

MINUTES OF ADEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE STROUD CONSERVATIVE CLUB ON
WEDNESDAY 3rd JULY 2019 at 11.00 am

1. ACT OF HOMAGE, AND WELCOME.

Chris Price, our Branch President read the Act of Homage, and welcomed Geoff Giles, the AVA National Vice-Chairman, to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Keith and Pam Spiret, Ken Plowman, Graham and Janet Harper, Stewart Harrison, Mike Ward, Brian Serrell, Sally Welzel.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM.

The minutes of the AGM held on 4th July 2018 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 Edward Knowlton.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM.

There were no matters arising.

5. REPORTS BY COMMITTEE OFFICERS

5.1. Chairman – Rick Rutter presented his report:

A year ago I was privileged to be elected as your chairman. It has been an honour to have represented your Branch, along with many of you, at a number of events throughout the year. Many very enjoyable ones, but also some rather sad ones.

I would like to place on record my thanks to all of you for supporting the Branch so actively, and for making our Branch a welcoming, and happy, place to be a member.

I must also give my personal thanks to Chris (President), Michael (Secretary), Chris (Vice-Chair) and David (Treasurer) for advising and supporting me during the year.

You have all played your part in representing, and supporting, our Branch in a variety of ways. Standard bearing, displays, wreath laying, raffles and lunch events. Thank you.

Finally I would like to mention a very important point which was made at the Weymouth weekend by John Hotson, a founding member of the National Association. He said that the Aden Veterans Association is there to serve its members. I totally agree with his remarks and trust that you all feel that your committee serve you. Thank you all.

5.2 Secretary – Michael Compton reported:

The Gloucestershire Branch of the Aden Veterans Association has once again had a very active year with more than 20 events being attended by our members. On the social side, the monthly lunches organised by Jean Stubley have been very successful with all the hostesses getting close to 5-star rating by most members. Our thanks and a well-done to Jean for her arrangements.

Keith Spiret's idea that for the family day out, that we visit the REME Museum was expanded to include the REME training Centre at Lyneham. As a result, there was something of interest for all the three generations who went, so much so that one of the youngest is seriously interested in joining the Corps.

With regards to the more formal occasions these were attended well. Remembrance Sunday was somewhat overtaken by the national celebration of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Having had perfect weather for Remembrance Sunday, we had to endure the opposite for our 51st anniversary event at Cheltenham. We had to make a tactical withdrawal to the inside of the Borough offices for our service. We welcomed Deputy Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, John Thurston, to our service and afterwards to the buffet lunch at the RAFA Club.

In April, as suggested by Dennis Flamson, we joined in the "World at War" event at the Weston-super-Mare Helicopter Museum. We had a stand, attended the parade with the standard, and had a lunch where we were able to meet other Aden veterans from West Dorset and South West. Congratulations and thanks to Dennis for arranging such a complete day. Also, in April we had the St George's Day Service at Gloucester Cathedral at which our contingent numbered 17.

And so to the most crowded month of our calendar – June. On 19th more than 20 attended service at Earthcott Green. During the buffet lunch afterwards, we had the chance to present the Aden Veterans shield to Dame Janet Trotter as a thank you for her support during her tenure as Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire. The weekend afterwards, we were involved with the events in Weymouth. Finally, on 29th June we were in Malvern, in very hot weather, at their Armed Forces Day.

As the keeper of the Branch members' information, I have had to record sad news too many times this year with the passing of David Newton, Derrick Harris, Roger Morgan, John Ward-Davies, Ian Cooper, Eric Slaughter, and a few days ago, Norma Rodman. As the relatively "new kid on the block" it has for me, been both a salutary experience and a privilege to see so many of the Branch members at the celebrations of our friends lives. In all cases the families have been both surprised and appreciative of the support we have given. On a more positive note, we have been pleased to welcome Rob and Sybille Wood, and Roger Worth to the Branch.

