

# ASSOCIATION OF HARROGATE APPRENTICES

## MINUTES OF THE 23<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at

WO's & Sgts' Mess, Uniacke Barracks, Harrogate

On

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**The meeting opened at 1105hrs.**

**Present:**

Maj Gen (Ret'd) John Stokoe CB CBE (63A)	President AOHA
Len Morland (65A)	Hon-Chairman (Protem)
Mick Johnson (83C)	Hon-Secretary
Brian Dallas (83C)	Hon-Treasurer

Forty-nine members present.

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**(1) Opening Statement by the Chairman.**

The Chairman (Protem) passed on apologies from John Wright, the Association Chairman, who was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. He welcomed Members and Guests to the 23<sup>rd</sup> AGM since the re-establishment of the association.

**(2) Statement by the President – Maj Gen (Ret'd) John Stokoe CB CBE**

The President spoke about building for the future in a climate where other association membership and recruitment are diminishing. Although many associations are beginning to suffer from a lack of “linkage”, Harrogate remains a focus all the way back to the time the College was formed in 1946. The College now accommodates around 1200 trainee Junior Soldiers. He referred to his role as the Assistant Inspecting Officer at the Army Foundation College's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and questioned, “will these young soldiers have an Association which they look back on with pride in the future?”. The President stated that “Harrogate” is the linkage which brings everything together and the potential role of the Army Apprentices National Association (AANA) in including those soldiers who have passed through the Army Foundation College.

**(3) Apologies for Absence (59)**

Mr Benny Bennett 69C	Mr David Jones 71A
Mr Guy Benson 74B	Mr Ringo Keep 65B
Mr John Bladen 59C	Mr Trevor Legg 78C
Mr Trevor Broadley 63C	Mr Trevor Mackown 70A
Mr Peter Bryant 54B	Mr Brian Marsden 72C
Mr. Spike Burge 81C	Mr Glyn Marsh 78C
Mr Jim Clinker 61A	Mr Russell Moren 74C
Mr Ron Coburn 64C	Mr Bunny Nunn 52A
Mr Graham Complin 79C	Mr John Oakley 63B
Mr Mick Dale 61A	Mrs Janice Pickard 48B
Mr Mick Davis 63A	Mr Maurice Sambrook P/S
Mr Arthur Dixon 52A	Mr Sandy Sanderson 67B
Mr Rod Edwards 62C	Mr Chris Sherlock 63B

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Mr Stan Finlayson	65A	Mr Tony Singleton	74C
Mr Pete Fitzmaurice	70C	Mr James Smith	54B
Mr Brian Ford	50A	Mr John Smith	64C
Mr Jack Francis	55B	Mr John Taylor	66C
Mr Bob Gill	56B	Mr Steve Taylor	59B
Mr Stephen Grantham	75C	Mr Paul Thompson	73B
Mr Pete Gray	54B	Mr Roger Watson	54B
Mr Chris Heyward	64B	Mr Jon Weighill	80C
Mr Dave Hopewell	54B	Mr Neil Wheatley	74C
Mr John Hopkins	71A	Mr Rod Whitson	72B
Mr Graeme Hossell	73B	Mr David Williamson	77C
Mr Bill Hough	49B	Mr Steve Witty	84C
Mr Dai Hughes	67C	Mr Peter Wood	58B
Mr Andy Hunt	63A	Mr Bob Yarnell	58A
Mr John Jacklin	54A		
Members who were to attend:			
Mr Trevor Broadley	63C	Mr Ron Breakwell	62C
Mr Martin Prior	59C	Mr Dave Woffenden	P/S

#### (4) Minutes of the previous meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

The minutes of the 22<sup>nd</sup> AGM, having been distributed to all members, the chairman asked that the minutes be accepted as a true record.

**Proposed:** Mick Taylor (63B)

**Seconded:** Bill Duncan (60C)

**Passed unanimously.**

#### (4) Matters arising from previous meeting – Nil

#### (5) Statement by the Hon. Secretary

The Secretary wished to record our appreciation to the Regimental Sergeant Major, **WO1 (RSM) John Armstrong**, for allowing us to use his Mess for our Reunion and AGM, and to personally thank those past committee members who have assisted the new committee this year, **Maurice Snook (59C)**, **John McKay(65C)**, **Len Morland (65A)** and especially, **Bill Duncan (60C)** whose support with the database has been invaluable.

