and expense, unless you have relatives in the London area. Secondly, the chance of meeting others who you have never known before, but with whom you have something in common, means you can have an enjoyable conversation instantly – was the real pleasure. Thirdly, from muster until dismissal, you are standing still for 95% of the time (about three hours). Also, participation in the service is difficult because the PA system was not adequate and the sunlight made looking at the screen impossible. But despite the limitations, attendance was an experience I would not have missed. So if there are any more Branch members who would like to attend the 2020 Cenotaph Parade, please step forward.

When we were considering a suitable venue for the Christmas Lunch, we were concerned that we would not have enough support to meet the Tortworth Court Hotel requirements of 40 participants. It was Jean Stublely's idea that we ask another veterans organisation if they would like to make the event a joint effort, and it was with her connections that she made this possible. While giving all credit to Jean for the idea, it has shown that as numbers in the various veterans groups decline, we can combine on an ad-hoc basis for the specific events, and yet still maintain our respective identities. I believe that this is a path for the future.

Finally, please note that all National Association membership fees (now £15.00 per Full Member, and £5.00 for Associate Member) need to be sent to John Lunn before the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

A Happy New Year to you all.

Michael Compton

#### TREASURER'S REPORT:

At the Annual General Meeting in July 2019, I advised Members that our costs had been rising against a background of reducing income. I had been concerned that if this trend continued unchecked, then in several years' time we could be in an unfavourable financial situation. I subsequently distributed an information paper at the October Meeting.

Like everyone else, I was becoming increasingly frustrated over the non-resolution of the dreaded Brexit impasse, whatever your views are. Then, we had a General Election.

This impacted on our Branch, as we could not hold our Civic Event to mark the Anniversary of the Withdrawal from Aden on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The Cheltenham Civic Offices were required by the Returning Officer and his staff, so our event was reduced to a wreath laying ceremony.

The effect of this is that we had no expenditure on that day, the cost of our normal arrangements for the sound system and the bugler being met by Cheltenham Borough Council. Shortly afterwards, we had an excellent Christmas Lunch, where our Branch Members and partners were joined by ex-Service and other groups in what was a joyful occasion. The Raffle raised £290.00, enabling us to end the calendar year in a better position than I had earlier envisaged.

At the start of 2020, we have £1,531.00 in the bank, and it is likely that we will end the financial year with a small surplus of income over expenditure. This is a good foundation to proceed, and it is a testament to the ongoing support given to the Branch. Your Committee will, of course, be keeping a watchful eye on the financial situation, so that we may continue to meet and enjoy the company of friends into the future.

By the time you read these notes, my partner and Associate Member, Angie, will have just had a hip replacement, and I shall be well into the "Op Order" (which I am sure exists somewhere) telling me all about post-operative care.

David Gearing.

#### SOCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

A Very Happy New Year to you all.

I hope that you have enjoyed the lunches that I have arranged in 2019 and thank you for supporting my efforts. We had an average attendance of 18 over 7 venues being the Miler and Carter at Quedgeley, The Kings Head at Birdwood, Cleeve Hill Golf Club, The Ram at Bussage, House in the Tree at Cheltenham, Gloucester Old Spot and Rose Tree Farm Quedgeley.

On top of those was our return to the Tortworth Court Hotel for our Christmas Lunch on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019. It was good to see so many of you supporting this event, plus your warm support in making welcome the High Sheriff of Gloucester City Council Councillor Collette Finnegan, The Gloucestershire Grenadiers Association and the "Breakfast Club from Weston super Mare. I found the Hotel hospitality excellent and the Orangery was a beautiful setting at a reasonable cost for four courses. However I did point out to them that the beef was rather tough! I would like your thoughts on whether we should return to Tortworth Court for our December 2020 Christmas Lunch or should we seek another venue and indeed whether we should invite guests once again so as to increase our numbers.

So far this year I have arranged the "First Wednesday Lunches" for February and March and you will find these details on the "Diary" pages.

