



THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 2 ISSUE 5

JULY 2010

EDITORIAL

After an indifferent start to the spring we have recently enjoyed an excellent spell of weather and no doubt the hosepipe bans will be in place by the time this goes to print.

Although it has been a period of high sporting drama, the events in Afghanistan are a reminder that however much we may suffer in the World Cup, this is not in comparison with the pain and grief that is borne by the comrades, friends and families of those who we have lost from our 1st Battalion. Not forgetting those who have been badly injured.

Despite our losses it has been heartening that the whole country is once again squarely behind our armed forces. Although the civil population may be fickle at times, the armed forces are currently enjoying a period of high prestige, and long may it continue. I was recently fortunate to attend Founder's Day at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. There I was reminded that when King Charles II built the Royal Hospital for his old soldiers, he was in fact building them a palace. With the exception perhaps of St Paul's Cathedral, at the time it was by far and away the most impressive structure in the whole of London. King Charles II certainly respected and cared for his soldiers and today the respect that the Armed Forces receive is an indication that nothing has changed.

It has also been a sad time for the CRA with a number of stalwarts posted to higher formation during the reporting period. I have decided to publish an abridged tribute to John Dean, one of our In-pensioners at the Royal Hospital, who sadly recently died. Although it is still somewhat lengthy, I thought that it might help to encourage those who might be considering applying for a place at the Royal Hospital.

I was recently privileged to visit Brigadier Mike and Marjorie Dauncey as he celebrated his 90th birthday. As well as presenting them with a cake it was great to see them both in excellent form. I had wanted to reproduce the citation from when he was recommended for the Victoria Cross, although I think that Brigadier Mike would have been very cross with me if I had done so. I am therefore very grateful to Harry Conlin who brought to my attention an article in the Spectator magazine entitled Men fight for their 'mates' — it is the secret of why they so love war. As well as being an interesting article in its own right, it also begins with a story about the exploits of a certain Lieutenant Dauncey during Operation Market Garden. I am delighted to reproduce the article elsewhere in this newsletter, thereby killing two birds with one stone.

The CRA Management Committee has agreed to go back to four issues of the newsletter each year and I will do my best to oblige starting from next year. In the meantime, items for the November issue should reach me by Friday 29th October 2010. Please send your contributions to me at: **The School House, Dartmouth Road, London SE26 4RD**. My telephone number is: **020 8291 9225**. You can also e-mail me at george.szwejkowski@sky.com. **Please note change of e-mail address.**

George Szwejkowski

CRAMC CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The deployment of 1 Mercian (Cheshire) has seen the Battalion respond in the best traditions of the 22nd but unfortunately they have suffered fatalities and casualties far exceeding their, and our, hopes and expectations. The CRA is supporting the Rear Operations Group in as many ways as possible including collecting Jiffy Bags and supporting their home inform meetings. Almost all members of the CRA are wearing a 1 Mercian (Cheshire) wristband or a wives club brooch to support their funds and additionally the CRA made a donation to help the Unit Welfare Officer buy books for children whose parents are deployed.

The Management Committee made a decision at their April meeting that the Association standard along with the standard closest to a soldier's home would attend Wootton Bassett to pay their respects and that all available standards would attend a soldier's funeral if requested by the family, this level of support seems to have got the response just about right. The thoughts and prayers of all members of the CRA are with all members of 1 Mercian (Cheshire), their attachments and families for the remainder of the tour.

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The link for the CRA webpage is:

<http://www.cheshiremilitarymuseum.co.uk/regimental-associations/the-cheshire-regiment-association.aspx>

The Mercian Regiment website is:

<http://www.army.mod.uk/infantry/regiments/Mercian.aspx>

The opinions expressed in the articles in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise of RHQ or the Regiment.

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CRAMC CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (cont)

The race day this year, again supported by the 4th Bn, saw an ever growing number of ex members of the 22nd turn out for this event, attendance has shot up from somewhere in the region of 200 to well over 400. Whilst this is an excellent turnout it does provide problems for the organisers as the traditional sized plot is now too small for the numbers attending and ordering stock for the various bars is a guess at best, not knowing how many will turn up is a challenge. The majority of people I have spoken to had an excellent time on the day and are looking forward to next year but a very small number of people made adverse comments, could I say that the people who organise and run the event do so for little or no return and deserve our thanks and not derogatory comments.

Listening to members of the CRA it is clear that our plan to wait until 2012 for the next big reunion of the CRA was not appreciated and as a result we have decided to hold another reunion weekend in the Norbreck Castle Hotel in Blackpool next year. We are also holding it in June so there is at least a chance of getting out of the hotel to sample the delights of Blackpool during the weekend, details will be sent out with the newsletter.

The remainder of the summer sees dates set for the Ellesmere Port Remembrance Service, The Suez Reunion, The Berlin Northern Ireland Reunion, The St Julien Service and The East Cheshire Reunion. All of these occasions are organised by branches of the Association, could I ask all members of the CRA to support these events as much as possible.

*Peter Gresty
Chairman*

CRA VISIT TO HMS ALBION

Seven members of Birkenhead Branch attended the invitation to visit HMS Albion on Friday 12th March 2010. Berthed in Liverpool, the visit was from 10 am until 1200 hrs. We were met by Lt Dan Parnell who made us very welcome, and in his words the ship was a mobile floating car park, constructed for the sole purpose of delivering fully kitted out troops and vehicles to theatres of war wherever they were needed. If the ship hadn't been late docking 15 members would have made the visit, never mind, those that did attend enjoyed the experience. Eddie sent an e/mail to Dan Parnell on our behalf, thanking him for looking after us. The lads were a little leg weary at the end, climbing up and down all the ladders.

Geoff Hunt



On the bridge of HMS Albion

VIEW FROM THE CASTLE



It is good to see how the CRA is getting behind the boys (and girls) of the 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) and showing their support in many different ways such as organising fishing trips, coffee mornings and collecting items for the Welfare Officer's jiffy bags. It is a pity that the media do not put the important word Cheshire in their reports (even though they have been asked to), but at least we know who they are and share their pride and their sorrow. There will even more opportunities to show how proud we are of them in November when they will be parading through the towns of Cheshire to celebrate their homecoming. The final event of the week will take the form of a special Thanksgiving Service in Chester Cathedral, followed by them receiving the Freedom of Cheshire West and Chester and marching through the city. Tickets will be available for CRA members to attend the Cathedral Service and details will be published on the CRA page of the Museum website; www.cheshiremilitarymuseum.co.uk in due course

Race Day went very well, there was a definite increase in numbers attending and this was proved by the fact that we ran out of beer! I would like to thank the Cheshire Companies of 4 MERCIAN and in particular CSgt Phil Clapperton (the oldest serving Cheshire soldier) for their efforts with the Racecourse tent. It is regrettable that some outsiders get in, but we just don't have the manpower available to secure the enclosure as well as keep the beer flowing. The new catering arrangements at the Castle also proved popular, so we will try it again next year (and also make sure that our Crystal Ball is a bit cleaner so we can see how many people are coming and get enough beer in!)

Glancing at Last Post, you will see that we have lost a number of stalwarts over the last few months; people who have made a big impression not only on the life of their branches but also who have left an indelible mark on the CRA as a whole; some of them are people who have worked quietly in the background but whose contributions have nevertheless been extremely valuable, they will all be sorely missed.

Are you getting the newsletter on time, do we have your correct address. Could I ask you to let us know when you move house and also let us have up to date phone numbers and email addresses so that we can send urgent news out quicker. Please send details to cheshire.regt.association@hotmail.com or ring us and let us know.

There are a couple of important inserts with this newsletter, please don't put them to one side to be dealt with later, fill them in now and get them back to us so that we know who wants to take part.

TEP

MINUTES OF THE CRAMC MEETING

MINUTES OF THE CRAMC MEETING HELD ON 17th APRIL 2010 AT RHQ CHESTER

Present: Mr P J Gresty (Chairman), Mr J Cooney, Maj J S Holden TD, Mr J A Jennings, Mr A Kennedy, Mr K M Parsonage, Maj J Salisbury, Mr M Walker, Mr D J Waring.

Maj T E Pickering MBE (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Capt Hughes

The Chairman opened the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed there were no matters arising. Mr Parsonage proposed and Mr Jennings seconded the proposal that the minutes as read be passed as a true record. **Carried.**

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman began by welcoming Major Jim Salisbury as a new, co-opted member of CRAMC and thanked him for agreeing to join the committee.

He spoke about the AGM and felt that the format of the meeting and supper was well received.

He outlined some details of The 1st Bn Mercian (Cheshire) deployment on OP HERRICK in Afghanistan and wished them well for a safe and successful tour in the traditions of the 22nd. Captain John Elms who is the Unit Welfare Officer has been using the CRA club, and Stockport armoury, for carrying out families briefings and we as an association are doing all we can to support this aspect of their deployment.

He reported that In-Pensioner John Dean has died, his funeral was well attended by Southern Branch members.

He touched briefly on the forthcoming events mentioning that the Golf Society was doing well with increased turnouts.

He feels that we remain in a strong position with our finances even though we still don't know how much we will receive from The Mercian Regiment as our grant for this financial year. The finance committee have made a recommendation that the grant to all 3 antecedent associations be reduced to £5,000.00 but he is arguing against such a drastic cut. A decision will be reached at the next Regimental Council Meeting on 10th June.