**Membership Numbers.** Active Membership numbers is as might be expected, given the previous intention to close, significantly lower than previous years.

- Last Year (2022) – 290
  - 25 – Have since, sadly passed away.
  - 23 - Requested to be removed from mailing list (AOHA Database)
  - 134 - did not continue with membership or respond.
  - On the positive 108 - continue to actively support the Association.
- This Year (2023) – We have had 41 new members.

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- Total of – **149** current members.
- There have been a number of requests for membership information throughout the year which did not come to fruition.
  
- **Reunion & AGM Attendee Numbers.**
  - Last year (**2022**) – **50** members and **23** guests.
  - This year (**2023**) – **49** members and **23** guests.
    - *Note the maximum we can entertain in the Mess is 120*
  
- **Resignations** - A number of the past members, felt that they could not continue due to age or immobility, and resigned from the association. Sadly, when this happens, due to GDPR legislation, we must remove their details and subsequently lose contact with them. This prompts a pause to think about how we proceed with our membership and suggest proposals around Annual Membership policy, to ensure that this does not happen unnecessarily.
  
- **Age Statistics** – Based on the current active membership of 149 the age groups for subs year 2024 will be as follows:
  - Over **80** years old = **49/149**
  - Over **75** years old = **92/149**
  - Under **75** = **57/149**

**AOHA Website - Update** There have been significant changes to the AOHA website. The Secretary wished to record, on behalf of the association, our appreciation to **Steve Parkinson (79C)**, for his continued generosity in providing the platform for the website, free of charge. It was suggested that we should propose a contribution for the use of the platform, but Steve generously declined any offers.

- **Current Subscriber – 27** - Previously the website was open to public viewing, but this prevented the publication of information that may be classified as personal and fall foul of GDPR (Data protection) legislation. It also did not allow the capacity for members to share information between each other.
  
- The site is now open to active members only, and subscribers can create their own groups, upload any AOHA related photos or memorabilia, and communicate with all other active members. No! It will never be Facebook, but then again Facebook does not have access to our membership details.

**General Administration** - Some quick general points and requests:

- Members should inform the Secretary of changes to contact details and email addresses.
- Members are requested to encourage previous active members to reconnect. Especially if the membership subscription policy is amended through this meeting.
- Members are encouraged to join the AOHA Website, which will only become useful if more people participate.
- A questionnaire to canvas opinions regarding some of the things discussed today will be distributed following the AGM. Please take the time to reply.

Following the report from the Secretary, **Terry Hanman (54B)** raised a question as to whether the annual journal would be reintroduced. The Chairman (Protem) explained that the previous Journal

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editor, Frank Page 59C, had passed away last year, and there was no other committee member to do the task. The equivalent information will now be published on the AOHA website.

### (5) Statement by the Hon. Treasurer

The Balance sheet as it stands:

AOHA Accounts Balance Sheets for 2023

Opening Balance	<b>£5,393.97</b>	01/01/2023	
	<b>Assets</b>		<b>Liabilities</b>
	£1,460.00	Subscriptions	
		AANA Donation	£400
	£77.00	AOHA GPF Donations	
		Refunds	£10.00
	£51.00	Memorabilia	
	£1,428.00	*AGM - Catering	£1,146.97
		*AGM - Staff Costs	£1,094.08
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£3,016.00</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£2,651.05</b>
		<b>Cash at Bank</b>	<b>£7,999.97</b>
		<b>Cash Available (after AGM)</b>	<b>£5,758.92</b>

*\*This information was added following AGM on receipt of final invoice*

**Proposed: Val Longstaff (56A)**

**Secinded: Bill White (64C)**

**Passed unanimously.**

### (6) Statement by the Bereavement Officer

The Bereavement Officer read out the "Last Post" for those members who had sadly passed away since the last AGM in 2022.