The usual times of 12.00 for 12.30 hours will once again apply and reservations to be made to me by telephone on 07970707945 or by email to [jean.stubley@virginmedia.com](mailto:jean.stubley@virginmedia.com). Details will also be shown on the AVA Gloucestershire Branch website.

Other venues are under consideration to include The Tudor Arms at Slimbridge, The Penny Farthing at Aston Ingham, The House in the Tree, Cheltenham College, Gupshill Manor and the Fleet Inn at Twyning near Tewkesbury.

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

Now that the General Election is truly done and dusted I can sit down and compose some thoughts and comments for the first Newsletter of a new decade being we have reached the year 2020. As Boris Johnson said on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December it is more a case of "early breakfast" than "early Brexit"!

This year is very special for the Aden Veterans Association since we mark twenty years according to the AVA Constitution issued on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2004 that it was founded on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000 by Mr John Hotston and co-founded by Mr Ernest Izard. It was a real pleasure for some of us to meet with John Hotston at the AVA West Dorset Branch and Weymouth Reunion and Armed Forces Weekend over the period 21 to 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019. John has since been to visit the AVA South West Branch on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019 when they held their Annual Service to mark the Withdrawal of British Troops from Aden that took place on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1967. I understand that Mr Ernest Izard is now living abroad but we send our good wishes from the Gloucestershire Branch. Although a much younger organisation our own Branch will celebrate its Anniversary in August when we complete thirteen years of being initially set up. Of course we did not have official recognition until we held our first Branch Meeting on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2008!

The final quarter of 2019 was full of success as we attended the Battle of Britain Service at the Minster Church in Cheltenham although the numbers of Veterans on Parade was sadly very small. Some of us also attended the AVA Reunion and AGM held at the Norbreck Castle Hotel in Blackpool. If you are joining us at Blackpool in September 2020 be very careful when booking into the Hotel with your vehicle to ensure that the correct registration number is recorded by the reception desk staff, and most importantly the number of days you are staying includes the day of arrival and departure.

It was on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019 that some of us attended, at St. Paul's Church Whiteshill near Stroud, for the final Service led by the Reverend Brian Woollaston our AVA Branch Padre. The Church was full to capacity and our Branch President Chris Price read one of the lessons. A very enjoyable buffet lunch was to follow and the opportunity to chat and make new friends and meet old ones!

On Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 at the Long Garden Memorial in Cheltenham our Chairman Rick Rutter laid our AVA Cross in the Garden of Remembrance hosted by the Mayor of Cheltenham Borough Council.

Our Annual Service to mark the Withdrawal of British Troops from Aden at the Long Garden in Cheltenham on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November went ahead in a very truncated format since the

Election for the 12th December had been announced and the accommodation in the Borough Council Offices that was normally available was required for other matters. However the Service took place and the Member of Parliament for Cheltenham Alex Chalk came and joined us. We were also joined by Wing Commander Roy Roberts of Cheltenham RBL and two other Association Standards.

The Christmas Lunch at the Tortworth Court Hotel was very successful but I will let Jean Stublely tell you more about this since I do not wish to steal her thunder!

You will recall that Kevin Topping the Armed Forces Champion for Stroud District Council wrote an epistle in our last Newsletter. Kevin has been busy raising the profile for Armed Forces Veterans and has recently put together an excellent document covering Breakfast Clubs, NHS priority treatment, War Pensions to include Widow's Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Schemes, the Joining Forces project, and many other subjects. To access this information simply type into your  
<<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/community-and-living/armed-forces-community-covenant>>  
Please note dash between words and not underscore!

The very successful "Joining Forces Project" run in conjunction with Gloucestershire University at Park Campus in Cheltenham continues to flourish. If you have not attended and wish to do so please speak to Emlyn Phennah at one of our meetings. This project records the memories of veterans from past conflicts and uses photographic images and other facilities to enhance your stories.

Also the very successful Breakfast Clubs continue to operate around the County of Gloucestershire and a further development is awaited in the Dursley and Berkeley area. More information via email [cafvinc@gmail.com](mailto:cafvinc@gmail.com) or via facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2139841736271725>.