3. FINANCE AND BUDGETS

The secretary presented a statement of financial affairs as at 31st March which included a breakdown of expenditure. The CRA has funds of £95326 and the Club £3544. He reported that over the 12 months ending 31st March, the Club made a profit; this was heartening following the losses of the previous year.

4. REPATRIATIONS

A CRA policy for attendance at the repatriation of Mercian soldiers KIA was discussed and it was agreed that should the situation arise, the Association Standard together with the Branch Standard of the Branch closest to the Soldier's home should attend at Wootton Bassett. Travel costs would be borne by the CRA.

The Secretary reminded the committee that attendance of Standards at funerals was a matter for the family to decide and that decision will be relayed to RHQ by the Casualty Visiting Officer. Families should not be approached by anyone representing the CRA. He also expressed the hope that those who attended at Wootton Bassett would behave with decorum and not treat the occasion as a reunion as happened recently with another regiment and which left a bad impression with the local people.

5. FUTURE EVENTS

The list of events was discussed and there were no changes, although Mr Jennings chided the Secretary for omitting the East Cheshire Reunion from the agenda list.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Parsonage proposed and Maj Holden seconded the proposal that the sum of £300 be granted to the Unit Welfare Officer, 1 MERCIAN to purchase "Hello from Home" books to give to children of deployed members of the regiment. Carried.

Mr Parsonage spoke about how the CRA was supporting Help for Heroes in Ellesmere Port.

Mr Cooney spoke about support to the club from outlying branches and put forward the idea of subsidising Branches who wished to visit as an organised body. A lively discussion ensued but it was generally agreed that this would not be possible.

Major Salisbury suggested that some thought should be given to where the future of the CRA lies and that some thought should be given to the shrinking membership with more being done to engage with "younger" potential members. He expressed the opinion that a Bosnia Reunion might prove fruitful.

Major Holden asked if the Newsletter could be reinstated as a Quarterly issue, it was agreed that this would be a good thing if the editor was able to give the time to do so.

The Chairman mentioned the recent donation made by the CRA to the Northern Ireland Memorial Garden and hopes that he will be able to visit it when he is next in NI. He went on to propose that the Gurkha Reinforcement Company members be made Honorary Members of the CRA on their return from OP HERRICK, this was agreed unanimously.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Saturday 10th July at 1000hrs, followed by the Secretaries' Meeting at 1330.

SNIPPETS

Psychiatric Ward

An inspecting Brigadier decides to visit the psychiatric ward of a military hospital. He wants to show an interest and asks the nurse how they decide if a soldier needs to be admitted as a patient or just seen in out-patients.

"Well," says the QA psychiatric nurse, "we fill the bath with water and give the soldier a mess tin and a spoon. He is then asked to empty the bath."

"Ah, I see!" exclaims the Brigadier, "A normal person would use the mess tin because it is larger and will take less time to empty the bath."

"No Sir" sighs the psychiatric nurse, "A sane person would pull the bath plug. I'll get your bed ready Sir!"

WHAT A RACE DAY

Well it starts a couple of weeks earlier with the prep, and, will we have a bar or not?

Not knowing the answer we carry on and prepare, I suppose its easy to surmise that things will happen and all's going to be honky dory.

Well we get the outside garages and two bars need building, these were duly made by Dave Mapley and Dave Clark, thanks guys, (but I still had to brush up your rubbish).

Well the day starts early, BBQ area sorted, bar fully set up , deliveries have been done gas supplied etc etc,

We now welcome the guys and girls for what is for most a yearly re- union, we are all set,(faffing around here and there), as you do, bags of ale (more than last year as you anticipate possibly more people or heavier drinking) were ready,

1100, quiet start things a bit slow, a few more in, but not like last year, maybe the weathers dampened things a little and put people off, (No were talking Cheshires here) surely not.

1200, As Cheshire's, we don't forget our own, we had a two minute silence to remember our loss of Cpl Harvey Holmes, (our thoughts to his family and friends)

Well between 1200 -1400 things did hot up, beer seemed to flow non-stop, my staff working hard toward theIR first shift payment,

Between 1400- 1730 things were quiet, (The proverbially lull before the storm) " I saw Eddie then" for a short while,

1800 Onwards, Serving of ale, this went on relentless, the beer taps were rarely in the off position, the onslaught was ongoing (5 against 300) talk about Meeanee, not a patch, we held them at bay, then it subsided., we held our breath for the next

onslaught, it came but thankfully not quite so bad, PHEW. Then there was a lull,

2100, the staff took time out to clear the dead (glasses) from the battle field, (the yard, I'm getting carried away here) however it did go on till approx 2200 but at a more steadier pace and things quieted down then, we were now almost out of 'ammo' (I mean drink).

I would like to put it to some who had a gripe, that this was due to a sell out of stock, as opposed to running short of stock - there is a difference. We catered for a lot more than last year, and more of you came or drank more, I can only apologise to the few that were disappointed, (and I blame a clouding of my crystal ball).

It was great for me to see such great friends and stalwarts of the 22nd, to name but a few Lockley, Allmark, Evans, Walkman, Maj. Mike, Waldo, Wohlleben, Clappo, Brain, Bottomley, Allseybrook (and Darren) Halford, Stretch, Duckers, Nulty, Mike Jones (nice one Mick) Simmo x2, Rusty, Tom Jones, Cotgrave, Dog, Beaky, All Kirkham boys (Phil remembered) Percy, the card school , Yoxy, Jamo, Rash, and all, so many to mention the list is endless, and of course all the good ladies.

Special thanks to my boys behind the bar, Nige, Gary, Keith, Mike, all the catering staff, (first time for them).

And a special thanks to Pete Gresty, Clive Wilding and son in law Adrian and my family Members for helping in the clean up operation the next morning.

Hope to see you all next year, the CRA needs your support.

Alan (Iggy) Jones

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

HAPPY 90th BIRTHDAY BRIGADIER MIKE DAUNCEY DSO

Sunday 9th May saw a double celebration as Brigadier Mike Dauncey celebrated his 90th birthday along with a slightly belated birthday celebration for his wife, Marjorie. Although it was very much a family celebration, George and Lynne Szwejkowski took the opportunity to pop in the day before in order to present a cake on behalf of the CRA.



Brigadier Mike and Marjorie with their cake

HAPPY 90th BIRTHDAY LAWRIE STUBBS

It was also many happy returns to Lawrie Stubbs, who celebrated his 90th birthday in the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. Members of the Southern Region dropped in to present him with a cake and buy him an orange juice.



Lawrie Stubbs celebrates in the In-Pensioners' Mess

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH

The first event on this period's calendar was the Association AGM at St Mary's Centre, followed by an excellent supper and a fair amount of liquid refreshment. The event was made more enjoyable for the writer, who had a win on the 22 Club.

Into March, a number of branch members accepted an invitation from the Senior Service to visit HMS Albion, which was berthed in Liverpool (see separate report).

April saw our bowls section emerge from their winter hibernation to commence practice for the forthcoming match versus Stockport. In May members travelled to Walsall for the Malay and Singapore Reunion, where we met many old friends and enjoyed their hospitality.

Early June saw the first leg of our annual bowls match versus Stockport, who as usual arrived enmasse. The weather held up for most of the match, but in spite of all our pre-match practice, coaching and tactical talks, we were soundly beaten. Roll on September's return match.

Later in the month members attend Armed Forces Day at Wallasey Town Hall, a much better attended and organised event than in 2009.

For some time now the branch has been sending shoe boxes to troops in Afghanistan. One member has established contact with a footwear outlet, who supply us with all the boxes required and to date 144 boxes have been despatched.

Finally on a more sombre note, during this period we have lost three long-standing friends of over 50 years – John Wilkes, Mick Bird and Eric Longson, they will all be missed. On the 22nd June members attended the funeral of Corporal Terry Webster at Blacon, Chester, and on 25th June there will be attendance at the funeral of Lance Corporal Alan Cochran in North Wales.

Graham Ball

CHESTER BRANCH

It is my sad duty to begin these notes with the news that we have lost a further two Branch stalwarts in the past two months. On Monday 12th April Mr Tom Sparks passed away. He has always been an enthusiastic member of the Branch, having held several offices, and was an avid life long supporter of the Cheshire Regiment having enlisted as a boy in the late 1940's. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him and our sincere condolences are offered to Betty and the family.

On May 22nd Mrs Jean Helliwell passed away peacefully following a long bravely born illness. Jean was a superb supporter of the Branch and The Cheshire Regiment for 60 years and served in many parts of the world. She will be sorely missed by all those fortunate enough to have known her. To Bill and family we offer our sincere condolences on their most grievous loss.

Apart from Race Day, during which I can confidently state I saw more people than horses, and a visit to the Malayan Reunion, the Branch has had a quiet quarter. We were forced to cancel a Fathers Day lunch due, unbelievably, to a distinct lack of interest. We are hoping to correct matters with a trip to the National Memorial at Lichfield in September, interested parties should contact me, and a Branch Dinner in October. Again anyone interested in attending the dinner should contact me ASAP because the tickets have a bad habit of being snapped up very rapidly,

Finally in regard to the tragic events in Afghanistan we offer our sincere condolences to all the bereaved and we will never forget the sacrifice made by their loved ones. We wish all the lads who are performing brilliantly in such hostile surroundings the best of luck. May God bless you and keep you all safe.

