



THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 2 ISSUE 4

MARCH 2010

EDITORIAL

I do hope that by the time this newsletter reaches your letterbox, we will have cast off the winter and that we will be enjoying at least the green shoots of a British springtime.

I am very grateful for all submissions to this newsletter. I am particularly pleased to produce Peter Hennerley's article on the unveiling of a blue plaque in Chapel Street, the bravest little street in England. Peter did a fantastic job of organising this event, and it was so unfortunate that it clashed with the Mons Reunion, amongst other events.

I received a number of letters and photographs regarding Malta and I am sorry that I was unable to publish them all. It was good to receive a Christmas Supplement to the newsletter from the 1st Battalion, although I know that not everyone will have received this. I am also grateful that they have found time in their very busy schedule to update us all again in this newsletter. We wish them well as they depart for active service.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that as editor, I take responsibility for what is included, and what is not included in this newsletter. It is not possible to please everyone, but if there are complaints regarding what is published, or omitted, then do feel free to contact me, rather than RHQ.

What I do not have any control over is the newsletter's distribution. Any requests or amendments regarding the distribution of the newsletter should be directed to The Castle, Chester.

Items for the July issue should reach me by 21st June 2010. Please send your contributions to me at: The School House, Dartmouth Road, London SE26 4RD. My telephone number is: 020 8291 9225. E-mail: gszwejkows@aol.com.

George Szwejkowski

CONTENTS

Editorial	1
CRAMC Chairman's Report	1
Minutes of the CRAMC Meeting	2-3
Minutes of the CRA AGM	3-4
Update from 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment ..	4-5
Word from the Branches	6-10
View from the Castle	11
Malta Experience by <i>Peter Gresty</i>	11
Bravest Little Street in England by <i>Peter Hennerley</i> ..	12
Operation Anthropoid by <i>George Szwejkowski</i> ..	12-13
Singapore to Southampton by <i>Brig. Keith Prosser</i> ..	14
Missing the Obvious by <i>Arthur Clarke</i>	14-15
John Fairbanks Writes	16-17
Where Are They Now? / M62 Coach Bomb / Poem ..	17
Post Bag	18-19
Calendar of Events / Club News / Last Post	20

CRAMC CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This will be a fairly brief column due to a lengthy chairman's report having been given at the AGM and is included elsewhere in this newsletter. Is it really four months since I submitted a column for the last newsletter? I suppose it must be although it has been a busy period for the CRA with a full round of Christmas and New Year parties, draws, lunches and raffles held around the branches. Over the Christmas period I visited our 2 In Pensioners at The Royal Hospital Chelsea, Lawrence Stubbs and John Dean, and both asked me to pass on their best wishes to all members of the association.

The association club is holding its head above water in these uncertain times and thanks must go to Eddie Pickering, our club manager, and Alan "Iggy" Jones, our club steward, for the hard work they put into the job. Please give the club your support at either a branch or personal level and consider booking it for a lunch, a dinner or a function if it is within travelling distance for you.

The Central Branch has not taken off the way I had hoped for and I would ask for all those members of the CRA who do not attend branches, for whatever reason, to join this virtual branch and support the objectives of the CRA. Information can be obtained by sending an e mail to cracentral@hotmail.com where an application form and gift aid form can be requested. I fully realise that many younger members cannot attend a branch meeting on a monthly basis and that is not what I am asking, rather that people offer their support through joining the virtual branch.

It is interesting that face book is generating a large attendance at funerals and CRA events etc. and I propose to make the maximum use of this outlet as well as the newly launched Chester Military Museum website and the CRA Newsletter.

Branch chairmen, and secretaries, are reminded that they should by now have sent annual returns to Eddie Pickering at RHQ Chester including accounts and membership lists and also copies of the minutes from their branch AGMs.

Peter Gresty

The link for the CRA webpage is:

<http://www.army.mod.uk/infantry/regiments/8950.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.

