



OLD PARKY

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“Lead by Example”

Reflections on the last days of 2017; Sitting down in late December with nothing better to do. Breakfast time Christmas Eve morning and as usual listening to the Today programme on Radio Four. The News reader tells us that the Defence Secretary has canned a survey that had cost the MOD £500,000. The News explained that The Army's slogan of “We are The Best “ was dated and so was the Army's Logo of Cross Swords and Crown. To say I nearly choked on my cornflakes at hearing this and speculating on what sort of punishment should be meted out to whoever could spend so much money on something so trivial. But we are talking of The M.O.D. and we all know that their excesses can be somewhat elastic. Then through the doors marches the new Secretary of Defence Gavin Williamson CBE MP rather a young cove. He decides rather sharpish to put a stop to such nonsense and we subsequently learn that he is lobbying the treasury, in the hands of spread sheet Phil Hammond for more money to stop the Army from losing more skilled personnel, below the already risible 82,000 staff. Maybe he understands that messing about with our traditions and what we march behind i.e. Cap Badge, Standard, Place in Line, and the symbol of the British Army: Cross Swords and Crown should not be up for discussion. We all know “WE WERE THE BEST” and the serving personnel of today can rightfully say “WE ARE THE BEST”. Long may it be so. **P.S.** 3/2/18 Again on the news today discussions in parliament to Cull the Royal Marines along with their support vessels.

REA Badge of Merit. I have just returned from a winter break and some news has just been passed to me about our **Treasurer David Ormsby** . He has been given this award that signifies dedicated service to ones fellow REA members. Speaking personally, Dave and I worked together on our Branch Committee for many years, he has looked after our finances in an exemplary fashion since the Branch started, he looked after the two appeals that we had for the Commemorative Bench at The Arboretum and The Cairn at Brompton Barracks. He has made sure that the AGM and Dinners along with the Raffles have left the finances in a neutral position on these events. That may I add is some skill. An equal contribution to all this has been his considered opinions and input into the committee decisions over all these years. May I thank Dave on behalf of all of us for his service. They also say that behind every successful man is a woman and in Dave's case that is true having Nicki by his side. She also serves the branch well with the raffle ticket sorting and folding and myriad other things she does for us as well. Again from all of us Thanks.

Deputy Director REA Our Chairman **Iain George** has been appointed to this Roll. I'm sure we all wish him the best of luck in his duties and we wouldn't ask him for any favours (would we).

Obituary Barry Cummings (1934 – 2017) You may ask yourself who is this? Barry has served this branch for quite a few years and he wasn't even a member. As the Editor I used to put the copy together and then it was passed over to Barry to knock it into some semblance of order. Then when it was printed he looked over what was being posted out. One day he came back to me and said he'd missed that John O' Grotes was spelt wrong and it should be Groats. I did point out that we were Junior Leaders and nobody would notice, to which he was highly amused. Barry was my next door neighbour who did national service in The Intelligence Corps and took the Russian course, afterwards serving along the border in Germany. He was there when the Russians marched into Hungary and he told me that that is where he properly used his skills and knew what he had been trained for. A great friend to me and also to the Branch. R.I.P. my friend. Putting his obituary together made me realise just how fortunate we are to have many people who are not Branch members helping us along the way in keeping the Branch ticking along. Again thanks to them as well.

The year **2018** as I'm sure you will know is the Centenary when the Armistice to end The 1st World War was signed. **2014** saw a **marked** recognition of this hundred year period with the Ceramic Poppies displayed at The Tower of London which once again brought to us what price was paid. In 2014 I was gifted two books on this conflict one by Max Hastings “All Hell Broke Loose “ and David Reynolds “The Long Shadow “ both very good books which I am not reviewing here but cite them as something different to two other books I am going to review on the 1st World War. These first two looked at the reason for the conflict, interesting but at times academic; going along into the Action