John Fairbanks

ELLESMERE PORT BRANCH

I start on a sad note as we recall that two stalwart members from the Midland Region recently answered their "last call" - Mick Bird and John Wilkes. Also the loss of three of our front line soldiers - Cpl Harvey Holmes, L/Cpl Alan Cochran and Cpl Terry Webster.

"Rest In Peace Comrades" - At The Going Down Of The Sun, And in The Morning - We Will Remember. Our thoughts, prayers and condolences go out to all the families.

Not a very active time for us this period. On VE day a small group attended a short ceremony at our War memorial. On the day, I felt very privileged at being asked to lay the wreath on behalf of the Branch. Captain Dave O'Brian (Church Army) conducted a most moving service and Captain Bill Osbourne (Salvation Army), as usual gave a faultless rendering of the Last Post. One thing did concern me however. None of our civic leaders saw fit to attend, nor the local press. With very few of the townspeople witnessing the ceremony. A few of us supported South Wirral Branch at a Help For Heroes" fundraiser at one of our local clubs. A very successful and enjoyable night. Well done Nigel and his "team.

Our meetings are still very well attended, with my current recruitment efforts ongoing. Posters going up in various "hostelries" throughout the town, and the local market hall.,

We are still concerned about the health and wellbeing of members Jim Humphries and Derek Blundell, the situation being monitored very closely. To Jim and Derek, - you are always in our thoughts comrades.

Looking ahead - on 11th July we have our customary services of Commemoration. Following that we have the Suez reunion. In August we are having a "fun day out" in Llandudno. Looking forward to getting my knees brown !!!!.

I may be "chasing rainbows" but I wonder if I could motivate any of my members to march on the Mons Parade?.

Gordon Kipps

KIRKHAM BRANCH

On Friday 7th May the Kirkham Branch all met up in a nice little cafe in Kirkham. After a full English breakfast our next port of call was the Stables Hotel, where we hold our branch meetings every month. True to form the landlord was waiting for us behind the bar. He never ever lets us down, and once again we all had a couple of drinks for the road, before boarding our coach for the race day at Chester.

We had a nice journey down to Chester and we all made our way to the beer tent where we met up with our old friends from other branches. We all had a very good day out and one or two of us had a couple of winners. All in all it was a great day out and a big vote of thanks must go to our Secretary, Rick Burchett, Chairman Noel Brookes and our Treasurer Billy Birkett for all their hard work. Our thanks must also go to the staff at the beer tent, the CRA members and staff at the Regimental Club for making us all so welcome. Our thanks to the coach driver for

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

getting us back to the Stables Hotel where the landlord and his staff had done us proud with a big tray of sandwiches waiting for us. What a great way to end a first class day out.

Our next port of call was the Malaya and Singapore Reunion at Pelsall Labour Club, on Saturday 15th May. I was booked in at the Premier Inn at Norton Canes and met up with the other MT Section gang who were staying at the Barons Court Hotel. Paul Hadfield, John Eddowes, Eric Thompson, Roy Turner, Bill Bastin and Walt Lakin, who we agreed to meet at the club. We had a really good evening, the company and the fish and chips were first class – the entertainment as well. Once again the Walsall Branch have done a great job and made us all welcome.

Our very dear friend Mick Bird died just a few days after the Malaya and Singapore Reunion. Mick was a great man with a heart of gold, who always had a smile on his face. All his mates on the MT Section thought the world of him. It was great to see such a good turnout at his funeral on 2nd June. We send our sincere condolences to his wife, Pat and all his family. To all members of 1st Bn Mercian (Cheshire) we hope and pray for your safe return from Afghanistan.

John Gibson

LIMAVADY BRANCH

Due to various reasons Limavady Branch has been somewhat “AWOL” with our Branch Notes of late but I can assure you that we are still here and notes will be more forthcoming in the future.

Our annual “Can’t cook, Won’t cook” competition is not far off and we are hoping that the Association can keep on to the trophy which was gallantly won last year by our very own Ken Cooper.

The weather has picked up considerably and it won’t be long before we dust off our trusty BBQ and host another BBQ event for all the Associations that have assisted us over the past year, it also helps to raise awareness of our Association which can’t be a bad thing.

Three members of the Branch managed to get across for the races, Ken Cooper, Mac Philpott and Bruce Rhymer, as always a fantastic day was had by all. A pity that Ken Coopers return journey back to the Province wasn’t as great as the races was as, unfortunately, due to the volcanic ash, he was stuck on the plane, on the runway, in England for a fair few hours!!!!

Preparations will begin shortly for the 28th Droppin Well Memorial Service which for those of you that are unaware is held at Tamlaghtfinlagan Church in Ballykelly. The service is always held on the Sunday nearest to the 06th December as possible. The church hall adjacent to the church always does a sterling job of putting on a good spread for us after the service and of course, the United Service Club in Limavady and the Droppin Well always welcome us when we call in for a drink afterwards. Details regarding the Service, travel, accommodation, etc will be posted on the Facebook site prior to the event and for those of you that don’t quite feel up to coming over you will be pleased to know that we have now been dragged, kicking and screaming into the 21st century. We now appear on Google maps, simply type in the postcode BT49 9HS (Tommy’s Chippy) and you can do your own virtual visit. Infact, you can now do your own virtual tour of the whole province and maybe take a trip down memory lane, visiting all those delightful places that you spent months or years at, although be aware, a high percentage of these places have been demolished.

Mac Philpott

MACCLESFIELD BRANCH

This has been a sad time for us, since the last notes. A long-serving member, Derek Bache died in June after much pain and suffering, and our deepest sympathy goes out to his wife and family. The funeral service at St. Paul’s Church, Macclesfield, was well represented by members of the branch. Colonel Edward Scott was there, also the former MP for Macclesfield, Sir Nicholas Winterton. Derek had been a regular soldier, and at some time in his service had been in the SAS.

A very old friend of mine, Eric Longson of Stockport Branch died and his funeral service was on Wednesday 16th June. I was unable to be there as my wife Irene is in hospital at present. I shall miss Eric’s friendship very much at the East Cheshire Reunion and the other CRA functions. We did many TA camps together.

Ken Newton is recovering from his second hip replacement operation and is doing very well and will soon be throwing away his stick. Ken and Derek Bache were our almoners for many years and never failed to visit our sick members at least once a month. The problem is, are there any volunteers to replace them?

There is not much else to report as it is a quiet time, with people going away on holiday, but attendances are usually around 25 at our monthly meeting – not bad for a small branch.

I have decided after a lot of thought, to resign as branch “scribe”. I have been doing the job for more than 25 years and I think that it is time for a change, perhaps a new approach and fresh ideas. So, for the last time, cheerio and goodbye. I’ll see you around, I hope.

Frank Worrall

NANTWICH BRANCH

The branch continues to attract new members, the latest edition being Roger Dykes of the Suez era, who was most warmly welcomed. Branch meetings are generally extremely well supported, with an average attendance of some fifteen members. Most certainly there is much lively and humoured discussion, with the meetings so ably chaired by Harry Tomkinson. Secretary Jim Salisbury has produced an updated attendance register, listing names, addresses and contact details of each branch member. Discussion has also taken place on the possibility of a change of meeting times and dates. Agreement was reached that on branch nights members should be encouraged to meet at 7.30 p.m. (not 8 p.m.), to socialise prior to the meeting.

Former Branch President, Michael Morgan-Wynne, has received honorary life membership for his eminent services over many years. Peter Hoffman, as Branch Almoner, continues to present a report at each branch meeting, and “thinking of you” cards have been sent to members Betty Cooke, Maurice Boon, Dilip Solanki-Koli, Michael Morgan-Wynne and Jean Webster, all who have not enjoyed the best of health over the past few months.

Branch members supported that Stoke and Stockport branches should again be invited to join our branch functions throughout the year. Since the last newsletter branch members have been well represented at: 1 Mercian Open Day in February, Meeanee Reunion and AGM, veterans’ function in Liverpool, Malaya and Singapore Reunion at Pelsall, and Chester Races in May. Congratulations to Brian Billington on his well deserved CRA award and to Peter Hoffman, our Almoner, who celebrated his 60th birthday in June.

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

The following events and activities are now proposed:

1. Laying of the Branch Standard in St Mary's Church, Nantwich.
2. Tree planting in the National Arboretum.
3. Sunday lunch in the CRA Club in Chester.
4. Social days out to military museums and other venues.

SANDBACH BRANCH

Starting on a sad note, as a branch we would like to offer our sincere condolences to the families of Cpl Harvey Holmes, Cpl Terry Webster, Lcpl Alan Cochran and Cpl Andrew Breeze our thoughts will be with you always Rest in Peace Comrades. There are books of condolence in the museum so if you are passing come in and sign them to show support to the families. We also offer our condolences to the family of Mr Eric Longson Stockport branch.

We held our A.G.M on the 29th April 2010 and the old Committee was re-elected, but if there is anyone out there who wishes to take over as treasurer of the branch because our treasurer wishes to retire. Our next event is the annual day to Llandudno on the 24th of July a favourite place with the Older members of the branch because if it rains you can readily get under cover.