The Weston-super-Mare Helicopter Museum will once again be hosting the very popular "World at War Weekend" on Saturday and Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020 between 09.30 and 17.30 hours. Your Branch Committee have agreed to attending with our display boards etc and Dennis Flamson will be overseeing our coverage on these two days.

The Weymouth Veterans Weekend takes place from Friday 19<sup>th</sup> until Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 with accommodation at reduced rates at the Rembrandt Hotel on Dorchester Road just a few minutes' walk from the Town Centre. Reservations are currently being accepted by Sylvia Johnson on 01305 833188.

News from "Concord" by Denis Sparrow:

As 2020 starts to blossom with diaries ready to be filled, why not join a few of us on a trip to Weston super Mare and support our two Aden Veterans Association Branches, being West Dorset and Gloucestershire, venture to take part in the Helicopter Museum's "World at War" Exhibition with displays both under cover and outside over two days, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020 between 09.30 and 17.30 hours.

A number of members of our Branch took part last year helping to set up our display boards and talk to the visitors to the Museum and a very enjoyable weekend was had by all. There is a Travel Lodge Hotel next to the Museum with ample car parking and a pub serving food. For those who wish to sample a little retail therapy in the town there is a connecting bus service. More details will appear on our website as they become available.

You will be aware that from time to time we as Branch Members attend a Funeral of one of our own, and we know how to support the families in their personal bereavement. Normally we receive a personal message of thanks but on a recent occasion late in 2019 I received a telephone call from the daughter of a former Royal Marine who was in his 90's when he died, and had served in France on "D" Day and in the Burma Campaign against the Japanese Forces. She asked me to recommend a place where she could purchase a Commando Green Beret to be placed on her late Father's Coffin. I replied that she could borrow mine and suggested that I would deliver it to her home in Painswick. She decided to collect it from my home saving me the journey, which gave me the opportunity to sit and chat about her Father who had been injured in a car accident and was unable to walk, therefore she and her close family had been his carer for a few years and had become very close to him. She explained that his wishes were to have his ashes scattered around the Commando War Memorial near Fort William in Scotland and I responded that I had contacts up there and make the necessary enquiries. Also to ask if any serving Royal Marines could attend the ceremony.

Before she left my home, I promised her that it would be a privilege to attend the Funeral Service at Cheltenham Crematorium and would make enquiries within our Branch for others to join with me. Brian Serrell, Chris Blick and Rick Rutter agreed to do this. The Chapel of Rest was filled with family, friends and veterans from the Armed Forces. We then retired to the Royal William Inn at Cranham for the Wake where we sat down to express our sympathy with the family who showed their genuine appreciation for our support at this sad time. Furthermore, they said that our presence helped them to deal with their loss plus and that they were proud of their Father and Grand Father. A few days following the Service four bottles of wine were delivered to my door for Brian, Chris, Rick and myself as a token of their appreciation.

More recently I received a telephone call expressing sincere appreciation and thanks for arranging the presence of two serving Royal Marines from 43 Commando Group who guard the Nuclear Base, where the Ashes were scattered. Their presence was really appreciated and what was a sad occasion was turned into one that they will always remember and was a very fitting end to their Father's life, a feeling of completion.

There is a point I would like to make with this story of a passing of this War Veteran, and applies to all those served since the Second World War, and especially those of our own age, not all of them have a family to rely upon. Many live on their own and indeed die alone, therefore our presence at such funerals is extremely important, although not every family want or need such attention. It does though show respect and gives such families the knowledge their loved on is not forgotten and helps to heal broken hearts.

In conclusion, having written three books about Aden, with the help of a few dozen veterans, I have been told time and time again by family members that their Father or indeed Mother had never mentioned their Service in the Armed Forces, or that any records had been sadly lost over the years. Please pass your history on to others so that we can keep the history of those who served in Aden alive.

## “Aden in Which we Served”

Age UK Gloucestershire:

Chris Walker is the Community Engagement Manager for Age UK Gloucestershire and has compiled the following details regarding his responsibilities.

