THE SAPPER CHARITY

Royal Engineers Association

Newsletter

News and events from across the Corps and Sapper Family

October 2026



As autumn draws to a close and we reflect on another busy and successful period, we are delighted to welcome you to this edition of our newsletter!

Once again, it celebrates the incredible efforts of serving personnel, veterans, volunteers and supporters across our Sapper Family. From commemorative events and community activities to fundraising achievements and welfare support, these pages highlight the dedication, camaraderie and spirit that continue to strengthen our community.

Accidentally but by no means regrettably the activity of late September and early October demonstrates the many ways in which our community remains connected through service.

From the restoration of work in Arromanches, Normandy to the preservation of veterans' headstones in Ripon. The safeguarding of our forebears legacy for future generations is in good hands. These projects are much more than heritage activities as they provide a social opportunity for those able to take part.

You will also read about the opportunities being created for today's Sappers. Through initiatives such as TASS Grants, talented athletes are being supported in balancing time in uniform with the pursuit of sporting excellence, while the Sappers Network continues to service leavers with job opportunities. Both programmes reflect our commitment to supporting individuals throughout every stage of their journey.

Importantly, this edition also celebrates the future of the Corps. With the newest members of the Sapper Family receiving their Stable Belts at Hawley Hard. The presence of the Minley Branch reminding Sappers that they are now at the very core of the Sapper Family.

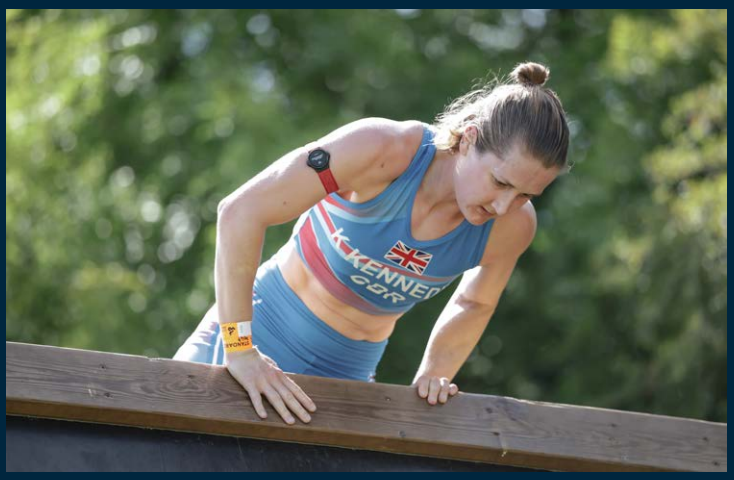




At the other end of the scale and not too far from Minley a rededicate of Cpl Richard Heard's grave was conducted. Having taken part in the Bruneval raid Cpl Heard passed away from cancer a year later (1943). Due to war time conditions Cpl Heard was buried unceremoniously in a grave which until recently was unknown.

Thank you to 23 Para Engr Regt and the Airborne branch for making the service happen.

What is evident in every story is that when given the opportunity Sappers show themselves to be a credit to themselves, the sapper family and the veteran communities. So a request, over the coming weeks when you are parading, look left, look right and take note of who isn't there as it's often the ones who can't or don't want to be on parade that need support.





TASS GRANTS

SUPPORTING SPORTING EXCELLENCE

Balancing military service with elite sport requires determination and commitment. Through our TASS Grant programme, talented Royal Engineers athletes receive vital support to help them reach their sporting potential.

Two athletes who have enjoyed outstanding success this year are Kirsty, competing in Obstacle Course Racing (OCR), and Jordan, a high-performing hockey player representing the Corps at multiple levels.

For Kirsty, the support provided through the TASS Grant has helped make an ambitious racing calendar possible, enabling her to compete across the UK and Europe against some of the sport's top athletes. Her results this season have been impressive, including 1st Open Female at Spartan Midlands Super!

Reflecting on the season, Kirsty said:

"I seriously cannot thank The Sapper Charity enough for this season of racing. It has been incredible being able to get to races that I wouldn't, on my own, be able to afford."

Jordan has also enjoyed a remarkable year! Alongside his duties, Jordan has represented the Royal Engineers Hockey Team, Army Hockey Team and Tri-Service Hockey Team, while also competing in the National League for Bath Buccaneers Men's 1st XI.

A major milestone came with his selection onto the TASS Scheme. Speaking about the achievement, Jordan said:

"Being recognised by TASS is something I am extremely proud of, as it reflects the hard work and dedication required to compete at a high level while continuing to serve full-time in the Army. The encouragement and assistance provided has made a genuine difference and is greatly appreciated."

We are delighted to support talented athletes such as Kirsty and Jordan through our TASS Grant programme. Their achievements demonstrate the exceptional talent within the Sapper family, and we are proud to play a part in helping them pursue their sporting ambitions!

Ready for your next career move?

SAPPERS NETWORK

Whether you're preparing to leave the Royal Engineers or have already transitioned to civilian life, Sappers Network connects Sappers with employers who value the skills, experience and leadership gained through service.

Explore opportunities across a wide range of sectors, from skilled trades and technical roles to senior management and executive positions, and discover organisations actively looking to recruit Royal Engineers.

Take the next step in your career and explore Sappers Network today.

Click here for more information.

SIGN UP TO EASYFUNDRAISING HERE.

CHRISTMAS IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER!

2027 SAPPER CALENDAR

"THE MANY FACES OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS!"



SEND YOUR PICTURES IN TODAY!

Preserving Our Heritage in Arromanches

Serving Sappers and veterans come together in Normandy to restore military artefacts and strengthen the bonds of the Sapper Family.