MINUTES OF THE CRAMC MEETING

MINUTES OF THE CRAMC MEETING HELD ON 14th NOVEMBER 2009 AT RHQ CHESTER

Present: Mr P J Gresty (Chairman), Maj J S Holden TD, Mr J A Jennings, Mr A Kennedy, Mr D J Waring, Maj T E Pickering MBE (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Mr J Cooney, Capt A W Hughes, Mr K M Parsonage and Mr A Rowe

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. The Secretary stated that the audited accounts had not yet been received from McLintocks.

There were no further matters arising. Mr Waring proposed and Mr Kennedy seconded that proposal that the minutes as read be passed as a true record. Carried.

2. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending. He commented on the Mons Reunion and Lunch, and how the day had passed off well. He felt that the only disappointing part of the day was the decrease in numbers actually marching. He thanked the Secretary for the efforts of the RHQ team to make it a success.

He said it was a sad occasion to see the Standard of the Wolverhampton Branch being handed over for safe keeping, at the Mons Reunion following their very painful decision to call it a day and wind up the branch, the individuals are still members of the CRA and tell me they will still attend events and reunions under their own steam. He mentioned some of the activities of Branches over the summer:

- Stockport branch a trip to Belgium for St Julien, and the successful commemorative Service and lunch on their return.
- Tranmere branch have just returned from their annual trip to Belgium for Armistice Day and by all reports had a very good time.
- Ellesmere Port branch held their Remembrance services in the Boat Museum and at the Cheshire Copse in Whitby Park.
- The East Cheshire Reunion at the end of October attracted around 190 people; it was disappointing that the Corps of Drums were forced to cancel at the last minute.
- The Golf Society normal programme of matches went ahead with a couple of extra matches added for good measure.
- Remembrance parades across the UK and in the county, the most high profile of course being Southern Branch who featured on BBC yet again with Oak Leaves firmly in place and receiving good press as part of it. He mentioned the sale of 2010 Diaries and Year Planners.

The 1st Battalion have returned from Kenya and have now settled down into their Pre-Deployment training which will take them through to March next year for an April deployment. A Company has been detached from the 1st Bn to work with the 1 Scots Guards Battle Group.

The Newsletter has been despatched and you will be hitting doormats very soon. He thanked those who turn up at RHQ to envelope up and prepare for posting some 2000 issues every 4 months. He reinforced the point that with reducing the number of issues we all need to think further ahead and wondered if we have the issue dates correct or should they be changed. He passed on the message of the CRA President, Colonel John Donnelly OBE, that he is immensely proud of the way that the CRA is conducting itself and he is pleased with the way we support our events.

3. SECRETARY'S REPORT

a. **Financial Report:** The Secretary handed out a resume of income and expenditure to date and stated that we had £96,638.59 with a further £5119 to claim from the MRA at present giving a total of £101,757.59. The Account has been prepared for audit in accordance with the wishes of CRAMC to amend the FY to 1 Nov-31 Oct annually.

b. **The Club:** The Club account has been prepared for audit as above. Figures are encouraging; there was surplus of income of £1816.03 during the period. A short discussion followed about the terms of the CRA insurance. It was agreed that Branches should be instructed to inform the Secretary of any planned events which need insurance cover. The Chairman pointed out that much of the support for the Club seemed to come from Stockport and Chester branches and thanked them. The Secretary added that Alan Jones the Steward worked hard at making the Club a success and was supported in this by members of his family.

4. BUDGETS

It was agreed that expenditure is within the budget set.

5. FUTURE EVENTS

a. **Droppin' Well Memorial,** 6th December 09. It was proposed by Maj Holden and seconded by Mr Kennedy that the sum of £300 be granted to Limavady Branch to assist with costs involved. Carried. Maj Holden also proposed and Mr Jennings seconded the proposal that £100 be granted to defray the Association Standard Bearers costs. Carried.

b. **AGM 2010** – 20th February in Chester. The Chairman again asked the committee to think about nominations for the President's Award and the General Martin Award. The Secretary outlined the arrangements for the Meeanee Supper which would once again be a hot buffet in the Club.

c. **Serjeants' Club AGM.** This planned for the weekend 26th – 28th Feb. It was pointed out that this coincides with some Branch Meeanee events; the Chairman stated that he thought this was regrettable, but for the 1st Bn, it was the only option available.