“As Community Manager I am responsible (in a nutshell) for helping to create better - connected communities. Whether that is through supporting individuals who would like to start a new community group or intervening to save a failing group and bring it back to a state of sustainability. We often act as the catalyst for action by bringing together and brokering a deal to create successful partnerships and sustainable activity that is not reliant on one stream of funding and supported by multiple agencies.

We are working in many areas throughout the County with community choirs, walking sports groups, intergenerational ideas just to name a few areas, but will support anything that brings people together to reduce loneliness and isolation.

We use what we know, who we know with what we have learned, to work with many different partners. For example with the military charity SSAFA where we support military veterans through a range of products, services, signposting and innovative work with partners like Gloucestershire University who are creating digital live-stories bringing their incredible experiences and stories to life for generations to appreciate and learn from. This is a really exciting piece of work both for the veterans and the students alike.

We have supported governing bodies such as the FA, Gloucester Rugby, England Netball in order to help develop Walking Football, Rugby, Netball, and we will soon be looking at Walking Basketball and Hockey. We have been supported by grass-root clubs such as Abbeymead Rovers FC (being one of the largest in the South West boasting the current England over 60's Manager Stuart Langworthy), Longlevens and Newent RFC creating more football and rugby provision linking in to local clubs. These sessions not only provide a wealth of additional opportunities such as tours and tournaments, but bring groups of 20+ people together on a weekly basis and that social connection is bigger than the sport in terms of reducing social isolation and loneliness.

We are currently also working on expanding a Gloucester pilot to the rest of the County through a partnership with libraries where we have created “Springboard” groups. These are places where people can come together to discuss a range of issues and get involved in a range of activity, but more importantly meet together, form new friendships and act as peer support collectively with our support and connections if needed. Our aim is to support the groups to self-manage and provide that “long-arm” support to keep them sustainable,

connected and linked-in to a range of other support groups should they need to take advantage of them.

This is just a snippet of our "Community" function and to find out more about other projects and services or to book a talk, telephone me on 01452 422660".

**Fixture List for February, March, April and May 2020:**

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February First Wednesday Lunch 12.00 for 12.30 hours. The Toby Inn, (formerly The Dog at Over) next to the Over Farm Market, GL2 8DE. There is a 20% reduction on this event since we are paying with the Defence Discount card!

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March First Wednesday Lunch 12.00 for 12.30 hours. The George Inn at Frocester (St Peter's Street) GL10 3TQ. Two courses £10.00 and three courses £15.00.

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March Fenland Branch (AVA) Dinner to which we have received an invitation.

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Aden Veterans Association.

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April (Do not let the date put you off coming!) Branch Meeting at 11.00 hours in the Stroud Conservative Club. Please advise Branch Secretary of your attendance and lunch requirements.

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April St George's Day Service at Gloucester Cathedral.

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April ANZAC Day Parade at Leighterton Cemetery at 14.00 hours.

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May First Wednesday Lunch at 12.00 for 12.30 hours. Venue TBD.

On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May there will be for Bus Enthusiasts a vintage bus show in the grounds of Stroud College from 10.00 until 16.00 hours including free bus trips around the district!

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June First Wednesday Lunch 12.00 for 12.30 hours Venue TBD.

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June until Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June Weymouth Veterans Weekend. More details elsewhere and on the Branch website or call Sylvia Johnson on 01305 833188.

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June National Armed Forces Day at Scarborough Yorkshire.

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July AVA Gloucestershire Branch Annual General Meeting at Stroud Conservative Club commencing at 11.00 hours

With sadness I bring to your attention the death of the West Dorset Branch Chairman Peter Wild (1937 to 2019) on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Peter was known to many of us who have attended the Weymouth Veterans Weekend events arranged by his Branch. His Funeral took place at the Weymouth Crematorium on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December by the West Dorset Chaplain the Reverend Dennis Mould. Our Branch was requested to attend with our Standard and Dennis Flamson travelled to Weymouth for the Service.