We have recently lost one of our associate members Mr Robert Perks (THE FUSILIER) after a long illness our thoughts go out to his daughter Debbie. We are glad that Mr Charles Sullivan ex 2nd Battalion he is ninety this August has made a brilliant recovery after being ill for a while, he recently went to London with a carer to the 70th Anniversary celebrations and saw the French President and his wife he said he had a glorious time. We would like to wish all our troops serving in Afghanistan especially 1st Battalion Mercian (Cheshire) a speedy and safe tour of duty God Bless you all...

D.R.Beech (secretary)

SOUTHERN REGION

Probably much like other branches, there has not been a lot of good news in recent months. We were very sorry to lose one of our In-Pensioners, John Dean, who died at the age of 91. John was in the Royal Hospital for over ten years and a member of the Southern Region for virtually all of that time. Before his recent illness, John took part in many activities as a member of the branch, travelling to Chester to march at the Mons Reunion, and he always attracted attention when he marched with us in his scarlets at the Cenotaph.

On a happier note we were able to celebrate the 90th birthday of our other In-Pensioner, Lawrie Stubbs. It was great to be able to visit him and present him with a special cake on behalf of the branch, although Lawrie was only allowed to celebrate with an orange juice.

On the subject of birthdays, our best wishes also went to Brigadier Mike Dauncey DSO, who also celebrated his 90th birthday recently. We were very privileged to visit him, and Marjorie, in order to present him with a special cake on behalf of the branch.

Some of us were able to watch the annual Army v Royal Navy rugby match at Twickenham. It was not the Army's finest hour, as indiscipline resulting in two red cards, enabled the Royal Navy to snatch victory from a position where the Army had been coasting to an easy win. We are particularly grateful to Major

Charlie Stevens, who looked after us, and it was great to see Keith and Helen Tarbuck making their annual pilgrimage from Dubai for the occasion.

Race Day saw a sprinkling of Southern Region members, but I don't believe that any were able to make any vast profits from the bookies. We are grateful to everyone who worked so hard to make the day a success, and I am sure that next time the beer will last as long as the race meeting.

Our best wishes to our 1st Battalion as they continue in their duties in Afghanistan.

George Szwejkowski

STOCKPORT BRANCH

On 2nd April 22 branch members and partners attended the passing out parade in Helles Barracks, Catterick of former cadet, Chris Priest, from 1 Platoon, The Prince of Wales's Division. The weather held and the parade went according to plan. After the parade we were bussed up to Vimy Barracks NAAFI for a superb buffet and to meet the trained soldiers along with their permanent staff. It brought back many memories for some of the old guard, with the odd quip of "It were a lot different in my day lad". Chris is now with 1st Battalion Mercian (Cheshire), serving in Afghanistan. We wish him well and a safe return.

On Saturday 24th April branch members and partners attended the St George's Day Church Service, held this year in Stockport at the aptly named St George's Church.

Friday 7th May was Regimental Race Day at Chester. The usual suspects from the branch attended and some actually saw a horse or two this year before retiring to the beer tent. Hopefully we will find a sponsor for next year's race. Our thanks to all at RHQ and the 1st and 4th Battalions for all their hard work in putting on the race day and making it a huge success.

Saturday 23rd May saw us in Walsall for another enjoyable Malaya Reunion where we enjoyed a superb fish and chip supper, washed down with a few beers. An enjoyable evening in congenial company.

On Sunday 24th May we attended a Lancashire Day in the OCA Bar at the Drill Hall, Ashton-under-Lyne in aid of Oldham and Glossop Mountain Rescue Teams. Dress code 1950 style flat cap etc. The event raised over £300 and the rescue team put on an impressive display of vehicles and equipment. Our branch made a donation of £50.

On the May bank holiday six of us travelled to the Major General's Review on Horse Guards, the rehearsal for Trooping the Colour. We stayed at the Union Jack Club, Waterloo (highly recommended). It was the turn of 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards to troop their colour, after only returning from Afghanistan in April. For the majority of them this was their first troop as the Grenadiers last did so in 2004. The marching and drill was spot on. Halfway through the event the heavens opened up and we all got wet. On the Sunday we watched the changing of the guard at Wellington Barracks and Buckingham Palace. Once again drill spot on (eat your hearts out Yanks). We then went to Royal Hospital, Chelsea to visit Lawrence Stubbs, our Cheshire In Pensioner, who celebrated his 90th birthday on Tuesday 25th May. We presented Lawrie with a bottle of Grouse from the branch. Lawrie is in the new hospital block and is well looked after, in good spirits and still regularly visited by his ladies. If you have never been to the Royal Hospital, it is well worth a visit and a credit to King Charles II.

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

Sunday 6th June saw the annual battle of the bowls at Port Sunlight against Birkenhead Branch. The first half, before lunch the weather held, but after a superb buffet the rain came down and some of us got wet. At the end Stockport came out worthy winners. Return match in Stockport will be on Sunday 19th September.

It fell to Stockport to attend Wootton Bassett for the homecoming of the 1st Battalion's first fatality, Corporal Harvey Alex Holmes, of Newton, Hyde, Cheshire. Derek Sykes and Gordon Smith carried the Association and Branch standards. On arrival they were met by a horde of hairy bikers, who turned out to be all ex servicemen, who took them in hand and explained the order of the day. Derek and Gordon met and talked with family members of the two marines and Corporal Harvey's family, plus the local contingent of the Royal British Legion. As the cortege passed by, the standard bearers did a rolling dip as each of the hearses passed by. After a very moving and dignified event, they adjourned to the Cross Keys Public House where the landlady laid on coffee, tea and sandwiches for all, at no cost. Derek and Gordon both praised the RBL and the people of Wootton Bassett for their devotion and dedication to our armed forces. They are a credit to the nation.

At Harvey's funeral on 27th May the people of Hyde turned out in their thousands, to say goodbye to one of their own, with 50 standards on parade and Brigadier Andrew Sharpe OBE in attendance.

Derek Sykes was back in Wootton Bassett along with Alan Kennedy for the homecoming of Lance Corporal Andrew Breeze, of Gorton, Manchester. Once again the people of Wootton Bassett turned out in their hundreds to pay homage to the fallen.

On 16th June we celebrated the life of Sergeant Major Eric Longson, who passed away on 5th June. Eric was Vice President for the last six years. He served with the 1st Battalion in Cyprus and the Suez Canal Zone and Berlin in the 1950s, before joining the 7th Battalion in the 60s, reaching the rank of WO2. He went on to serve with the Mercian Brigade, 1 Cheshire and then the Mercian Volunteers. St Mary's Church, Stockport, was packed with Eric's family, friends and comrades from the CRA and Mercian Volunteers. Tributes were paid by his son, Kevin, daughter Erica and close friend Jim Clare. There were six standards on parade from Chester, Birkenhead, Sandbach and Macclesfield as well as Stockport and the County Standard. After a light hearted and moving service, committal was at Rowan Chapel, Stockport Cemetery and the wake at the Armoury TA Centre. We had a drink or two to Eric and listen to the stories of "our dad" from Steven, Kevin and Erica. Friday nights at the Armoury will not be the same without Eric's witty and dry sense of humour. We have lost our own "Les Dawson".

Keith Mort

WALSALL BRANCH

We open our entry with heavy hearts. Our most respected and valued member/secretary, Mick Bird passed away after three years of painful illness on 20th May 2010. He will be missed a great deal for his dedicated work as secretary and as a first class gentleman.

The Regimental Race Day went well in brilliant sunshine and the beer tent ran dry before half of the meeting was over. However stocks were replenished by a very obliging staff of Mercian lads.

May 15th saw the annual Singapore/Malaya Reunion, well attended by 103 people, who all enjoyed "Bostin" fish and chips. The entertainer was very well appreciated by all. He was very interested in the photograph board as he had also served in Selerang Barracks, albeit a few years after the Cheshires. The money prizes were all won by our visiting friends, avoiding any cries of "fix". Winners names will not be printed, but are available from the Walsall Branch on request (you know who you are).

Ten members and wives, along with other CRA members from other branches, enjoyed a brilliant weekend at the Adelphi, Liverpool for a Veterans' Weekend, which included a gala night on Saturday 29th May.

I am pleased to announce that the branch will have a new branch secretary, starting in August 2010. He is Joe Sadler, who has been a member of our branch since its conception. Joe can rely on the members' support and we wish him well in his new role.

On 2nd June we said our final farewell to Mick Bird. His funeral was well attended by his family, friends and colleagues from the CRA. Thanks to Gordon Smith who carried the County Standard, Brian Hartingam, who carried the Stockport Standard and Mick Hart, the Walsall Standard Bearer. On behalf of the branch I would like to record our thanks to Major Bill Jones, Major Eddie Pickering and Major Mike Tarbuck for their attendance. Thanks also to John Gibson from Kirkham, Ray Turner representing Macclesfield, members of Birkenhead and Stockport Branches and Mick's old comrades from MT Platoon, all who travelled to Walsall to pay their last respects to Mick Bird.