and the political reasons for it. With reading about something as permanently devastating and grotesque as what was being reported I felt something a bit more adventurous to give me a break was needed. A sprinkling of Lee Child's hero, doer of good, putting things right "Jack Reacher" answered the call. This brings me on to the books I wish to review "**Six Weeks**" by **John Lewis-Stempel**. The six weeks in the title refers to the average time that it took a Subaltern to survive in the trenches. The fee paying schools of that time provided these young officers. Some barely eighteen years old. The OTC (Officer Training Corps) which ran in these establishments trained these young men in Officer qualities. Alongside that, most came from families that had servants and so command in most cases was second nature. Then of course the percentages that were produced showed that between October 1914 and September 1915 Subalterns killed 14.2% Other Ranks 5.8%. That strikes me as a chilling statistic. The top establishments Eton, Harrow, Uppingham etc. Are often mentioned along with lesser public schools providing recruits to the officer pool. To be commissioned from one of THE LESSER schools into one of the better Regiments especially as the war progressed after a couple of years, or being promoted from the ranks meant you could be classed as Non-U and not be spoken to in the Mess. This usually was one of the arcane rules dreamt up by the Colonel. Another interesting fact from this book was the respect which was genuinely held for their young officers by the men, this was returned in no small measure. At the time The German General Erich Ludendorff said "The English Generals are wanting in strategy. We should have no chance if they possessed as much science as their officers and men had of courage and bravery. They are Lions led by donkeys." We have heard the last part of that quote many times. These young men were not The Donkeys. The second book "**Somme Mud**" doesn't need any description of the title. **E.P.F. Lynch** wrote this book as a diary. He was a Digger in the Australian Army and joined up in 1916 he shipped off to France fought and survived. If every soldier who survived that wars conflict told their story this book wouldn't be remarkable. To my knowledge not many books from a squaddy telling of the appalling conditions, being sucked under by the mud, having indifferent and no rations when at the front, trying to sleep when wet through for days. Being under constant fire, going over the top and as he describes it "hearing the Rat-Tat-Tat of the machine guns as you advance over no mans land, trying to keep in line and seeing your best mate Darky next to you on the way to meet his maker. This was what faced the writer and his mates for the next two years. After the war they were returned to Blighty before they were shipped home. They were being honoured with a municipal dinner and he explains that they were marched to the event. " The band strikes up our O.C. and C.S.M carrying useless canes march ahead of us. We don't begrudge them their canes for we remember when these two marched ahead of us carrying in their hands not canes but our lives, and leading us not to a sit down dinner but to assault Fritz trenches or pill boxes, or those deadly machine- gun nests from which so many of our mates collected their R.I.P. The writer chose to name the Digger in the book as Nulla. The editor of the book Will Davis points out that it was probably written by Lynch as a way of exorcising those demons which must have been present from what he went through; he probably felt that Nulla did that for him whilst retaining some privacy for himself. After the war he trained as a teacher and when the second war needed men he re-enlisted attaining the rank of Captain and being put in charge of a jungle warfare school in Aus. In conclusion these two books sat well to be read alongside each other, the Officers story and the Diggers story both striving for the same ends.

So who is Ginge that has kept us

entertained with his story. We both joined Dover B Sqdn. In January 1960 and over the years I knew he had an interesting story to tell. Most of us went on with our lives, interesting in our own ways. Ginge no different. His given name Keith Palmer Ginge you must have guessed; the hair. He has been one of our members for many a long year but he managed to attend our last dinner for the first time. I'm sure he wasn't disappointed. There's something else to his story and here it is. " In the early 80's I was a member of the Home Service Force, a sub unit of the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC). The oldest continuing serving regiment in the British Army. Albeit now a TA unit. You may like to Google it to find out its history. It took a bit of effort for me to join as my father was a Gunner and we had had several discussions about which was the senior us RE's or them, the hairy arsed gunners. The HSF was for ex soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, both regular and TA. It was a sort of Dad's Army. We had drill nights (drinking nights) on Tuesdays and did 4 or 5 weekends too. The HAC is a bit of a gentleman's club and you had to be proposed for membership and pay an annual membership subscription! As I was working in the City at the time the mess facilities were very good as I could take customers there for lunch and fall asleep in the armchairs having had sufficient including brandies and port. Much better than going back to the office. I served in it for 6 years and rose to the dizzy heights of Lance Sergeant (corporal). I have only just resigned my veterans membership as I hardly ever go to London now and so don't use the club."

Continuation of Ginges Story.

Maintaining and flying two and a half vintage aircraft is quite expensive so I decided to sell the Stampe and use the money to do some more serious rallying. Before I did though I let a fellow Stampe owner fly to an airshow in France, with me in the Jungmann and him in the Stampe. His Stampe was being rebuilt and he wanted to keep his hand in so to speak. His name; Col (ret'd) Frank Esson the former commandant of the Army Air Corps. Had I joined the AAC it was quite possible Frank could have been my flying instructor. Needless to say I had to check Frank out before letting him go solo in my plane. How I laughed at the role reversal and so did Frank. His Stampe is now rebuilt and he generally flies to Headcorn once a year to join me for lunch. I sold the Stampe but I often see it flying as the new owner still keeps it at Headcorn. My first real rally car had to be British and it had to be a sports car. I rather fancied a TR and found a TR5 in pieces at TR BITZ. I had it shipped to Maidstone Sports Cars in Headcorn who did a body off restoration for me. I did a couple of English rallies with a friend, Jeremy, then we entered the Millennium Monte. An English organised rally run during the winter, generally the week after the 'proper' World Rally. We started in Ypres and then drove some 1500kms to the finish in Nice. We had to do several regularity tests during this trip and came fifth, I think, in our class.

