

Dick,

I remember very well you rattling your radio – as I recall your bergen landed on the towpath. I landed next to the Juliet and was immediately straddled by two MSPs landing either side of me – I pushed off PDQ. Because I knew where the Juliet was on the map I found the Bde HQ RV and Mike Rose, then the Brigade Major, and almost no one else. We then waited until first light before searching the DZ – we had left our parachutes and kit to represent a ‘live’ drop. I seem to remember a couple of Land Rovers landed astride some tree stumps in a wood but that may be from another drop. It was a while ago.

Hope you’re well.

Gordon

Thanks, Craig, I had seen the article on the AB Network, and over the years since 1974 I've seen & contributed a few words, here and there, on various websites; ARRSE and Paradata come to mind. On the night in question, my wife, June, was on duty in the SE district Comcen, and as NCO I/c Shift, she received the first Op Immediate signal from Germany regarding the incident. Of course, she knew very well that I was jumping with 15 PARA, so the news that all the casualties were thought to be TA soldiers did nothing to reassure her!

While all this was going on I was searching a dark canal bank for my Bergan, which I'd jettisoned from about 300ft, in the hope I could steer for the ground instead of drifting into the water. When I eventually found it, more by the smell of smashed chicken-curry tins than anything else, I was horrified at the state of the wrecked A14 radio, which sounded like a large set of maracas, and by my SMG, whose barrel had become banana shaped!

After making a late RV, I joined the rest of the Battalion to spend the remainder of the dark hours sitting in a damp field, scrounging ciggies and brews from those who hadn't had to dump their kit. It was a long night for us, but somewhat longer for the 6 souls who couldn't make any RV except the Final One.

In later years I met up with the Vic Cowie who was subsequently interviewed for Paradata. When I worked with the ACF in Shetland, Vic was my TAVRA QM in Perth. We paraded together on an ABF Day in Aberdeen some years ago, and were proud as punch to march down Union Street behind a PARA Regt band.

Strangely, I did my very best to avoid jumping with the TA after 1974!

Cheers,

Grumpy.



15th Battalion (V) and 4th
Battalion (V)
The Parachute Regiment -
Exercise Bold Guard



On the night of the 11th September 1974, The 15th Battalion (V) and 4th Battalion ((selected for the exercise) V)) of the Parachute Regiment had the rare privilege of being part of the biggest United Kingdom Joint Airborne Task Force deployment of the year along with the 2nd Battalion the Parachute Regiment as part of 16 Parachute Brigade group, on Exercise Bold Guard. This was a large-scale NATO exercise involving UK, German and Danish Forces. It involved parachuting at night on a drop zone bounded in the north by the Kiel Canal.

The airlift from the UK comprised of 35 Hercules Aircraft (C130's) carrying around 600 troops and their heavy drop vehicles. Owing to a freak temperature inversion the winds at between 800feet and 600feet changed direction, causing 16 of the Parachute Regiment soldiers to

land in the canal, causing the death by drowning of 6 Paratroopers. On the 27th June 1975. A large rock with a brass plaque, flanked by six trees was consecrated on the bank of the Kiel Canal in memory of the six soldiers who had died on that tragic night on the 11th September 1974. The young men who died are honoured by the inhabitants of Sehedstedt beside the canal. A memorial stone is guarded by trees specially planted. Members of the Airborne Forces Association Scotland and Central Scotland PRA have often visited the site and have been treated like royally by the villagers.

Captain Gerry Muir ...
A Coy
15 Para Scotland



Officer Cadet James Cooper ...
Edinburgh and Herriott Watt University OTC

Ocdt James Cooper was a member of Edinburgh and Herriott Watt University OTC on an experience attachment to C Company, 15 PARA. Although he was not a member of 15 PARA, the Parachute Regiment nor the Airborne Forces, he did have the non-airborne forces parachute qualification, the "lightbulb". Nevertheless, paratroopers, rightly honoured him at his funeral where his headdress, his T.O.S (Tam o' Shanter) rested on the flag on his coffin.



Sgt Richard Tompkins
... B Coy
15 Para Scotland



Sgt Elliot Leask ... Sp
Coy
15 Para Scotland



L/Cpl Brian Bett ... Sp
Coy
15 Para Scotland



Pte Edward Beach ... A
Coy
4 Para Liverpool



Kiel Canal Parachuting Accident.

This year is the 40th anniversary of the death of six soldiers drowned in the Kiel Canal on the night of 11th September 1974 when on exercise Bold Guard. This happened close to the village of Sehestedt where there is a monument erected by the villagers. Some 15 PARA faithful have been going to a service on the 11th every year for the last twenty years, but few officers have ever attended. Can you go?

A lot has been written over the years about this tragedy, but below are just two of the many links worth looking at:

<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/21st-september-1974/7/tragedy-at-kiel>

<http://www.paradata.org.uk/article/6671/related/6864>

HANSARD 1803–2005 → 1970s → 1975 → April 1975 → 15 April 1975 → Written Answers (Commons)

Parachuting Accident (Kiel Canal)

HC Deb 15 April 1975 vol 890 cc57-9W57W

Mr. Younger

asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received the results of the inquiry into the parachuting accident during exercise Bold Guard over the Kiel Canal on 11th September 1974: and if he will now make a statement.

Mr. Mason

The proceedings of the joint Royal Air Force and Army Board of Inquiry on this tragic accident have now been received and studied.

After an exhaustive examination, which included taking evidence from some 7458W witnesses, it has been established that the basic reason for 15 men landing in the canal was that the actual wind encountered during the parachute descent was both stronger and more southerly than had been forecast,

due to a temperature inversion near the surface. Using our present methods of weather forecasting this variation could not have been detected before the actual drop.

All the parachutists involved had had the necessary training and had been specifically briefed on the possibility of a landing into water. All were equipped with lifejackets which are inflated by releasing gas by hand from an attached cylinder. In the case of the six men who were drowned, three, for reasons unknown, had not attempted to inflate their lifejackets; in the case of the other three the lifejackets had failed to inflate because the head of the gas cylinder had not been screwed home, one of them because the thread had become crossed.

I have carefully considered the report of the Board of Inquiry. I am satisfied that the decision to carry out the drop was justified in the circumstances and that every reasonable precaution was taken, including the provision of safety boats. Closure of the canal during the drop could not be negotiated, but I am satisfied that this was not a significant factor in the tragedy.

A full review of all existing procedures for parachute drops, including the methods of determining wind speed and direction during descent, is being undertaken to reduce or eliminate the chances of a similar occurrence. Although there is no evidence either way to show whether the cross-threaded gas cylinder was issued in that state, action has been taken to improve standards of maintenance and inspection of lifejackets and to ensure that the gas cylinder head is fully screwed home before the jacket is issued.

I deeply regret the tragic deaths of these six volunteer soldiers. My concern is not lessened by the fact that the men who were involved in this parachute drop took part knowing the high risks inherent in military parachuting and that fatal accidents will occur from time to time. It is, however, to minimise these risks that we are adopting the additional measures I have already described.