Reg Smith

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Colonel Tony Gauvain (Retired) has launched a new Charity to treat Veterans, TA, and families for the effects of PTSD, through a UK-wide network of 250 therapists. You can find details at www.ptsdresolution.org. You will see that the charity wants to raise awareness among sufferers and potential donors and that all responses should go via the website or 0845 021 7873. Please also consider how funds might be raised locally. Please don't suffer or let others suffer - please refer and donate. Tony can be contacted on tony.gauvain@btopenworld.com and 01483 267027.

SNIPPETS

Old Soldier

A Chelsea Pensioner was sitting on a bench in the park in London.

A young man walked up to the bench and sat down. He had spiked hair that was all different colours -- green, red, orange, blue and yellow.

The old soldier just stared!!

The young man said, "What's the matter, old timer? Never done anything wild in your life?"

The old soldier replied, "Got drunk once and had sex with a parrot. I was just wondering if you were my son."

MEN FIGHT FOR THEIR MATES...

MEN FIGHT FOR THEIR MATES – IT IS THE SECRET OF WHY THEY SO LOVE WAR

This article by James Delingpole appeared in the Spectator on 9th June 2010. I am grateful to him for allowing me to reproduce his article in this newsletter.

One of the nicest, gentlest fellows I've ever met is a man named Mike Dauncey. He's so terribly polite that he can't bring himself to swear even in extremis and if you had to guess what he did before he retired, you'd probably say 'country parson'. In fact, though, Brigadier Mike Dauncey DSO is a bona fide war hero, known as the 'sixth Arnhem VC'. Only five were in fact awarded at the battle. Mike was put up for the sixth, only to have the letters 'VC' crossed out on his citation and amended to 'DSO' by one BLM (that'll be Bernard Law Montgomery) who felt that, heroism or no heroism, five VCs were quite enough for one debacle.

When you learn what Mike did as a young lieutenant, though, you're left in little doubt he deserved better. Frustrated by the lack of action in his war so far, he had retrained as a glider pilot. Operation Market Garden was his first taste of combat and he took to it rather well. On landing, he was sent (as many glider pilots were) to defend the guns at Oosterbeek and on three occasions he prevented his position being overrun by superior forces of tanks and infantry, often by leading near suicidal counterattacks.

Grazed across the scalp with a sniper's bullet, then caught in the eye by a shell splinter — which a comrade agonisingly but unsuccessfully tried to extract with a matchstick — Lt Dauncey went on single-handedly to disable a self-propelled gun with a gammon grenade. After that he was hit in the leg by a bullet, had his jaw broken by a stick grenade and was captured by the Germans. And still he managed to escape from his POW camp and make a home run to Blighty where his beloved Marjorie awaited him.

For all that, though, I can see Monty's point. Yes, taken out of context Mike's heroics do seem pretty exemplary. But the more you study Operation Market Garden in detail — as I did for my book *Coward at the Bridge* — the more you begin to realise that far from being exceptional, deeds like Mike's were almost the norm. Time and again, the men of the doomed 1st Airborne Division cheerfully sacrificed their lives to give their comrades a slim chance of survival. The hardened SS troopers (many who'd experienced the hell of the Eastern Front) rated the paratroopers at the Bridge as the toughest opposition they'd faced. With Kohima and Imphal, the battle for Arnhem was surely the British army's finest hour in the second world war. And this isn't to denigrate the achievements of the men who fought at El Alamein or D-Day or Monte Cassino. It's merely to point out what most of us know in our hearts to be true: that nothing stiffens the sinews or summons up the blood quite so readily as the hideous defensive battle in which we come within a hair's breadth of losing.

Or which, in the case of Arnhem and the Battle of the Imjin River, we lose altogether. I've been reading about the latter in *To the Last Round*, Andrew Salmon's superb account of the 1951 Korean war battle when China's entire 63rd army launched itself at a British infantry brigade. The British soldiers (together with a very brave Belgian battalion) were outnumbered seven to one. A fair few were National Service conscripts caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, for no one had expected an attack in such force on this deceptively tranquil, beautiful front. Yet they

fought to the last with reckless courage. Not just the legendary 'Glorious Glosters', whose battalion was annihilated, but also less well-remembered participants like the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, the Royal Ulster Rifles (including P.J. Kavanagh, occasionally of this parish) and the 8th Kings Royal Irish Hussars.

Here's Z Company of the Fusiliers: 'The major was hit again and again — in the head, the arm, the backside — but continued fighting. "Christ I've been hit in the arse!" a Fusilier yelled. "I've got one in the arse too," Winn roared back. "Keep cracking!" The "big man", Crooks, standing without cover on the ridge, firing a Bren from the hip, was shot through the chest. He somersaulted off the ridge and into a tree; another Fusilier killed the sniper. Crooks was patched up and resumed firing from a prone position...'

This is war porn at its finest, all the more delicious for being totally true. I don't believe there's a man alive who can read this sort of stuff without wishing he'd been there — and then come out in one piece. It's the 'come out in one piece' part, of course, which rather scuppers that fantasy. But oh to have been there and done that. You could climb Mt Everest, write a book that sold a million, shag your favourite supermodel, become prime minister, and still it wouldn't even come close to having fought and survived an action like that.

Of course, one generally gets frowned on for saying such things, because, as we know, war is hell and nothing good ever comes of it. This is what's so wonderfully refreshing about Sebastian Junger's compulsive new book *War*. Unlike me, Junger has 'seen the elephant'. His book — about war, in case the title left you wondering — is the result of five trips to perhaps the most dangerous spot in the entire Afghanistan war, the Korengal Valley, where he risked his life at a remote forward operating base with the men of Battle Company of the Rock Battalion of 173rd Airborne brigade.

His conclusion? That the high you get from intense combat is like nothing else on earth. 'Combat is such an adrenaline rush,' one soldier confides to him. 'People back home think we drink because of the bad stuff, but that's not true... we drink because we miss the good stuff.'

So far, so obvious. But where it gets really interesting is when Junger analyses what it is that men of his platoon secretly most desire. What they crave, he reckons, is not an encounter where they trash the opposition and slaughter them in droves, but rather one such as has happened at two US outposts in Afghanistan — Ranch House and Combat Outpost Kahler — where the position is overrun by a merciless enemy attacking in overwhelming force and they have to fight to the death.

And the reason for this is not that they like their fighting to be as violent as possible (though they do, of course, like that too: any opportunity to go 'cyclic' on their SAWs) — but because it affords them the chance of making the ultimate sacrifice for buddies who, they're fully aware, would do the same for them. As Ian McEwan wrote after 9/11, adapting Philip Larkin: 'What survives of us is love.' What Junger shows is that it's as true in the heat of combat as it is in peace. Men fight, not for their country or for their cause (of which they often know precious little), but for their mates.

'The defence of the tribe is an insanely compelling idea and once you've been exposed to it there's almost nothing else you'd rather do,' says Junger. Not since his first world war namesake Ernst, I think, has any writer got closer to the dark, terrible but strangely touching secret of why it is that men so love war.

Full Metal Jacket

Directed by Stanley Kubrick

I recently saw this old (1987) film late one night when I didn't feel like going to bed. It falls into two distinct halves: the first half follows the basic training of a squad of recruits to the US Marines, during the Vietnam war, the second half is set in Vietnam where the newly fledged recruits find themselves flung into battle in the Tet Offensive and men start to die. It is based on a book by Gustav Hasford called *The Short-Timers* which relates some of the author's personal experiences in the Vietnam War. Stanley Kubrick, the film director, thought that the title *Short-Timers* might give people the impression that the soldiers were only part time – something very far from the truth. He eventually stumbled on the title *Full Metal Jacket* in a gun catalogue. It refers to the cartridge of a rifle bullet.

In some respects it's a very good film, it certainly holds your attention; it gives a scary picture of basic training at the Marines' depot on Parris Island and of the horrors of jungle warfare where a sniper can pick off a half a dozen men before he is spotted and eliminated. On the other hand, I think it lacks credibility – unless basic training in the US Marine Corps is very different from basic training in the British Army.

Basic Training

The drill instructor, Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, has the task of transforming the recruits from soft civilians into desensitised, hardened killers. If what happens on Parris Island is true then no one in their right mind would volunteer for the US Marines. Hartman verbally and physically abuses the recruits continually. He hits them across the face and screams a constant stream of invective at virtually all of them. What is incredible is that Hartman is played by an actual drill instructor from the Marine Corps who simply plays the part he performs in real life. Most of his profanity and bullying come from memory and experience. To get the part he performed a demonstration in which he yelled abuse for 15 minutes without stopping or repeating himself. Kubrick estimated



that Hartman came up with 150 pages of malicious venom, most of it ad-libbed on the spot. He must be one of the most disgusting characters to have walked this earth. He certainly made me feel that if this is what the Vietnam War was fought for then it's perhaps as well the Americans lost. It is difficult to imagine a more foul-mouthed, degenerate, sick individual.

