



Derek John Gay

Upon leaving school, Derek was employed in the grocery trade, until, at age 18, he joined the Army. He enlisted in R Signals in Feb 1960, and trained as a Comcen Op at 24 Sig Regt. At the end of his training he volunteered for Airborne Forces. Derek was sent to Aldershot where he successfully completed 'P' Coy at Maida Bks, and parachute training at RAF Abingdon. He was then taken on the strength of 216 Sig Sqn (Para Bde Gp) - later designated 216 Para Sig Sqn.

Derek carried out Sqn tours in Malaya, Singapore, and completed a UN Tour in Cyprus. He ended his Army career in Germany in 1978. Derek completed 18 years, and was very proud to have served with the Paras.

Ill-health forced Derek to retire from regular (civilian) employment while only in his fifties. However, he decided to undertake charity work with SSAFA, firstly as a Caseworker. After a short period in the job, he decided that Tameside in Greater Manchester was in need of its own SSAFA Division. Along with other volunteers he set up an office in a Church Hall, and over the past few years this branch of SSAFA has been a great success.

Derek also became a founder member of the Tameside Branch of the PRA. He took on the job of Chairman after the death of Bill English, the founder Chairman.

Derek's sudden death on Sun 10th Feb 2002, shortly after his 60th birthday, was a great shock to everyone who knew this selfless, sincere, and dedicated man. The funeral was held at Ashton under Lyne on 18th Feb, in a church filled to capacity. Both the Sqn and PRA were well represented.

May he rest in peace; our deepest sympathies go to his wife, Lorraine, and to the remainder of his family that survive him.

Combined extracts

The Pegasus Journal, 2001, author SG from Tameside Branch PRA

The Wire magazine, 2001, author SM from 216.

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