

MINUTES OF ADEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE TOBY INN BROCKWORTH ON
WEDNESDAY 3rd JULY 2024 at 11.00 am

1. ACT OF HOMAGE, AND WELCOME.

Chris Price, our Branch President welcomed all present to the new venue; he also welcomed Stephen Weall, AVA National Secretary as well as Clive Candlin who had stated that he wished to attend in a private capacity. Chris then read the Act of Homage..

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Peter House, Jane Wathern, Dennis Flamson and Jim Major.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM.

The minutes of the AGM held on 5th July 2023 had been shown on the Branch website and were circulated before the meeting. These minutes were proposed as an accurate record by Brian Serrell, and seconded by Ray Bunnage.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM.

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5. REPORTS BY COMMITTEE OFFICERS

5.1. Chairman – Rick Rutter presented his report:

Welcome to our 2024 AGM at our new venue here at the Toby Carvery in Brockworth. I do hope that you will enjoy the venue and the buffet lunch. It is always a good opportunity to catch up with friends and exchange stories.

Since our last Branch meeting in April your Branch has been involved in many events. My thanks to all of you who have attended a wide range of memorial services, weekends, lunches and parades.

In April your Branch was represented at the St George's Day service in Gloucester where our Standard was paraded. During May a few members of the Branch attended ANZAC Day at Leighterton, Major Tom Wills memorial service in Cirencester Church and VE Day in Cheltenham. Major Tom was the Branch President for a number of years. Unfortunately I joined the Branch after he left. His memorial service filled the Church and Aden was mentioned in the first address. Our National Chair, Clive Candlin, served under Major Tom in the Coldstream Guards and knew him well. Everybody that I have spoken with clearly held him in high regard.

June was a busy month for the Branch with D-Day, the Remembrance Service at Earthcott Green, Weymouth Weekend, the Grenadier Guards garden party and AFD in Gloucester. The Branch Standard was carried at most of these events. You can see that Robert Parrant has been very busy. My sincere thanks to Rob for his commitment to the Branch. The date for Earthcott Green has already been set for next year, June 11th, which will be listed in the events section of our website. We had a letter from David Rae, the Director, thanking the Branch for supporting the Service and parade. There are also a number of photographs on the Earthcott Green website, www.memorialwoodlands.com/events-and-training. The Weymouth Weekend is also booked for next year. This year was a really enjoyable few days in Weymouth thanks to the excellent organisation and welcome from the West Dorset Branch. Sylvia Johnson contacted me to say that they took £500 on the raffle and a further £500 on their stall. Thank you to those members who provided items for sale at the stall.

Three important events coming up in the next couple of months are;

Monday 15th July VJ Day at the war memorial in Cheltenham

Friday 19th July Denis Sparrow will deliver the Kings School lecture

Monday 26th August Memorial Dedication – crew of the Halifax Bomber crash on Cleeve Hill

I would like to thank Michael for his work as Secretary and his role, with Denis Sparrow and Brian Serrell, in collating applications for the GSM award during the 'Gap year's. I am especially very grateful that he has continued through his recent diagnosis and wish him well for the future.

David, Sheila and Jean for all their hard work. The lunches continue to be very successful and well attended.

Finally an interesting set of statistics from Ray Bunnage, who does excellent work keeping our website up to date. During June the website had 394 page visits. Some interesting hits – 88 from West Dorset, 44 from Sanna in the Yemen, 14 from Boardman in the USA and 5 from Brisbane in Australia. Good to see an international audience.

Thank you all.

5.2 Secretary – Michael Compton reported:

Since last July, the Branch has had its usual "quota" of events. Apart from the major events, the real "glue" has been the First Wednesday lunches which always manage to attract a few stalwarts as well as those who are local to the venue. So I feel it

right that we say a special thank you to Jean Stubleby for her continued efforts. In addition, it is she who, at my request, has organised the venue and food today. As you already know, our long association with the Carlton Club at Stroud has come to an end now that there has been a change of management policy. We are hoping that this venue will be an adequate replacement, at the same time providing more appropriate choices for food, as well as better parking facilities.

Last year our Commemoration of Withdrawal was attended by Edward Gillespie the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, and once again we were supported by the Mayor of Cheltenham with coffee before the service. Moving on to December, we had a Christmas lunch at the Robinswood Hotel – many thanks to Sally Welzel for her organisational skills. Our first meeting in 2024 was a quiz hosted by Jim Major, who despite being in hospital in early December, insisted on carrying on regardless! The willingness of those who have helped and organised has made this Branch what it is today.

During the last year our numbers have remained fairly constant – we have about 45 active members with an average of 23 members attending most functions. As a few members have resigned they have been replaced by some who have joined the AVA as a result of applying for a GSM for the “Forgotten Years” – so welcome to Andrew Harley. As you know, Denis Sparrow has spearheaded the attempt to persuade the political establishment and the MOD that, despite medals being refused for all of those who served in Aden at the time, there is more than justification for those who served “up-country” to be awarded a GSM. Denis has about 50 ex RM’s who wish to apply, and I have managed to make contact with a further 10 members of different units whose service meet the criteria we specified. We were in the process of alerting the MP’s about these applications, so that we could have their support, when Mr Sunak torpedoed our efforts by calling a general election! So, currently the project is on hold until the political dust settles and we know who each applicant’s MP will be.