A team of 17 serving personnel and veterans from the **Corps of Royal Engineers** recently returned from Arromanches, Normandy, following a successful vehicle restoration event in partnership with the **Musée du Débarquement** and supported by the **Royal Engineers Association – The Sapper Charity**.

Overlooking the remains of Mulberry B, the artificial harbour that played a vital role in sustaining Allied operations following D-Day, the team worked on a variety of historic military vehicles and artefacts. These included a German 88mm gun, a Sherman tank, a 25-pounder field gun, a half-track, a Bofors gun located on the museum roof and a kite anchor. Their efforts will help ensure these important reminders of the 1944 Normandy campaign remain in good condition for the millions of visitors who come to Arromanches each year.

The team brought together serving Sappers and veterans, including residents of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, former Troop Commanders and experienced restorers, alongside newcomers keen to learn from those with greater experience. Joined by military grave restorer Steve Davies, the team also supported work on local monuments, including the much-revered Royal Engineers Monument overlooking Arromanches.

A highlight was an act of remembrance with the Mayor of Arromanches, honouring the Royal Engineers who lost their lives during the D-Day campaign. Spr Mitchell was selected by the team to lay a wreath on behalf of the Corps and the REA, providing a poignant moment of reflection.

Beyond the restoration work, the event brought generations together in the best traditions of the Corps. Old friendships were rekindled, new ones established, and serving personnel and veterans shared experiences in a relaxed atmosphere that strengthened mutual understanding and comradeship.

With thanks to the Musée du Débarquement lead by Guillaume Dorme, accommodation hosts Adrian and Karen, and the local community for their warm welcome, plans are already underway for further restoration events next year, including projects in France and Italy.



STRENGTHENING OUR SAPPER FAMILY



Restoring the Memories of Those Who Served

Veterans and community volunteers come together in North Yorkshire to restore more than 240 military headstones.

More than 240 military headstones have been cleaned and restored at St John's Church, Sharow, near Ripon, thanks to a community-led project supported by the Royal Engineers Association – The Sapper Charity.

Led by Steve Davies, The Military Grave Restorer, the week-long project in September brought together veterans and volunteers from across the region to restore the graves of former residents of Lister House, a Royal British Legion care home formerly based in Sharow before relocating to Ripon.

Years of weathering had left many of the headstones covered in moss and lichen, with inscriptions becoming increasingly difficult to read. Through the dedication of the volunteers and Steve's specialist knowledge, every headstone is now legible once again, helping preserve the memories of those who served for future generations.

Among the graves restored were those of 12 Royal Engineers, making the project particularly meaningful for the Sapper community. Several veteran Sappers joined the effort, working alongside members of the public and sharing stories, experiences and knowledge as the work progressed.

As the headstones were cleaned and regimental badges reappeared, the team was reminded that this was about much more than restoring stonework. Each grave represents an individual life, a record of service and a story worth preserving. Some of those buried may have served during the First World War, and possibly even the Boer War, before spending their later years at Lister House.

The project also demonstrated the value of bringing veterans together through a shared purpose. Practical work, conversation and comradeship created opportunities to build new connections while ensuring those who served are not forgotten.

The REA – The Sapper Charity is proud to have supported this important initiative and extends its thanks to Steve Davies and every volunteer who contributed their time, energy and enthusiasm.

Restoring their graves. Remembering their service. Preserving their legacy.







The success of the project was made possible by the many volunteers who generously gave their time and energy throughout the week.

Among them were veteran Sappers Gary 'Gaz' Chapman, John Rees and Phil Lockwood, alongside representatives of other services, Nick Disbury and Elwyn Pickering, who put in a tremendous shift from start to finish. The REA was also represented by Ken Kirk and Chris Toulmin, working alongside volunteers from the local community.

Among the community volunteers was 19-year-old Joe Cotten, a local student just embarking on a career in engineering, alongside mother-and-son team Paula Makepiece and James Soper. The work was physically demanding, but seeing the headstones restored and the inscriptions brought back to life made every effort worthwhile. Our sincere thanks and gratitude go to everyone who rolled up their sleeves, gave their time and helped ensure the service of those buried there will be remembered for generations to come.



WELCOMING THE NEWEST SAPPERS

The latest Stable Belt Parade at Hawley Hard marked an important milestone as 21 new Sappers officially joined the Corps!

Special Awards include:

- Mental Resilience Award -
  - Spr Gilmore, Shropshire
  - 24 Cdo RE
- **Top Academic Award -**
  - Spr Yorke, Battersea, London
  - 42 Engr Regt

Everyone at The Sapper Charity would like to extend our congratulations and a warm welcome to all the new Sappers.

We wish you every success as you begin your journey and look forward to seeing all that you will achieve in the years ahead!

Welcome to the Corps!











Corporal Richard I. Heard Rededication service

More than 80 years after his death, Corporal I. Heard of 1st Air Troop, 1 Parachute Squadron RE has finally received the recognition he deserved through a moving rededication service.

Richard enlisted into the Corps of Royal Engineers in 1936 and volunteered for the airborne forces in 1941, becoming one of the first parachute engineers. He took part in the famous Bruneval Raid (Operation Biting) before sadly passing away in 1943 after a battle with cancer, remaining in an unmarked grave for more than 80 years

The recent rededication ceremony honoured his service and sacrifice. Our sincere thanks go to 51 Parachute Squadron RE, Surbiton Branch, and all those whose dedication to researching Corporal Heard's remarkable story ensured his legacy will never be forgotten.