During the past year we have had three committee meetings. Currently, we have two places on the Committee. Also, John Longhurst has decided to relinquish the position of standard bearer at the end of this year. I am sure that we all wish to thank him for his contribution to our many ceremonies, over the past years. We are anxious that all strands of opinion are able to be voiced in committee. So if there are any willing volunteers please let me know. Furthermore, and this is a big ask, we are in need of someone (or two people) to manage the website and also carry out the function of editor for our newsletter. These two functions, previously carried out by Ian Cooper, to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude, are part of the “glue” that has helped to keep the Branch together. Currently, there are about 30 active members in this Branch all of whom value the friendship of the Association. So we have good reason to look forward to 2020 and beyond.

5.3. Treasurer – David Gearing presented his report together with a statement of account, which had been audited:

Mr Branch President, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. It is a pleasure to present my seventh annual report as your Branch Treasurer, and 2019 also marks my 10th anniversary of joining the Branch. In the past year, we completed final transactions resulting from our 2017 Commemorative event, namely the payments of £400 each to SSAFA and to Reverend Peter Crooks for the benefit of the Aden Eye Clinic. Copies of the audited accounts on the tables show more minus figures attributable to the “2017 event” (£800), our 10th Anniversary lunch (£295), the purchase of two gazebos (£80), and a payment for the website domain name (£67) being the main expenditure.

As we go forward with no special events on the horizon, our financial affairs should settle in to a regular pattern. I believe that, with our costs for services rising and our income being from donations and raffles, our expenditure will exceed income. I will be giving the Branch Committee a statement for discussion as to how I see the way forward.

Your continuing support for the Branch will ensure that we can enjoy the camaraderie and friendships that have given me so many memories and filled so many gaps in my knowledge of Aden over 50 years ago.

David then asked for acceptance of the accounts. This was proposed by Rose Longhurst and seconded by Jean Stublely.

5.4. Social Secretary – Jean Stublely reported that so far this year, our “first Wednesday of the Month” lunches have been well supported. The next lunch date is on 4th September when we have reservation for the Gloucester Old Spot. The venue

for the 6th November has yet to be confirmed. The venue for the Christmas lunch will be confirmed at the Tortworth and the price will £24.95 and we have to have a minimum of 40 attendees. The High Sheriff of Gloucester would be invited.

6. SPEECH BY NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBER.

Mr Geoff Giles began by saying he recognised some of the members from national events and that he enjoyed coming to the Gloucestershire Branch, one of the “backbone” branches in the Association. He commended the Branch on its level of organisation. Some time ago, he had tried to have a South Wales Branch started, but despite the fact that a number of ex-service personnel were in the area, not enough were prepared to organise a branch. Yes, we are ageing, so to maintain membership we should let in the dependants of Aden Vets.

Geoff Giles then gave brief sitrep on the state of the war graves in Aden; Silent Valley is being maintained well by local Yemenis, but the graveyard at Maala “is a mess”. In addition, the Sikh graveyard with about 400 graves, is under threat of being built on. He expressed the hope that in another year the security situation will allow someone to visit Yemen to get the full details first hand.

7. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Josie Scott has kindly agreed to stand for the Committee – proposed by Rose Longhurst and seconded by Dorothy Blick.

8. FUTURE BRANCH MEETINGS

Approval was given for the following dates for branch meetings – 8th January, 1st April, 1st July (AGM) and 7th October.

9. ADDITIONAL PLANNED EVENTS

Additional Planned Events include Family Day Visit to RAF Museum at Cosford on 7th August; Battle of Britain Service, Cheltenham 15th September; Remembrance Sunday Parade and evening service Cheltenham, 10th November; Remembrance Day Service, Stroud, 11th November; 52nd Anniversary of Withdrawal from Aden, 29th November Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire to be invited.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Geoff Giles informed us of his association with SSAFA. He wished to emphasise that any veterans needing help should be referred to them. He was informed that we already have a Emlyn Phennah, who is our “SSAFA member.”

10.2 Our padre, Brian Wollaston is due to retire but it was agreed that he be asked to officiate at the 52nd Anniversary Parade and Service. The programme for the service was also discussed and agreed.

11. Raffle and Lunch

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 12.30pm