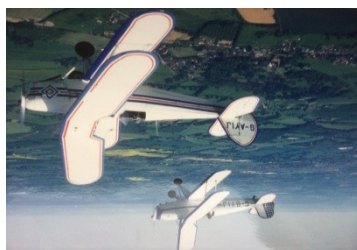
The TR5 is a great car but the rear suspension needs a lot to be desired as it can't be beefed up sufficiently to take the weight of 2 spare wheels and snow chains. A couple of gallons of petrol, some oil and clothing. When we got home I took the car to MSC for them to check it over. They found that the rear suspension arm had broken and we hadn't realised it! As I wanted to continue rallying I decided to get another car. This time I wanted and found a Left hand drive TR4, easier for overtaking on the continent and the navigator can continue plotting without looking up. This car has cart spring rear suspension which is quite easy to strengthen. The engine though is only a 4 cylinder 2.2 litre. The TR5 has a 6 cylinder fuel injected 2.5 litre engine with another 50 HP. I took the car to MSC and then got really involved with the restoration. Helping take the body off and actually rebuilding the engine with their supervision. The chassis was strengthened, fuel tank enlarged and various other mods and I now had a really useful rally car. The first outing with it was with my wife Tricia navigating and was the Trans Alpina organised by my friends at the Club du Centre. This started in Bourges and went via Milan finishing in Geneva taking in a couple of decent regularities over the Petit St. Gottard and Simplon passes. The car performed really well and Tricia navigated us to a top ten position. Very good for her first outing as a navigator.

Jeremy, my Monte navigator and I decided to enter the really hard rally organised by the Club Automobile de Monaco. The same club who organise the Monaco Grand Prix F1 race. This rally is run to the original regulations, ie a penalty per second for late arrival at check points and 2 points for early arrival. Lots of points mean no prizes. We started in Reims at 2104hrs, drove all night to Gap and arrived in Monte Carlo 3 days later. It wasn't all over despite the wonderful buffet and champagne bar laid on for us because we had to go out around 2100 again and drive all night so no drinking for us. We were staying in the Hermitage and I had managed to blag us a Junior suite which would have cost around \$500/night but as we had already paid for our hotels in the entrance fee package, it cost us nothing extra. We did the night regularity and finished around 0600hrs when we had a couple of G and Ts to try and get our adrenalin down. The positions were published around lunchtime and we were not in the top 100 but we had thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Tricia and I continued rallying with the easier Club du Centre rallies including 2 around Norway, Denmark and Germany, plus several in France. Jeremy and I did one more together before he decided to sail his yacht around the world. This was another mid winter rally, this time in the arctic circle from Rovaniemi in Finland to the North Cape and finished in Helsinki. The cars had studded snow tyres and we did not drive on any tarmac for 1500kms. This was in late January the daylight was only about 4 hours and temperatures dropped to minus 33 degrees. We also raced reindeer sledges and snow mobiles. Great fun.

In 2004 aged 60 I decided to give up flying not sure why but my aerobatic reactions were probably getting a bit slow and I felt after 30 years of aircraft ownership I had done pretty much all the things you could do with an old bi-plane. Touring, formation flying, aerobatics and even air racing. I had won a leg of the Kings Cup air race at Rochester in the Tiger. It was a handicap race and I had a couple of laps start over some of the faster twin engined planes. I also did some stunt flying in an episode of the New Avengers with Patrick McNee, Gareth Hunt and Joanna Lumley.

The day before the new owners came to pick up the Jungmann I went up for a last aerobatic flight in it. Although I knew the sequence very well that I was going to fly, I still clipped the paper diagram showing the Aresti code for the manoeuvres to the instrument panel to remind me just for old times sake. Having got permission from Air Traffic Control to allow me to carry out the aerobatic sequence overhead the aerodrome I climbed up to 2000 feet, had a good look around and pulled the harnesses a bit tighter. The Jungmann like the Stampe has a seven piece set up. A 5 piece fixed to the seat and a back-up 2 piece fixed to the airframe just incase something breaks! It's generally a good idea to have the belts tight because when you fly inverted you are literally hanging in the straps and it can be very disconcerting, particularly in an open cockpit 50+ year old bi-plane, when your backside suddenly drops 2 inches from the seat! So with the straps tight it's one thing less to worry about. I switched the fuel system to aerobatic mode, closed the throttle a bit so as not to overspeed the engine and dived at 45 degrees towards the runway.