One of Hartman's favourite tactics is to select a recruit who is a bit slow or perhaps soft, torment him mercilessly and then punish the whole platoon for the unfortunate individual's supposed failures. He picks on three recruits in particular, 'Joker', 'Cowboy' and 'Gomer Pyle'. Pyle is big, grossly overweight and mentally slow. Hartman is relentless in his sneering and physical and verbal attacks on Pyle and makes his life an absolute hell. The only reason I can think of for this behaviour is that Hartman is a pure sadist. Sadly, such individuals do exist and the army provides an opportunity for some of them to exercise their particular brand of nastiness. However, Hartman gets his come-uppance on the last night at Parris Island. After the passing out parade, Pyle has a total breakdown and is found by Joker in the lavatories swinging his rifle and talking to it. Joker tries to calm him down but Hartman hears the commotion and comes in to see what is happening. Pyle is clearly out of his mind. He points the rifle at Hartman and blasts him from short range. He then puts the rifle in his mouth and blows his own brains out. It is perfectly understandable. It makes one wonder what incompetent allowed a psychopath like Hartman loose on a squad of recruits. It is obvious to anyone with a grain of intelligence that Pyle is not Marine material. And, by the same token, Hartman is not NCO material. Pyle should have been transferred on Day Two to somewhere more suited to his temperament and abilities and Hartman locked up.

Facing the Enemy

Suddenly, the whole scene changes and the recruits are now fully operational Marines in Vietnam. They haven't been in the country very long and are assured by the press (which come across as pretty servile and under instructions to put an optimistic spin on everything) that the situation is improving and the Viet Cong are virtually finished, when the 'gooks' launch the Tet Offensive and almost overrun their base camp. The Marines are then moved up country to Hue (pronounced 'wey'). Before long their commander Lt Touchdown is killed, Cowboy, now a Sergeant, takes over and he is killed by a sniper. Eventually, the squad locate where the shots are coming from and flush the sniper out, who proves to be a teenage girl. She is badly wounded and pleads to be put out of her misery. Joker shoots her reluctantly – and thus gets his first kill.

The Survivors

The last scene shows the Marines marching through the smouldering ruins of the city of Hue, glad to be alive, and singing the Mickey Mouse March which, amazingly, is very effective and moving.

There are some superb characters: Animal Mother, Crazy Earl, Papillon Soo Soo – a Da Nang hooker and Snowball a black recruit who is on the receiving end of a lot of Hartman's abuse. Most of them are based on real life characters who served with Hasford in Vietnam.

I only learned later that the battle scene in Hue was filmed at the Beckton Gas Works in East London and the scenes in the Parris Island Marine boot camp were shot at the British Army base at Bassingbourne Barracks.

This is a very disturbing film and, not having been in the US Marines, I am uncertain as to how true to life it is. It will give you a lot to think about and raises some important issues which could keep you awake at night. As films go, I would give it a 5 star rating. The only war film, in my opinion, which betters it is 'All Quiet on the Western Front' directed by Lewis Milestone in 1930.

Arthur Clarke

22nd GOLF SOCIETY

Prestbury

Once again our new season saw us back at Prestbury. On a really beautiful day the 22nd flag flew high and proud as the members went out to do battle. We had 24 members and guests playing, a new record turnout. The 25th member was allowed along for low grade admin duties only! The golf was enjoyed by all and the course was in fairly good condition, although the greens were a little rough due to an excess of bad weather throughout the winter.



22nd Golf Members at Prestbury

The day saw three players recording 33 points – a good score for the tough course. The three players were P Foulton (Guest), R Johnson and J Bigland. So the battle for the members was between Richard and John. The result was that John Bigland won

on the back 9, but Richard put up a great fight. Cries of “shame” were to be heard, but even golf secretaries are allowed to win.

Whilst walking the course our cameraman came across Mike Huntriss (off 26) putting for a birdie 4. This was on a very long and difficult par 5 hole. He got it and now we know that his handicap is a “fix”!!

The Regiment has been coming to Prestbury for over 50 years and as ever we were made very welcome by all the staff and members. The meal was excellent and overall it was a great start to the season.

Wychwood

The meeting on May 13th 2010 was at Wychwood. The day was well attended and the weather was perfect. The course was “tough” and it suited the long hitters.

The winners, on the day were:

1st R Parkinson with 37 points (a great round). Ex 1st Battalion.
2nd S Yoxhall (who was on a short visit from Spain) with 28th points.

Joint 3rd were Bill Hackney and Pete Gresty.

Many thanks to Bill Hackney for arranging the venue.

The next two meetings are:

Vicars Cross (Chester) June 24th.

Pryors Hayes (Tarvin) Sept. 10th.

Do make the effort to attend. These are proving real fun days and our players span over 65 years! Quite a bit of service in that!!!

Bill Jones

CORRESPONDENCE

From Lois Howard

John Raymond Willett is wondering whether any of his former comrades from WWII might, like him, be wondering if anyone is still left (blunt but true)? Or, maybe, you recognise one or more of the names he recalls as one of your relatives and be interested in these photographs. John enlisted 3 months prior to outbreak of World War II – 15 July 1939 1st Militia. He served in the 4th Battalion Cheshire Regiment – serial / identity number 4127518. In a mobile unit of machine gunners he was despatched to France with the British Expeditionary Force and was later involved with the retreat at Dunkirk.

He particularly recalls army comrades by the names of: Wimbush, Watson, Wadsworth (and with him as Willett - being known as the 4 Ws) and also Rathbone.

He was discharged (Release Group 25) on/around 18 March 1946 at the rank of Full Corporal. “Exemplary conduct – Honest and sober. A good mechanic and driver of ?? vehicles. A quick man who is a willing worker and reliable”.

John was the youngest son of Joseph and Mary (nee Houlbrooke) Willett and he spent his childhood at Rookery Farm, Alraham, Tarporley, Cheshire. During the latter part of his service he met his future wife (Brenda) in Norfolk and subsequently settled and remained in Norfolk. He is now 91 years of age and he and Brenda retired to Attleborough, Norfolk (having spent most of his working life in the Wymondham area). He has four children, five grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

If anyone knows of him or recognises the names or photographs of any of his serving comrades then he would love to the opportunity to reminisce. Contact details can be obtained via Lois Howard (daughter) 07920 169493.”



John Raymond Willett is back row, left

John Raymond Willett

Current address:

44 Rye Lane

Attleborough

Norfolk NR17 2JH

Date of Birth: 15.12.1918 – now 91 years of age

Lois Howard

15 The Fields

Tacolneston

Norfolk NR16 1DG

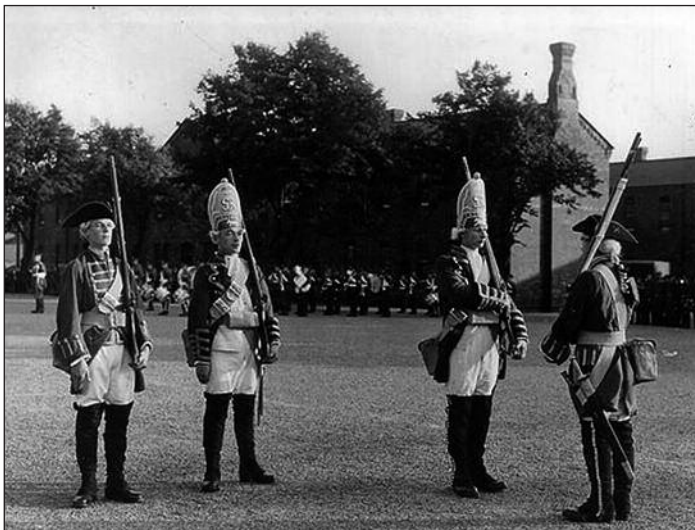
Email: loishoward@btinternet.com

(Mobile: 07920 169493)

CORRESPONDENCE

From Gordon Pownall

I came upon these photos and thought they might stir memories. In brief, the year is 1949 (about), the place Whittington Barracks, Lichfield. I was given the task of creating an item for the Chester Searchlight Tattoo to be held on the Roodee and it was a change of Guard between the Grenadiers and non-Grenadiers. I had to research the drill, the uniform and the accoutrements - I spent quite some time doing this and then had to 'dress' the men. My memories are distant but I recall making the webbing from old Fire Brigade hose and the grenadier hats were also made. The event was a great success and on return we did a daylight display on the square. Some of the soldiers might still be alive in their 70s plus! There might be some reference to it in The Oak Tree of that time if more accurate details are needed.



To the best of my knowledge there were no subsequent items like this until I did the First KAPE and I created the Olympic run with torch and the Jungle scene for the displays held throughout Cheshire in the early 60s.

With best wishes

Gordon Pownall

From Paul Hadfield

On a return visit to Malaya & Singapore I visited the Kranji Memorial on the S'pore/Johore Road to locate the graves of two comrades killed in 1958 & 1960. I eventually found them & photographed their gravestones. These photos have recently come to light & I would like to pass them on to relatives or anyone who served with them. The only means by which I can do this seems to be through & the newsletter, can you help? Their names are:- 23481218 Cpl.F.J.Readioff killed 14.June.1958 & 23526872 Cpl.L.Burtenshaw killed 8.may.1960. Their names are also remembered at the National Arboretum Staffordshire. I will send hard copy or e-mail these photos to connected persons.

My second request regards archive material. I cannot find out if the Regiment holds anything on the 1st Cheshires in Malaya. I have some three hundred 35mm negatives that saw the 1st light of day since 1960 just last week. I am about to have them digitised & put on a disc & wondered if anyone would be interested. They mainly cover the MT but there are many others of the Jungle, Singapore, Malaya, places we went on leave etc.& the usual motley crew at the time & Selarang Barracks which no longer exists in its original form. It would be good to do something with them before I snuff it & they are lost forever.