Dennis received a 'thankyou card' from members of the West Dorset Branch which reads "You're the best! Just a note of appreciation from all the members of the West Dorset Branch to thank you for your time and service that you gave at Peter's Funeral today". We extend our condolences to his family

Our Standard Bearer:

As many of you will be aware John Longhurst stood down as our Branch Standard Bearer at our Christmas Lunch held at the Tortworth Court Hotel on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

John penned the following for inclusion in this edition of our Newsletter:

"As I am about to hand over the Aden Veterans Association Gloucestershire Branch Standard, which I have carried with great pride over the past five years to various events both locally and nationally, I thought that I would share with you some of my memories.

I have been a Member of the Aden Veterans Association and involved with the Gloucestershire Branch for around eleven years. I was already a Royal British Legion Standard Bearer for the Forthampton and Bushley Branch of the Legion close to my home near Tewkesbury. I often joined my dear friend Roy Scott who was the then Branch Standard Bearer attending many events with both of us carrying our Association Standards.

We attended various events that included the all too regular Repatriation Services held initially at what is now known as Royal Wootton Bassett and more recently at RAF Brize Norton (Carterton) in Oxfordshire following the closure of RAF Lyneham. There were many moving moments especially when more than one hearse was in the process.

Accompanied by my wife Rose and with Josie Scott we covered many miles to reach our various appointments to include the ANZAC Parade held at the village of Leighterton near Tetbury, various Armed Forces Day events, the annual pilgrimage to Weymouth for the AVA West Dorset Branch event in June each year, plus Gloucester Cathedral, Remembrance Service in Cheltenham and Patchway near Bristol, Cheltenham Town Hall for the Festival of Remembrance on a Sunday night and of course to the National Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire, just to mention a few.

Sadly Roy Scott passed away on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2013 and his Funeral took place at Cambray Baptist Church in Cheltenham on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. I was extremely proud and indeed honoured to be invited to carry the AVA Gloucestershire Branch Standard on that sad occasion for a very much missed friend and comrade. Mick Kippin was Roy's deputy and took over the role until he moved to the Royal Hospital in Chelsea as an in pensioner on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016 to wear his Scarlet Uniform.

I then became the main Standard Bearer for the Gloucestershire Branch of our Association with Robert Parrant being a school boy in Aden 1964 to 1966 whilst his late Father served at RAF Khormaksar. Of the various events around 2017/2018 that I have carried the Standard these are the most memorable moments of my seven years in harness.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Withdrawal of British Troops from Aden held in Gloucester Cathedral on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2017. This was closely followed by a journey to Yorkshire to carry our Standard at York Minster for the National Aden Veterans Service commemorating the Withdrawal on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1967.

This Drum Head Service was conducted by our National Chaplain the Reverend Canon Simon Cox of All Hallows Church, Bispham near Blackpool. A full pipe band led by Andy Paton took into the Minster and provided the instruments for the Drum Head. This was yet another inspiring day for those present.

The following year at the Weymouth Veterans Weekend organised by Weymouth and Portland Borough Council on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018 the Aden Veterans Association contingent was invited to lead the Parade along the Sea Front from the North Pier to the Pavilion Theatre. We marched along a packed sea front whilst a pipe band played "The Barren Rocks of Aden".

I also attended the Service to Dedicate a Paviour and new bench at the National Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018. If you have not visited this Memorial then please do so since it is very moving to walk around the various Monuments and Stones and look at the inscriptions.