d. Other events were outlined but not discussed:
Race Day
Suez Reunion
Malaya Reunion

MINUTES OF THE CRAMC MEETING (continued)

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a. The Secretary spoke about 1 MERCIAN's forthcoming OP HERRICK tour and the support role of RHQ Chester, as Assistant Regimental Secretary, he will be working in close liaison with the Unit Welfare Officer throughout the deployment. He requested that the Regimental Association did not organise any initiatives without informing RHQ, to ensure that initiatives were appropriate and required.

b. The subject of financial support for the Cheshire Military Museum was discussed. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the CRA to support the Museum from time to time. Mr Waring proposed and Mr Jennings seconded the proposal that the sum of £1000 be donated to the Museum to assist with running costs. Carried.

c. Mr Kennedy commended 1 MERCIAN for sending detachments to participate in County Remembrance Day ceremonies.

d. Major Holden spoke about funding for reunions; he felt that the three main events were adequately catered for, but pointed out that there were at least three other regular events that may merit funding: Suez Reunion, Malaya Reunion and the Ballykelly Memorial weekend. The

committee agreed that this was worth further discussion and suggested that if the organisers were to request a grant, each case would be considered on merit. (See minute 5a.)

e. The subject of The Elizabeth Cross was discussed. The Secretary restated the eligibility criteria and said that RHQ had lost touch with all but one eligible family and that details of current whereabouts would be appreciated. To date, no Crosses had been presented to families of Cheshire Regiment soldiers.

f. The Chairman spoke about the Mercian Regiment Association (MRA). The Association Standard is being designed, at the moment only one will be produced because there is no intention to replace the antecedent Regimental Associations and their standards. He has been appointed as Chairman of the MRA, and there will be a Committee formed by representatives of the existing Regimental Associations. Major Holden and Mr Kennedy agreed to serve on the MRA Committee.

7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

6th February 2010 at 1030hrs. This meeting will be discussing the agenda and other items pertaining to the AGM, there will be no Secretaries' Meeting held.

MINUTES OF THE CRA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2010 ST MARY'S CENTRE CHESTER

63 Members attended.

1. OPENING REMARKS

The meeting was opened by the President of the Regimental Association, Brigadier J P S Donnelly OBE who expressed his delight at being President. He welcomed everybody and spoke briefly about the activities of the Mercian Regiment. He reminded everyone that 1st Bn The Mercian Regiment (CHESHIRE) was about to deploy to Afghanistan and faced a difficult year ahead. As Chairman of the Cheshire Military Museum, he thanked the Regimental Association for their donation towards the Museum's work, reminding everyone that the Museum showcased the Regiment's heritage and that he felt it deserved support. He spoke about attracting younger members of the Association into CRA activities in order that the CRA could carry on into the future and spoke about his wish to make the Mons reunion a more special occasion. He then invited the Chairman, Peter Gresty to chair the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Brigadier M D K Dauncey DSO, Brigadier W K L Prosser CBE MC, Brigadier A J MacG Percival OBE, Brigadier A R D Sharpe OBE, Lt Col A N Hadfield, J R H Knott MBE, Mr Alan Rowe, Mr Michael Trevor-Barnston, Major P H Oulton, Major R C Connor, Mr G Szejewski.

A roll-call of Branches was taken, there were representatives from Birkenhead, Chester, Ellesmere Port, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Sandbach, Southern Region, South Wirral, Stockport, Tranmere and Walsall.

3. MINUTES OF THE 2009 AGM

It was proposed by Mr Terry Finlay BEM and seconded by Mr Ken Riley that the minutes of the 2009 AGM be accepted as a true and accurate record. Carried.

4. THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman started by thanking everyone for their attendance at the AGM. He thanked WO2 Matt Henry from the 1st Battalion who has come to brief us after the meeting on the 1st Battalion's deployment to Afghanistan. He also congratulated the President on his recent promotion to Brigadier. Speaking about the CRA year, he felt that it had been busy and successful; in addition to the major events, there were numerous Branch functions, outings and events organized locally. All of these and more besides have been recorded in the Newsletter which George Szejewski has now edited for 12 months. He thanked George for the effort he puts into producing an interesting and varied read with something for everybody. He also thanked the contributors and stressed that the Newsletter can only be successful as long as people provide articles and news.