We held a Committee Meeting in February, at which the programme for this year was agreed. This was published at our April meeting. If anyone would like a printed copy of the Minutes of the Committee Meeting, please let me know.

Finally the question – “The Future of the AVA” has been raised again by the East Yorkshire Branch despite the fact that the subject was raised at Blackpool last year, and agreed in principle. At that meeting I stated that our Branch was wholly behind our continuing until our 60th anniversary. I intend that we can reaffirm our opinions on the matter at the AGM.

5.3. Treasurer – David Gearing presented his report. Statements of account, 2022-23 are attached to these minutes:

It is a pleasure, once again, to present the Statement of Accounts to the Annual General Meeting. Our finances this year have been wholly influenced by donations, which have secured our financial security as we move forward.

We are deeply indebted to Graham Harper, for his substantial donation at the end of 2023, and in March of this year we received a donation of £250 from the Right Honourable Alex Chalk, MP for Cheltenham, to support the work of the Branch. I thank also Branch Members for their continuing support through donations.

At the end of the financial year, our bank balance was £3,480.62. I have circulated this morning copies of the Statement of Accounts; our Branch Administrative Expenses were just £7 more than last year, and other outgoings were as required to support Branch events. Without our major donations, we would have broken even, but in the face of rising costs for goods and services, it is likely that deficits would have been likely for the future.

I would like to ask the Meeting that the audited Statement of Accounts be approved, so that I may enter the original signed copy into the books.

5.4. Social Secretary – Jean Stubley reported:

So far this year, our “first Wednesday of the Month” lunches have been well supported with an attendance of about 20. The most recent lunches at Blaisdon, and the Lower Lode near Tewkesbury enjoyed the meals were well supported. Finding the venues at the right price is not always easy. Future arrangements are as follows: at Oakridge Lynch on 7th August, and at the Cheese Rollers in Shurdington on 4th September. In addition, I took over the arrangements with the Management for today’s function at Michael’s request. The arrangements for our Christmas lunch are under way.

6. SPEECH BY NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBER.

Stephen Weall our National Secretary attended as the National Committee representative; however he deferred to Clive Candlin who wished to state his concerns regarding the AVA nationally.

The fact that the Association is losing about 100 to 120 members a year is meaning that the current distribution of the Dhow has become too expensive and that it likely that we will receive 2 issues per year in future.

Despite the fact that it had been agreed in principle last year that the AVA would carry on until a planned finish in 2027, there have been misgivings in some areas that an earlier finish would be more appropriate. Clive pointed out that those members affiliated to branches represented about 15% of total and that the opinions of those members not affiliated to branches should be given a chance to have their say.

Hugh Gibson suggested that when the formal laying up at the cathedral/church occurs, it be done in 2 stages (one in the South, and one in the North) to save travelling and expense.

7. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE OFFICERS

In accordance with branch procedure, the positions of Branch Treasurer and Branch Secretary were for re-election. David Gearing stated that he is prepared to stay in post for another 3 years. Michael Compton stated that he is prepared to remain in position as long as his medical condition allows. There being no other proposals for either position, both were confirmed nem.con.

8. APPROVAL OF BRANCH MEETINGS FOR 2024

Branch meetings scheduled for 8th January, 2nd April, 2nd July (AGM) and 1st October were approved. The venue is now changed to the "Toby" Inn.

9. FUTURE OF THE AVA

See para 6 above

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dennis Sparrow informed the meeting of the current status of the applications for "A GSM for the lost years".

11. CLOSURE

The meeting closed for the raffle and lunch.

Michael Compton

ADEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 1st APRIL 2023 TO 31st MARCH 2024

Bank Balance brought forward £1191.78

Donations

Received from Branch Members	2410.00	
Received from Rt. Hon. Alex Chalk KC MP	250.00	
Donation made to RAF Assoc. Cheltenham	25.00	+2635.00

Receipts from Branch raffles +546.00

Christmas Lunch at Best Western Hotel Robinswood

Hotel costs, and refunds made	1271.75	
Receipts from Branch Members, and others attending	1280.25	+8.50

Branch Administrative Expenses

Office equipment and consumables	215.85	
Postage	71.40	-287.25

Sound System for 56th Anniversary event -231.41

Purchase of AVA wreaths from Royal British Legion -137.50

Internet Fees -108.00

Lunches at Branch Meetings

Costs from Carlton Club	357.50	
Receipts from Branch Members	281.00	-76.50

Speaking fee, Ms Helen Sims (ex-RN) -60.00

Bank Balance at 31st March 2024 £3480.62

Total Income : £4767.25
Total Expenditure : £2478.41

Excess of Income over Expenditure £2288.84

Statement of Accounts prepared by the Branch Treasurer

Accounts Auditor