When the airspeed indicator reached 125 knots and at about 1500 feet I pulled the stick gently back and started the first half of a loop. As the speed started to bleed off I opened up to full power, passing the vertical I checked to see if the wings were square to the horizon and continued to pull back on the stick. Then just before reaching the fully inverted position I eased the back pressure off the stick and proceeded to do a half roll which then put me in the upright, or in aerobatic terms, erect horizontal flight at about 2000 feet again. By now the speed had dropped to around 50 knots. Closing the throttle completely I gently ease back on the stick again and as the aircraft slowed to around 40-45 knots I smartly pushed full right rudder and as the right wing dropped I pulled the stick back fully. The aircraft then enters a spin. I only want to do one and a half turns so just after completing a full turn (about 3 seconds) I push full left rudder and as the rotation stops stick fully forward and am now heading downhill vertically. The speed builds up quickly and reaching 125 knots I ease out to the horizontal and am heading along the runway again. About halfway along the runway and at 1500 feet commence another half loop this time just before the inverted position with the throttle wide open I do a flick roll which is the same procedure as a spin, full right rudder, stick back but at 70 knots, this makes the rotation quicker. I need to stop this when I reach the inverted position, so again using the same recovery inputs as a spin, I finish inverted and complete the second half of the loop. This is a very spectacular manoeuvre and looked even more spectacular in the Stampe which had a smoke system installed. I am now at 1500 feet and commence a 45 degree climb, as the speed starts to drop I roll inverted and continue climbing at 45 degrees till the speed gets to about 50 knots when I pull back on the stick and complete the second half of a loop coming out horizontally now facing the other way down the runway at 120 ish knots. At the centre of the runway I pull up into a vertical climb and do a half vertical roll, the speed is dying very quickly and as it reaches 45 I hit full right rudder and the plane pivots on its centre of gravity and suddenly we are facing downhill again still facing the starting point. That maneuver is called a stall turn. Done too fast it looks terrible as the plane still continues to climb albeit sideways, entered too slowly the plane can tail slide but like a dropped dart it will eventually fall nose down. I am now again heading for the start and pull three quarters of a loop, then I push forward and descend inverted on a 45 degree line for about 3 seconds and then roll and pull out horizontally at 120 kts. I then perform a complete loop, four point hesitation slow roll then another stall turn, this time descending I push the stick forward and with about 3-4 negative G I finish up flying inverted. A half slow roll to erect flight then I slow the plane to 70, do a horizontal flick roll and that's it finished. Well not quite, as I ask control if I can do low inverted pass. 'At your discretion' comes the reply. I am now on finals to land but as I cross the hedge at about 60-70 feet I roll inverted and fly the length of the runway upside for the last time. I then complete a proper circuit, land, clean the oil off the underside of the Jungmann and put it back in the hanger ready for the new owner to take it away and hopefully have as much fun with it as I had. I also sold my Jodel share and continued rallying. Along the way in 2002 I had bought a Sunbeam Tiger. The engine is the same one used in early Mustangs and AC Cobras 260 cubic inches about 4.3 litres. It goes like the clappers and has that wonderful V8 burble. However keeping 4 cars on the road although not difficult, I felt I couldn't do justice and use them sufficiently so something had to go. The TR5 was now a road car and the Tiger was the better of the two, so I sold the TR5. I see it occasionally as it still appears at MSC for its services. I continued to rally the TR4 around Europe with Tricia and we used both the Alvis and Tiger for touring. In 2003 we had bought a lovely ski apartment in the French alpine village of Chatel. That summer I took the Tiger and with some friends in their classics we drove to Monte Carlo again then up through Italy via the lakes and Switzerland and stayed a couple of days in Chatel. The old cars turned a lot of heads. About 6 years ago I decided to give up serious rallying and sold the TR4. So now we concentrate on foreign touring mostly in the Alvis as it has a massive boot for booze and French cheeses. We ski quite a lot generally about 6-8 weeks a year. We also use the apartment in summer when we go walking in the alps. Other things I do, like probably most of you is a bit of DIY and some house maintenance. Plus we manage to have quite a lot of holidays and have been on safaris in S. Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Borneo and the Galapagos. On the family front, our eldest daughter, husband and 2 grandchildren live in the same village as us. Which is great and we have a lot of fun with them being so close. Our youngest daughter has lived and worked in Switzerland for nearly 10 years. She works for the International Committee of the Red Cross. She lives in Morges with her Swiss boyfriend. Luckily for us Morges is on Lake Geneva and only an hour from Chatel so we see quite a bit of them as we visit them every couple of months or vice-versa and they often come to stay and ski or walk with us. So that's my life from Dover to today and I have thoroughly enjoyed it, seeing quite a lot of the world, meeting some lovely people and growing old with most of our family around us. I hope you have too.



Ginges Rally Car
And Flying
Upside
Down