He mentioned that the new Cheshire Military Museum website (www.cheshiremilitarymuseum.co.uk) advertises us and our events and "Facebook" has had a lot to do with increased attendance at some of our events particularly by younger members.

continued on page 4...

MINUTES OF THE CRA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (continued)

The Mercian Regiment will shortly be reviewing the legacy funding we receive, the Chairman has made very strong representations to retain it. The original legacy funding was set at £15k but had to be reduced to £10k shortly after our last AGM when investment income collapsed. He considers that this reduction has been well managed and the CRA continues to financially support everything that was supported before amalgamation such as Meeanee, Mons, East Cheshire, Over 90's hampers etc. and now provide financial support to other long running CRA events such as Malaya Reunion, Suez Reunion and the Droppin' Well Memorial.

He expressed thanks to the Management Committee, (CRAMC) for the work they do behind the scenes in ensuring the CRA carries on as usual. He mentioned that Alan Rowe has resigned from CRAMC for health reasons; Alan has been a stalwart member of the CRA and CRAMC for a very long time. Major Jim Salisbury has agreed to become a Co-opted member and will be joining us at the next meeting. He thanked the Secretary for his work and mentioned the efforts made by Alan "Iggy" Jones, the Club Steward who seems to work tirelessly to provide the very best service. He said that the Club will only survive if it is supported. The Central Branch has not had a good start, the membership stands at about 12 so far.

He has written to the Commanding Officer of The 1st Bn giving the best wishes of all members of the CRA for their forthcoming tour of Afghanistan and also thanking him for kindly inviting association members to attend the families day in Catterick on Thursday at which the Earl of Chester was present.

5. THE SECRETARY'S FINANCIAL REPORT

The Secretary presented the final accounts for the year ending 31st March 2009. He pointed out that the account is now stable after the funds had been transferred to the control of the Mercian Regiment. He also stated that it has been decided to amend the Financial Year to 1st November-31st October in order that a more up to date set of accounts can be presented to the AGM. He presented an unaudited Balance Sheet for the 7 months ended 31st October 2009 (Annex A). Mr Ken Thiis proposed and Mr Dennis Rochell seconded the proposal that the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2009 be adopted. Carried.

6. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER OF THE ACCOUNTS

It was proposed by Major John Holden TD and seconded by

Mr Roy Porter that McClintock & Partners be appointed as Independent Examiner of the Accounts. Carried.

7. PROPOSITIONS

a. Proposal by Lt Col D L H Owen that the full title of the 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment should include reference to its origin and inheritance i.e. The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment. This proposal was seconded by Maj P H Oulton, who is currently in hospital recovering from a major operation. It was agreed to discuss the proposal even though it was not within the remit of the CRA and such decisions were taken by the Army Board. Following a lively discussion, the President was requested to make representation to the Regimental Council of The Mercian Regiment that the titles of all of the Battalions of the Mercian Regiment should follow the model adopted by the Royal Regiment of Scotland. Several members deplored the fact that the media often referred to "1 Mercian," "2 Mercian" without mentioning the County affiliations, this was noted and the Secretary agreed to speak to the Brigade PIO.

b. Mr Alan Kennedy proposed and Mr Geoff Hunt seconded the proposal that former Colonels of The Regiment be appointed as Honorary Vice Presidents of The Cheshire Regiment Association and that this honour is extended to include Presidents of The Cheshire Regiment Association on completion of their tenure. Carried.

8. THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD AND THE GENERAL PETER MARTIN AWARDS

There were no nominations for The President's Award.

The General Peter Martin Award was made to Mr Brian Billington of Nantwich and District Branch, Mr Alan Kennedy of Stockport Branch and Mr Les Sutton of Walsall Branch in recognition of their outstanding service to their branches.

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place in Chester on Saturday 19th February 2011 at 1830hrs.

WO2 Matt Henry then addressed the meeting on the subject of 1st Battalion's preparations for the forthcoming deployment to OP HERRICK in Afghanistan.