In anticipation of help from somewhere, Kindest regards,

Paul Hadfield.

Ex. 23389436 Cpl.P.Hadfield MT 1st.Cheshires Apr '57-June '60

From Paul and Lynne Fisher

We would be very grateful if you could mention that we are looking for Paul and Tracey Cox. If anybody knows of their whereabouts then we would love to hear from them. You can contact us by e-mail at: lynnefisher1105@hotmail.co.uk

From Brian "Dickie" Dale

In the last newsletter I read about Brigadier Prosser's trip from Singapore to Southampton on the SS Oxfordshire. I was also on board the ship and I remember that we did stop somewhere else. It

CORRESPONDENCE

was Gibraltar, but we were not allowed ashore for political reasons. I know we did our best to drink all the Tiger beer on board and it was like a Mediterranean cruise that lasted three weeks.

As Brigadier Prosser said, when we got home we went to Carlisle, then some of us went on the county marches. Two things I remember happening, one amusing, one not so funny. In Stockport Bill Helliwell lost his eye when we were re-enacting how Lt Prosser, as he was then, won his Military Cross in Malaya. Some of us did not have the most glamorous of roles, I for one was a camouflage tree. The amusing incident was when we were in Chester, when one of the “trees” attracted a dog, who thought it was a good place to cock his leg up. The amusing part, as I found out afterwards, was that the tree in question was me.

Brian “Dickie” Dale

Brian sent some photographs, but unfortunately they were not of sufficient quality to copy (Ed).

From The Rev Canon W Tyson

In support of Proposition No. 7 in the minutes of the CRA Annual General Meeting held on 20th February 2010. The Friends of Chester Cathedral Newsletter, dated June 2010, has a column of Cathedral events for June to November 2010:

Thursday November 11th – Mercian Regiment Service

If this is a reference to the 1st Bn parade of the Mercian regiment, it is another example of the loss (in writing) of the County affiliation.

Maybe the CRA thinks this omission is worth a note to the Cathedral authorities. At one time the Dean of Chester was the Cheshire Regiment Chaplain, and perhaps still is.

From John Gregory

I was interested in the letter from Les Stelfox in the March issue, as he may have been at the Castle about the same time as my father, Bert Gregory.

Dad joined in 1930 and was in Aldershot before moving to Chester, I have enclosed a group photo of a 1931/2 intake. He was posted to the 2nd Battalion in Malta, where I was born in the military hospital in Imtarfa (my birth certificate bears the signature of Lt Col A E Percival, CO of the 2nd Battalion in Malta). Dad later served in Egypt and Palestine before going to France with the BEF.

I have a number of my father’s photographs of some personnel from those days, among them a couple of Alex Sheriff, an all round athlete going by the number of trophies he has in one photo.

Unfortunately not all the photos have names attached, but those that have are the following:

Alex Sherriff (cross country champion), Cpl Lawson (Fife Major), Billy Myers, Sgt Harris, Sid Morris, John Bott, Jack Riley, plus a rather tattered group photo by the sphinx/pyramids circa 1936.

I would be interested to know if Mr Stelfox recognises any of them, or if any of the above names mean anything to anyone. They are welcome to the (rather worn) photos.

Regards

John Gregory (Ex Cpl Signals Pl, 1st Bn Suez 1951-54)

Editor’s Note: Unfortunately the photograph was not of sufficient quality in order to publish. I did however show the photograph to Les Stelfox and although he recognises the photo and some of the faces, he was not able to put names to any of them.

IT JUST KEEPS HAPPENING! by John Fairbanks

On several occasions recently, I have been asked where do I get the ideas for the articles and anecdotes which I have been fortunate enough, over the years, to have had published. The answer is very simple. I was once given a piece of advice, by a writer, to the effect that budding authors should only write of things that they know about. Since then everything I have produced concerns my experiences along life’s pathway, and my future offerings will come from the same source. Some examples of the incidents or events that litter my past prove my point which is that things happen to me!

For instance, in 1950, shortly after my 17th birthday, I was awarded an apprenticeship by the local blacksmith. I was taught the basics of forge work by the head of the firm. He was 84 years old, with muscles that Schwarzenegger would have killed for, and possessed of a wicked sense of humour. Under his tuition I soon learnt never to pick up metal with my bare hands and other painful lessons. The work that really fascinated me was the shoeing of horses and after a long impatient period of study it was finally decided that I should shoe my first horse. The animal chosen for this great event was a gigantic but gentle shire horse named Punchy. Confidently I arranged all the tools and, positioning myself to the rear of the horse in time honoured fashion, picked up and straddled the enormous hind leg. What followed next remains somewhat blurred but it involved my flying through the air and thudding with some force into the smithy wall which was some yards away. When I had recovered

my senses and the blacksmith had stopped laughing he apologised for not reminding me that Punchy did not take kindly to people standing behind him.

Another example of the way my life has been kept full of incident occurred a couple of years later in Egypt when the Battalion was taking its turn in guarding the vast and sprawling Abu Sultan ordnance depot. During the stay in this desert location, a few miles from the Suez Canal, the training of the NCO’s cadre, of which I was a member, continued unabated. One evening we were driven some miles into the desert to take part in a night compass march. It was stressed that the success or failure of the exercise depended entirely on our ability to locate and take bearings on the Pole Star. We got hopelessly lost. Because the bright shining star we dutifully and determinedly followed turned out to be the masthead light on a ship heading down the canal.

The final example, for now, of a truly unusual and rare incident, took place alongside the beautiful Achensee in the Tirol. I was a resident rep for Wallace Arnold, and was based in the 5 star Hotel Rieser. Each week my firm sent me a coach filled with eager, well heeled tourists. The coach always arrived in time for lunch and having accommodated the incoming guests I had then to supervise the loading of the homeward bound and now penniless passengers. (Practically all their spending money had found its way into my firm’s coffers).

On this particular day the incoming coach was an hour late in arriving. When eventually it did show up, and we had off-

IT JUST KEEPS HAPPENING! by John Fairbanks (continued)

loaded the passengers and luggage, the drivers reported having had some difficulty in negotiating the steep and high Arlberg Pass due to a distinct lack of horsepower. As we stood discussing the problem, there was the screeching sound of rending metal as the coach engine fell from its housing onto the tarmac. As you can imagine, this incident caused me one or two problems. When I telexed Wallace Arnold Headquarters in Leeds to report my dilemma, and to ask for advice on where to get another coach, my message was answered by the suggestion that I should lay off

the Schnapps!! The hotelier was not too pleased either to have bits of coach littering the forecourt of his de-luxe hotel and demanded the instant removal of the debris. Suffice to say that I managed to sort everything out to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Finally I must inform anybody who may still be interested in the source of my material that there's plenty more where this lot came from!!

John Fairbanks

IN-PENSIONER JOHN DEAN

JOHN FREDERICK DEAN 1918 - 2010

The following is an abridged version of the tribute given at his funeral, by Colonel Archie Mackenzie, Captain of Invalids, Royal Hospital, Chelsea

Born in Huyton on 1 July 1918 enlisted at Liverpool into the Cheshire Regiment on 24 July 1937 and after basic training he joined the 2nd Battalion at Aldershot. He volunteered to join the 1st Battalion in Khartoum in November 1938. Shortly after he arrived he moved to Atbara and became the Company Commander's driver. In 1940 they moved to Mersa Matruh in the western desert via Suez and Cairo. He was soon sent back to GHQ and employed as messenger.

He rejoined the 2nd Battalion during 1942 and moved to El Gaza near Tobruk. It was the 2nd Battalion that was part of the Garrison of the Gazala Line which was successfully defended till the German armour attacked it from the rear, but by skilful and determined action, most of the troops fought their way back to the Alamein Line. John however was not quite so fortunate; while on patrol his unit was cut-off and they were surrounded by German forces and taken prisoner in the June 1942.

He was taken to a German POW transit camp in Libya for several months where conditions were atrocious and the craving for water was unbearable. However, in due course he was moved to hospital in Tripoli thence to Casseria in Italy on a hospital ship via Naples. He always said that he was well looked after by Italian nurses in a Parma hospital. He was then discharged from hospital and sent to a Prisoner of War Camp PG 73, situated at Carpi, near Modena in Italy and thence to Stalag XIA in Germany in September 1944 travelling for 5-6 days in cattle trucks. I think John found his time in a PoW camp as incredibly boring, no work routine and few if any organized activities. For the young men there was never enough to eat and they were always incredibly hungry.

Towards the end of the war they were marched eastwards but American forces caught up with them in April 1945. They were trucked to Hildesheim and then flown to England in Dakotas to a camp near Amersham. He was later moved to Quorn and was eventually discharged 10 March 1946.

Following his Army service he took gardening jobs leading to gardener/groundsman at a Girl's school in Aylesbury from 1959 to 1973 then employed by Reader's Digest until his retirement in 1980.

