

MINUTES OF ADEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE STROUD CONSERVATIVE CLUB ON
WEDNESDAY 7th JULY 2021 at 11.00 am

1. ACT OF HOMAGE, AND WELCOME.

Chris Price, our Branch President read the Act of Homage, and welcomed Tony Holland, the AVA National Treasurer, to the meeting.

2. HEALTH AND SAFETY.

All those attending were reminded by Michael Compton of the anti-Covid 19 rules which had been agreed by the site management, in particular that masks were required when not seated, and that all those requiring food would have individual plates (rather than a buffet as had been the case as at previous meetings). A full risk assessment had been conducted as required by law.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Jim Major, Ray Bunnage, Hugh and Sheila Gibson, Peter House, Emlyn Phennah, Edward Knowlton, Keith Spiret, Robert and Sybille Wood.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM.

The minutes of the AGM held on 3rd July 2019 had been shown on the Branch website and were circulated before the meeting. These minutes were proposed as an accurate record by Dennis Flamson, and seconded by Bryn Richards.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM.

There were no matters arising.

6. REPORTS BY COMMITTEE OFFICERS

6.1. Chairman – Rick Rutter presented his report:

Mr President, National Treasurer, Branch Committee and members welcome to our 2021 AGM. We last met for an AGM in July 2019, a long time ago. COVID certainly disrupted many of our events and our social gatherings, which have definitely impacted on all our daily routines.

We have tried to keep you all updated with events that have taken place, through our newsletters. My thanks go to Emlyn Phennah and Ray Bunnage for their work on keeping us all in touch.

I would just like to mention some of the events that your Branch has been involved with.

- Following cancellation last year a Service of Remembrance was held at Earthcott Green on June 16th. We were invited to attend with our branch standard and to lay a wreath. Robert Parrant and 'Curly' Knowlton did the honours.
- We held our first Wednesday lunch at the Fleet in Twinning on June 1st. The last time that we had lunch together was on February 4th 2020.
- Sadly, as you all know, we recently lost our National Chair, Judith Holland. The Branch was well represented in the Guard of Honour and the Branch Standard, carried by Robert Parrant, was amongst many others at the crematorium. We were proud to be there to honour and to remember Judith.
- Having to cancel our 2020 Christmas Lunch was a great disappointment, however Jean Stubley will let you know about our 2021 Lunch in her Social Secretary report.
- Both the St George's Day service and the Weymouth Armed Forces weekend had to be cancelled for both 2020 and 2021. We look forward to attending these important events in 2022.

Moving into the next phase we have been invited to parade our Standard and to lay a wreath at the Battle of Britain Service in Cheltenham on September 19th.

I really hope that the Annual Reunion of the Association will be held in Blackpool from the 10th to the 12th September, following a much reduced event last year.

Hopefully we will be able to attend the usual Remembrance events over the next few months.

My thanks go to Chris Price for his continued active support of your Branch, to Michael Compton, who has done a sterling job despite all the difficulties that COVID-19 has brought. David Gearing has been very quiet so far this year, hopefully finances will be back to some kind of normality soon. Your Vice-Chair, Chris Blick, continues to be the person to turn to for his knowledge of all things Gloucestershire and the Aden Veterans. Thank you Chris. Jean Stubley is now 'up and running' again organising our social events.

I would also like to thank Padre Brian who has agreed to continue as our Branch chaplain. This is most pleasing as Brian can be relied upon to conduct our Branch services with dignity and often a little humour.

Finally I was told yesterday about a prestigious award that our Newsletter editor is receiving today. Hence his apologies, and best wishes, for not being able to attend. Emlyn Phennah, in his role with SSAFA, is being presented with the highest award that they can give. He is receiving the Global Major Gildea Award. This is well deserved and I have sent Emlyn your best wishes on behalf of the Branch.

My thanks to you all for attending this AGM, despite some restrictions still being in place.

6.2 Secretary – Michael Compton reported:

Despite a lack of occasions when we could meet due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Gloucestershire Branch of the Aden Veterans Association has once again proved that it is resilient bunch, most notably at the 53rd Anniversary of the Withdrawal from Aden, on 29th November 2020. I would like to thank all the Aden Veterans who did respond, and also the support we received from RBL and Gary Angove of Cheltenham Borough Council. Without their help, it would have been very difficult to arrange compliance with all the governmental anti-Covid guidelines. In the event, both the Lord Lieutenant, Edward Gillespie and the Cheltenham MP Alex Chalk attended service at the Cheltenham memorial. Our thanks to them for showing their official support at a time of a lot of “negative” thinking.