Infantry weapon systems with Artillery and Aviation support. The round robin of four day range packages tested the Coys in their ability to operate in a combined environment in some fairly extreme weather conditions, perhaps not that we are due to face in Afghanistan but a test of the soldiers' metal none the less.

Having completed their own CALFEX the coys provided support to the Royal Dragoon Guards (RDG) in their mounted

UPDATE FROM 1st BATTALION THE MERCIAN REGIMENT (CHESHIRE)

version being run at Castlemartin Ranges in Wales. It was an excellent opportunity for those involved in supporting the RDG to work with the Squadron that is due to deploy with the 1st MERCIAN Battle Group on Op HERRICK 12 in March 10. Equally it proved to be good practice for operating out the back of MASTIFF and VIKING armoured vehicles that will be providing protective mobility to 1st MERCIAN throughout the upcoming tour.

The following week 4th Mechanised Brigade (4X) took the majority of 1st MERCIAN'S Headquarters principle planning team (PPT) to act as 'players' for the Bde Combined Arms Tactical Trainer (CATT) at Warminster. CATT is an enormous network of computer systems that generate simulated scenarios that Bde had to plan and conduct missions against. Concurrently the Coys used this week to recover from the CALFEX and conduct battle prep for the impending Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRX).

The MRX is the culminating exercise of the whole MST package. The Battle Group complete with attached arms and services totalling some 550 personnel deployed to Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA) that had been orchestrated to represent the North of HELMAND Province in Afghanistan. The QM's department with work parties from the Coys had worked tirelessly the previous week to ensure that the Forward Operating Base (FOB) and Patrol Base (PB) were ready to accept the arrival of 1st MERCIAN en-masse.

FOB EDINBURGH (Avon Ammo Compound) and PB MINDEN (Beaches Farm) were our homes for the week and provided us with platforms from which to operate amongst the local nationals (LNs) to gain their support, isolate the insurgents (INS), develop indigenous security forces and promote legitimate governance. Through a series of patrols and successful LN meetings (Shuras) the Battle Group was able to separate the Insurgents from the broad mass of the people.



Intelligence gathered throughout the week that indicated there was a significant Improvised Explosive Device (IED) factory in a nearby settlement lead to the final mission to detain key IED facilitators and remove the IED production capability. The mission was an excellent high on which to finish the exercise as the STRIKE force deployed onto the ground in two waves of seven helicopters including SEA KING, MERLIN and CHINOOK protected by two APACHE. The Battle Group performed admirably and received some very positive feedback in the after action review.

In addition to the exercise serials the Battle Group also played host to several other events, the re-launch of the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF) and a Royal Visit from the Earl of Chester.



With the final serial of MST complete the Battalion was left to sweep up individual training and paperwork, the final crossing of t's and dotting of i's in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan. This lull in battle and coincidental timing allowed the Battalion to down tools of the 17th February and celebrate Meeanee Day. A superb day of inter-company competitions was organised by OC A Coy. Via the contest of cross country, combat agility, tug-or-war, volleyball and football Sp Coy shone through to take the inter-company shield.

The following day a very impressive families' day inclusive of equipment, welfare and entertainment, ostensibly to bring the Battalion's extended family together to inform everyone of the finer details of deployment was organised by OC HQ Coy. The event was further promoted by an unprecedented second visit in two weeks by HRH the Earl of Chester who spent a not inconsiderable amount of time meeting and speaking to soldiers and their families. He also took time out to present the respective sports trophies to the competition winners and of particular note awarded WO1 Daz Williams with his Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) for exemplary service citing his exceptional leadership, actions on operations and charitable work during a career spanning some 24 years.

Whilst the Battalion remains uncertain about its final role on Op HERRICK 12 we look forward to deployment and feel completely prepared and well served by the excellent training and equipment that has brought us up to the required standard for operations. We will stand firm and strike hard whilst on tour regardless of circumstance and will at all times remain ever glorious.

The Battalion's soldiers and officers now look forward to some well deserved pre-tour leave with their families.



BIRKENHEAD BRANCH

The only event on the calendar for October was the East Cheshire Reunion, as always a most enjoyable evening with many old friends present.