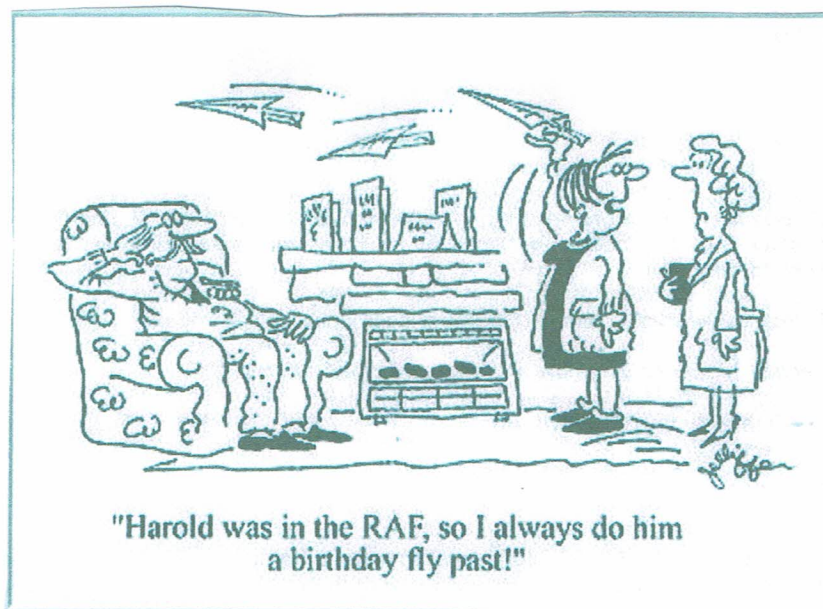
Our annual visit to Earthcott Green in June each year brings another opportunity to promote the Aden Veterans Association Gloucestershire Branch. A Service is held in the Chapel of Rest followed by a Wreath Laying Service at the War Memorial in the Park Grounds. A buffet lunch is provided by our hosts including tea or coffee or something a little stronger! Furthermore an AVA Wreath is provided for us to lay at the Memorial at no cost to ourselves.

I have paraded our Standard at many happy and social occasions but of course there have been some sad and poignant times as well. Attending the Funerals of our Members not only from our Branch but further afield brings us together in times of sadness and bereavement.

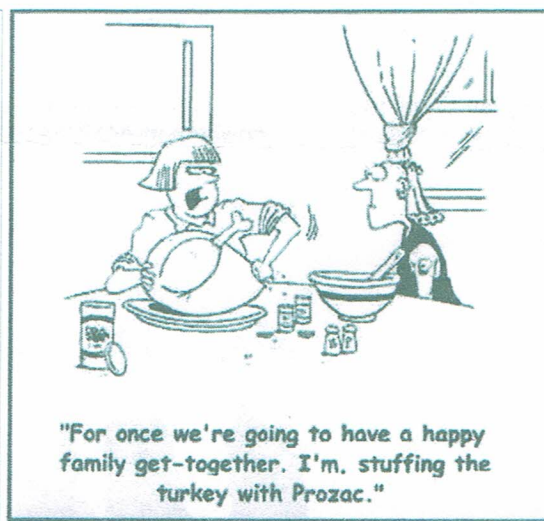
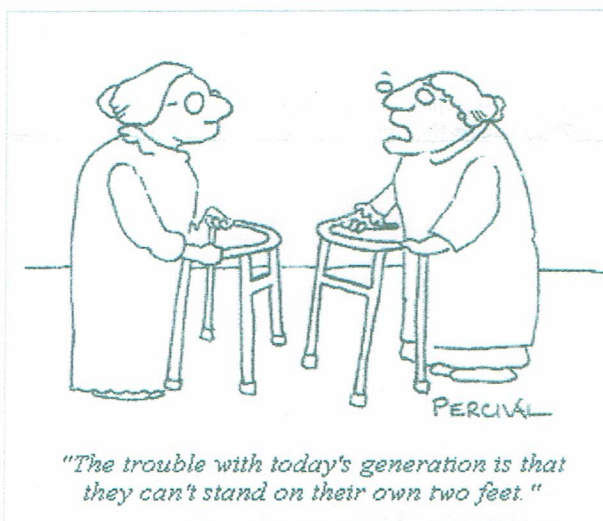
I have been very proud and honoured to carry out these duties for the Gloucestershire Branch but now is the time to ease up and hand over to a very capable and willing pair of hands and of course I am referring to Robert Parrant. Please give Robert your support as he carries out his duties on behalf of our Branch and also to Dennis Flamson and Robert Wood as they offer to help out when needed.

In conclusion I tender my thanks to the Branch Officers and Committee Members who have made my task so much easier with their kindness and help and I send you all my very best wishes for the future.

John Longhurst.



Taken from the AVA Gloucestershire Branch Newsletter April 2012



Taken from the AVA Gloucestershire Branch Newsletter October 2013

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