John joined the Royal Hospital on 10th May 1999 after his 4 day preparatory visit, obviously liked what he saw and stayed with us for the next 10 years and 8 months. The decision to come to Chelsea was entirely his own. John recalled that he was made

aware of the RHC's existence through the Army Pay Office and that he had discussed the possibility that he might seek entry with his family. At the suggestion of his ex-Regimental friends he was further persuaded to investigate admission to the Royal Hospital Chelsea and with little reference to his family he applied to join the Royal Hospital and came to us in May 1999 at the age of 80. However, I understand it had the full support and encouragement of his daughter Liz and Son in Law John.

At his initial interview he was described as "Intelligent, charming and amusing, smart appearance with an excellent ability for recall". What perceptive comments – and how true they proved to be.

Chelsea seemed to give John a new lease of life; on entry he enjoyed good health and he quickly fitted into his new environment and was respected for his conscientiousness, helpfulness and simple ability to get things done with the minimum of fuss and maximum efficiency.

He was much loved and liked by the staff here who could rely and depend upon him totally. This respect and warmth was mirrored in the Long Wards of the Royal Hospital where he was popular with his fellow In Pensioners and ward staff alike.

John was one of those very quietly spoken gentlemen, blessed with a quiet sense of humour who made friends easily, but selectively, and was respected for his ability to cope so ably for himself. Whilst most certainly not a loner, he did towards the end very much keep himself to himself. We were all very conscious how close John was to his family and particularly to his grand-daughter by their frequent visits to him.

This charming man had a delightfully straight-forward and practical approach to everything he did; an ability to get on with, and to get the best out of, all sorts and manners of people, an abiding loyalty to his friends, a great love of family and a particular pride and devotion to the Cheshire Regiment, many of whose members are here today to pay their respects. He was also a quiet, reserved man always very thoughtful and very aware. He thoroughly enjoyed life as a Chelsea Pensioner. He enjoyed the respect and recognition shown to him and his uniform both inside and outside the Hospital, and rightly so John's humility touched everyone and he would simply not let his deteriorating mobility and health become an excuse. John became an Infirmary Resident in our Infirmary and remained with us until his death here in this Infirmary on 6 March 2010 aged 91.

I know that I am joined by his fellow In-Pensioners, together with the staff and nurses in the Infirmary, when I offer my deepest condolences to the family. He will be remembered as a kind, considerate and generous father and grandfather and friend, and he will be remembered, with great respect, as a Chelsea Pensioner and a soldier.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010

17 Jul	Suez Reunion Ellesmere Port
24 Jul	Berlin/NI Reunion Chester
2 Aug	St Julien Service Stockport
10 Sep	Regimental Golf Day Pryor's Hayes
11 Sep	Officers Association Dinner, Chester
12 Sep	Mons Reunion and Lunch, Chester
30 Oct	East Cheshire Reunion Stockport
5 Dec	Droppin Well Memorial Service, Ballykelly

REUNIONS AND EVENTS

Berlin/Northern Ireland Reunion

The Fourteenth BNI Veterans Reunion will be held at the Regimental Club at the castle, Chester on Saturday 24th July 2010, starting at 1830 hours. It is open to all members of the CRA.

The cost of tickets will be £8, which includes a buffet, disco and raffle (including a Dutch raffle) Numbers are limited to 80 only, on a first come, first served basis.

Tickets can be obtained from the address below, or through your branch. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope for the return of the tickets and receipt.

Hon Treasurer BNIR
Mr T Finlay BEM
6 Websters Lane
Great Sutton
Ellesmere Port
CH66 2HL

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS

The following are extracts from annual confidential reports, although none could possibly be attributed to anybody from our regiment. There again

I am convinced that this man would be out of his depth in a car park puddle.

The only thing that this man has achieved all on his own is his dandruff

This man is a phoney; even the wool he tries to pull over your eyes will be 50% polyester.

If ignorance is bliss, then this man is the world's happiest person.

There is a lot less to this officer than meets the eye.

He is the sort of person who follows you into a revolving door, and comes out first.

This officer should go far – and the sooner he starts the better.

I could not warm to this officer, even if we were cremated together.

His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of curiosity.

Even though he comes from a long line of fellow Hussars, I would not breed from this officer.

In evolutionary terms, this man is on the return trip.

This man is about as useful as half a pair of scissors.

This man doesn't only drink, he also drinks between drinks.

This man has set very low standards and then consistently failed to achieve them.

Should this man ever pick up a wooden mallet, two things of equal intelligence would be in close proximity.

CLUB NEWS

The Club can be used for Branch Events and Private Parties by arrangement. A concessionary hire rate for CRA members private use applies, Branches do not pay to use the Club.

Revised normal opening times are:

Monday	1200-1400
Wednesday	1200-1400
Friday	1200-1400 1900-2330
Saturday	- by arrangement
Sunday	1200-1400

NEW FOR 2010 RACE DAYS!

**The Club will
be open
for pre-race
drinks and
post-race
supper for
PRE-BOOKED
PARTIES.**

**For all Club
enquiries,
contact Alan
Jones on:
07906 753699**



22 CLUB WINNERS

March

£100 C Lane / £50 WG Price / £25 PL Evans

April

£100 RP Porter / £50 DJ Waring / £25 RW Abley

May

£100 AA Joseph / £50 C Lane / £25 DR Cornes

June

£100 AA Joseph / £50 RI Gaskell / £25 PJ Halligan

There is no mistake – Alan Joseph has won two months on the trot.

A TRIBUTE TO HARVEY HOLMES

By his mother, Beverley

We have just lost one of the most cherished people in my life. I can hardly find the words to convey, in just a few short sentences, how difficult it is going to be to continue anything like normality in the future.

No more surprise telephone calls to cheer me up, no more of Harvey's illuminating smile, no more of his infectious laughter.

His generosity was insurmountable. His caring nature and his fierce loyalty to his family, friends and comrades are just some of the many things that we will miss about Harvey.

Harvey enjoyed so many things. He had a love of narrow boating, and "the cut", and hoped that by the end of his 22 years in the Army he might have persuaded Claire to join him running a pair of hotel boats. Quite where he would accommodate his model railway, tanks and aircraft on board was something that he hadn't quite worked out yet.

Talking to Harvey about any of his interests was a risky occupation, because he had so much to tell you – such conversations were best not started unless you had a few hours to spare.

Harvey loved and cared deeply for "our Claire", and it is no small feat that having met when they were 15, and in spite of all the strains that prolonged and frequent separation brought when Harvey was on operations, or on courses, they were still together, and still devoted to each other, over six years later.

He also had a very special bond with his sister, Elizabeth. They would often fight like cat and dog, but the moment anybody else threatened or insulted one of them, the other would leap to their aid, with all the fierceness of a tiger protecting its cubs. Together, Harvey, Elizabeth and I were "The Tripod". We could stand up to anybody and anything. Continuing as a mere "bipod" is going to be a tough one for both of us: our lives will not be the same again.

LAST POST

Derek Bache

Died 7 Jun 2010 aged 76 served R Sigs, SAF, RAMC TA & Cheshire Regt ACT.

Mick Bird

Died 20 May 2010 aged 72 Ex 1 Bn , Malaya, Secretary CRA Walsall

Lcpl Andrew Breeze

1st Bn KIA 12 Jun 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

Major Ronnie Campbell

Died 12 Jun 2010 aged 61 Ex QM 3 Bn

LCpl Alan Cochran

1st Bn KIA 4 Jun 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

Lady Patricia Crookenden

Died 4 Jun 2010 widow of Lt Gen Sir Napier Crookenden KCB DSO OBE

John Dean

Died 6 Mar 2010 aged 91 served 1937 – 46, Pow 1942-45

F Eaton-Lees

Died July 2009

Ruth Ferns

Died 20 Mar 2010 widow of Col Peter Ferns TD

Robin Foss

Died 14 Mar 2010

Pte Douglas Halliday

1st Bn died 23 June 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

Jean Helliwell

Died 22 May 2010 aged 81 wife of WO1 Bill Helliwell

Cpl Harvey Holmes

1st Bn KIA 2 May 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

CSgt Martyn Horton

1st Bn died 23 June 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

Colin Ingham

Died 29 Apr 2010 aged 63 Ex Percussionist in the Band, previously served with Sherwood Foresters

Pte Alex Isaac

1st Bn died 23 June 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

Eric Longson

Died 5 Jun 2010 aged 74 Ex 1 & 7 Bn and 1 Mercian Vols

Charlie MacDonald

Died 6 Jun 2010 aged 78 served C Coy 1 Bn 55 – 56

Kenneth Matson

Died 2 Jun 2010 aged 83 Ex 2Bn Egypt, Palestine & Tripoli

Pte Jonathan Monk (PWRR attached 1st Bn)

KIA 9 June 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

Mia Oulton

Wife of Major Phil Oulton

Irene Owens

Died 23rd February 2010. Wife of Ronnie Owens (Asst Pioneer 1968-73)

LCpl David Ramsden (PWO attached 1st Bn)

Died 23 June 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

Major James Siddall

Died 15 Apr 2010 aged 90, Ex 7th Bn

Tommy Sparks

Died 11 Apr 2010 Ex 1st Bn served Malaya and Suez

Cpl Terry Webster

1st Bn KIA 4 Jun 2010 whilst serving on Op Herrick 12

John Wilkes

Died 17 May 2010 Ex Secretary CRA Wolverhampton

E V Young BEM

Ex WO2. 1st Bn 1964? to 1986, Died 21 Jun 10.