	Intake	Coy/Sqn	Corps
Michael Hammond	53B	B Coy	Royal Signals
<u>2023</u>			
Kenneth Downton	57B		Royal Signals
Stephen Cave	75C	Phillips	Royal Signals
Trevor Grice	PS		Royal Signals
William (Bill) Kerr	50B	A Coy	Royal Signals
Terrence Davies	64B	Penney	Royal Signals
Pat Hodgkinson	63B	C Coy	Royal Signals
William (Bill) Laurie	73C	Phillips	Royal Signals
Charles (Charlie) Train	56B	D Coy	Royal Signals
David (Dave) Slater	51A	D Coy	Royal Engineers
Gareth (Garry) Wilson	75C	Bradley	Royal Signals
John Royles	51B	C Coy	Royal Engineers
George Ralph	65C	Penney	Royal Signals

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The Charmain (Protem) delivered the exhortation, and the members present held a minute's silence in memory of our passed comrades.

### **(7) Proposals**

Linked to the Secretary's report on membership, the constraints imposed by GDPR, as well as the Treasurer's report of a healthy account, a proposal to create "Life Membership" and remove the requirements for subscriptions for those members over the age of 75 was discussed. This would also facilitate the reintroduction of older members who were not currently active in the Association. **Ken Johnson (51A)** stated a concern that funds would be lost and that he would be willing to continue to pay subscriptions in order to maintain Association funds. **Jim McPhee (63A)** suggested that "Life Members" could still contribute to the GPF if desired. **Johnny McGahan (59A)** also suggested that funds could be used to subsidise future events, this had been proposed at the last AGM but was not carried. The final proposition was made that:

**"Those members over the age of 75 become "Life Members" and are exempt from subscription fees. Any contributions from those over 75 will be deposited in the GPF".**

**Proposed: Neil Haycroft (84C)**  
**Seconded: Mike Matthews (66C)**

**Passed unanimously.**

The Chairman (Protem) raised a discussion regarding the possibility of changing the date of the Reunion/AGM to the end of August, beginning of September. **Tim Brown (60C)** asked that the staff be consulted about availability, and it was decided to canvas feedback from members through a future questionnaire.

The possibility of another event to be held later in the year, which may utilise the current funds, was discussed. The prerequisite to creating other events would be the requirement for another (events) committee member, to assist with the organisation. **Maurice Snook (59C)** reminded members, that the AANA hold an event in the area of the National Memorial Arboretum in May each year, which all members are invited to. **Bill White (64C)** supported the attendance at the AANA event and recommended the Premier Inn at Burton on Trent for accommodation if attending the event in May. The Chairman (Protem) told members that this question/subject would be added to a future questionnaire.

The Secretary suggested that committee requires an allocation of funds to use throughout the year. An example provided, was the provision of a background music group, (not a disco) appropriate to the event. The suggested amount was £400, which would be in line with the projected 2024 subscription payments. **Jim McPhee (63A)** proposed that the committee would be authorised to spend necessary funds without limitation. **Bob Cook (64A)** suggested that the sum should have an upper limit and agreed with the proposed £400. The final proposition was made that:

**"The Committee would be authorised to spend up to £400 on entertainment without recourse to the members".**

**Proposed: Jim McPhee (63A)**  
**Seconded: Bob Cook (64A)**

**Passed unanimously.**

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The Treasurer said that the committee are looking at ways to maintain the Association membership and promote it to others, this should include efforts to make the event enjoyable for partners attending. Describing himself as a “young guy”, **Bill Dallas (81B)**, suggested that a reason why one might be willing to travel a great distance and to pay the costs required to attend the event, is the strong link to at least one other member, and the need to recruit friends who have served together.

### **(7) Army Apprentices National Association (AANA) – Update**

**Johnny McGahan (59A)** provided an update regarding the AANA. The AOHA and the other apprentice associations provide an annual donation of £100 to the AANA, except for Chepstow who have objected to the donation. The AANA received £400 from the AOHA, £100 from Carlisle and £100 from Arborfield. The Army Apprentice Memorial Trust (AAMT) will fold next year, the AANA will continue. The cost of the memorial event at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) costs around £400, which includes hire of the PA system, chairs, chain link and the pipe band. The AAMT paid £40,000 to the NMA which included a payment of £15,000 for maintenance of the memorial in perpetuity. There are issues with an agreement to provide free rooms at the NMA, which will be addressed by the AANA committee. If the issue regarding the rooms is not resolved, the memorial event cost will probably increase to around £500. There is currently £530 in the Memorial Trust and £1,100 in the AANA fund. The Memorial Trust will be used to pay for the next memorial event in May, from then on, the AANA will take over.