During the latter part of last year and until June this year, our social activities have remained curtailed, and all the plans made by Jean Stublely had to be cancelled, but at the first available opportunity Jean arranged a lunch on 3rd June. Many thanks for her continued efforts in the face of what must have seemed a very disheartening period. Hopefully, for the rest of the year we will be able to take full advantage of Jean’s organisational skills, culminating in our Xmas lunch at the Tortworth.

Next on the list for thanks are Ray Bunnage for his timely setting up of the website, to Emlyn Phennah for his work on setting up the newsletter and finally to Rob Parrant our standard bearer.

As the keeper of the Branch members’ information, I have had to record sad news with the passing of Sandra Flamson and Bill Spreadbury, both active supporters of the Branch. On a more positive note, we are glad to see that Stan and Tricia Shearer have joined us. Currently we have 37 active members.

As has already been advised the positions of branch secretary and chairman are due for re-election; from a personal point of view it has been a pleasure to serve you all.

Finally, the events of the last two years have shown me how our Branch can survive even those times when we cannot meet on a regular basis - a fitting tribute to those who set up the original organisation, and in this regard, to Chris Blick for his initiatives and unswerving support for the Branch over the years.

6.3. Treasurer – David Gearing presented his report. Statements of account, 2019-20 and 2020-21 are attached to these minutes:

Good morning, everyone. It is a pleasure to be back here in Stroud for the resumption of our Branch Meetings.

Today I will briefly cover the two periods for which Accounts have yet to be presented. The 2019-20 Accounts ended soon after our January 2020 Meeting, when the restrictions and then lock-down measures began. The following year 2020-21 saw no Branch Meetings and only a couple of transactions.

The Statements of Accounts will be included in the next Branch Newsletter, and I also have a few copies here.

So, today we resume business, and the key figure is that we have £1420. 57 at Lloyds Bank, Stroud. Normally at the AGM I invite Members to consider making an annual donation to Branch funds, and we suggest £10. For members who would like to donate by online banking, our sort code is 30-98-29 and the account number is 01482601. Branch raffles and donations are the main sources of our income, and hopefully we can resume the former when all restrictions should have been lifted for our October meeting.

I look forward to business as usual, as far as possible, and I am delighted to see everyone today.

5.4. Social Secretary – Jean Stubley reported that so far this year, our “first Wednesday of the Month” lunches have had to be cancelled courtesy of Covid-19, with the exception of the lunch at the Twyning on June 1st. Future lunches are planned for:

4/8/21 Carpenters Arms, Westrip, Stroud GL6 6EY – menu circulated

1/9/21 Tudor Arms, Shepherds Patch, Glos GL2 7BP

3/11/21 George Inn, Frocester, GL10 3TQ

Members are asked to contact Jean by phone or e-mail to confirm their wish to attend.

Looking further ahead to the Christmas luncheon, I will produce an invitation to the Grenadier Guards Association so that we can guarantee a total number of 50+ so that we can use the Orangery at the De Vere Tortworth Court Hotel on 8/12/21. The cost for 4 courses will be £25.95. Mulled wine will be served from 12 to 1pm. All other drinks to be paid for by members. The initial list for Branch members who wish to attend will be circulated at the end of this meeting.

6. SPEECH BY NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBER.

Mr Tony Holland began by expressing his sincere thanks for all those Branch members who attended his Judith's funeral, and for all the comments made about her service to the Aden Veterans Association. He complimented the Branch on keeping the organisation going when three other branches had had to be closed. This was because of reduced numbers and the willingness of those members who remain to become committee members. Despite the restrictions of Covid-19 we had managed to continue with the 53rd Anniversary Service at Cheltenham last November. Also, despite the restrictions, the National Committee had held virtual meetings; this had saved a lot of money.

Tony thanked the Branch for the invitation to join this Branch now that he is living in Tewkesbury, but he stressed that it was his intention to remain a "Branch member" only.

7. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

In accordance with branch procedure, the positions of Branch Chairman and Secretary are due for re-election. Notices had been sent out with the agenda asking for any proposals. However, no proposals had been submitted; both Rick Rutter and Michael Compton stated that they were prepared to stay in post for another 3 years. So their positions were confirmed nem.con.

8. CALENDAR OF EVENTS

A list of future events (both social and formal) will be drawn up and attached to these minutes.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Denis Sparrow had requested that he be allowed to summarise his latest publications "Ghosts", a history of Aden from 1800 until the present day and "Unfriendly Fire", which describes the events of the 20th June 1967 in graphic detail. Even copies of the handwritten statements written by some of those involved are included. There then followed an interesting discussion involving other members who were in Aden at that time. The basic tenure of the publication was endorsed; those directly involved felt that they had been let down by senior command which itself was under political pressure to ensure the withdrawal from Aden went ahead regardless of the consequences.

10. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 12.30pm for lunch; there was no raffle, due to the current restrictions.