**Rob Cross (58B)**, who is the event organiser for the AANA, emphasised that the funds mentioned, are only used for the memorial event at the NMA and not for the dinner night on the Saturday evening. **Johnny McGahan (59A)** wanted to thank **Peter Forster (60A)** for his work on the AANA website. The format for the AANA weekend is: The AANA AGM on Saturday around 1300hrs, a dinner at a hotel in Derby on Saturday evening, on the Sunday morning there is the memorial ceremony.

### **(8) A.O.B**

**Maurice Snook (59C)** made the following proposition:

“A vote of thanks to **Johnny McGahan (59A)** and the Arboretum team”.

**Proposed:** **Maurice Snook (59C)**

**Seconded:** **Bill White (64C)**

**Passed unanimously.**

**Peter Forster (60A)** requested that updates be provided about the future of the AFC.

**Bill Dallas (81B)** questioned whether the AOHA had links with the various Royal Signals Associations to advertise the AOHA. The Chairman (Protem) responded, that to his understanding, the AOHA was a branch of the RSA. **Jim McPhee (63A)** pointed out, that as the Secretary of the Harrogate Branch of the RSA, with a membership of 65, 21 being ex-apprentices, only 12 are current members of the AOHA. Despite efforts to encourage the others to join the AOHA, they are not interested.

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**Jim McPhee (63A)** informed the meeting that there is a website called the Royal Signals Index site, that is run by Mike Graham (67C), there are 2000 members on this site which may be worth investigating.

**Tony Freeman (66C)** informed the meeting about the RSA roadshow which was recently in Darlington. The team have been travelling around the country but are also having difficulty recruiting.

The Chairman (Protem) reminded the meeting of the work that is required to run the Association and requested that members put themselves forward to assist the committee.

The President responded to the previous enquiries regarding the RSA and said he would pass on any questions to the Corps Secretary, Dave Craft. With reference to the future of the AFC, the President said the future of the AFC was assured, but he would speak to the Deputy CGS, who is also the Master of Signals, to establish her view on what is happening in the future.

**Rob Cross (58B)** suggested the recruitment of the current RSM into the Association. The Secretary had spoken to the RSM about this during the reunion evening.

**Clive Howells (53B)** informed the members about a book he had placed on the memorabilia table, which contains photographs of the Normandy Memorial overlooking Gold Beach. He expressed his pride, that our Association had donated towards the British, Normandy Memorial, and thanked members for supporting the proposition, four years ago, which enabled the contribution.

**Bob Cook (64A)** suggested the idea of providing a presentation to the most improved Recruit, or to the most improved Royal Signals Recruit. The possibilities and costs of this suggestion will be explored further on the future questionnaire.

**Neil Haycroft (84C)** Asked if the word “Apprentice” would hinder the development of the Association if/when there are members of the AFC join, as they have no apprenticeship. The Chairman (Protem) informed the members, that discussion of this question and future implications would be developed through the questionnaire.

The Secretary asserted, that as much as the Association needs to plan for the future, the membership should consider the logistical, and management implications of casting such a broad net at this present time, and the importance of maintaining the legacy and ethos of the AOHA as handed down from the past membership.

The Chairman recited the Kohima Epitaph and There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed 1231 hrs.

### **(9) Date and venue of next Meeting.**

(Provisionally – Uniacke Barracks – Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2024)

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### Notices

Committee members email addresses are:

Hon. Secretary      [secretary@aoha.org.uk](mailto:secretary@aoha.org.uk)      *Mick Johnson (83C)*

Hon. Treasurer      [treasurer@aoha.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@aoha.org.uk)      *Brian Dallas (83C)*

Bereavement Officer [secretary2@aoha.org.uk](mailto:secretary2@aoha.org.uk)      *Len Morland (65A)*

Website Address      [www.aoha.org.uk](http://www.aoha.org.uk) .