November was a busy month, firstly with branch members assisting 1 Mercian ACF with their Poppy Appeal collection day, and on Sunday the Remembrance Parade and service at Port Sunlight, with many attending. The parade was led by the Port Sunlight Lyceum Band and at the war memorial the minister invited the 1 Mercian ACF detachment to take positions around the memorial itself. Following the service at Christchurch Port Sunlight, and the march back to the Royal British Legion, members along with the ACF and Port Sunlight Village Trust held a short service at the Vision Museum, where the silver statuette to the 13th Service Battalion is displayed.

Later in the month two events took place, firstly some members joined with the RASC/RCT Association for a weekend away in Llandudno, and secondly a party of 30 members from Birkenhead and Ellesmere Port, along with 1 Mercian ACF, made a coach trip to Birmingham to see the international military tattoo.

December saw the start of the festive season with members attending functions in New Ferry, Ellesmere Port and Hoylake with the RCT Association.

The first item in 2010 was a telephone call from Alberta, Canada, from one Don Leithwaite, ex 1st Battalion, MT Platoon in Egypt. Don, who had managed to join us for the Suez Reunion whilst in the UK, wished to pass his best wishes for 2010 to the CRA. Don also mentioned that on Remembrance Day in Canada, he had arranged to lay a wreath on behalf of the Regiment, and by chance met a member of our affiliated regiment, The Cape Breton Highlanders, so they joined forces and laid wreaths together.

The first week in January should have seen the branch AGM taking place, but the adverse weather arrived so the meeting had to be postponed until February, when all current branch officials were re-elected for a further period of duty. We now look forward to the Association AGM and Meeanee Supper, and meeting old comrades.

Graham Ball

CHESTER BRANCH

The last major function of 2009 was the Christmas Draw. The festivities began with members being offered a glass or two of mulled wine. A short carol service, with live music played by the Eddie Pickering Trio, was then successfully completed. As always I was astounded that we managed to sing the same tunes that the band played. We then had a delicious buffet, created and served by Mrs Dawn Sealy, which also included samples of Kath Beech's potent mince pies (which I feel should carry the warning 'Not to be eaten by teetotallers!'). The evening produced a really unforgettable moment. It was the sight of Henry Dodds trying to carry his many prizes, which included a gigantic Teddy Bear and a Thomas the Tank Engine set, to his car. He managed to do so in spite of the many unprintable offers of advice and encouragement he received from members.

The Branch AGM held in January produced a change on the committee. Andre Kujawinski stood down for personal reasons and as a result the assembled throng (?) unanimously elected Mitch Elliott, a Malayan veteran, to the post of Chairman. The

remainder of the committee had their sentences increased by a year. In his first address to the meeting Mitch expressed his, and all members, gratitude for Andre's sterling efforts on the Branch's behalf during his time in office. Following a successful meeting, during which annual subs remained unchanged for the umpteenth year, members then retired to the club where Iggy supplied a delicious curry supper which because of the Arctic weather raging at the time was greatly appreciated by all members.

We are looking forward to the forthcoming reunion season. Full details of these events are given in the Regimental Diary which is published in the latter pages of this newsletter. We always look forward to meeting old friends, and new, several times a year. And we are always amazed at the distances some people travel to attend. This year the 1st Battalion will not be present on Race Day, they have an appointment elsewhere. We wish them God Speed and a successful and safe tour in Afghanistan. And we look forward to renewing our acquaintance with them all later on in the year.

Chester Branch hold a social evening every Friday in the Club. If you would like to join us sometime then all we ask is that you let us know in advance so that we can buy a few extra tea bags. You are very welcome to join us either on Friday or Sunday Lunch time, or any lunch time except Tuesdays because this is when Iggy goes to confession!

John Fairbanks

ELLESMERE PORT BRANCH

Greetings from Ellesmere Port Branch.

A fairly quiet period this time. Together with our friends from Birkenhead Branch we were well represented at the East Cheshire Re-union at Stockport. I was very impressed at the dignity in the way the evening was presented, obviously a lot of thought had gone into the organizing and Stockport Branch are to be congratulated for a very successful and enjoyable night.

November brought us to Remembrance day. Once again we were well represented, sad that due to ongoing issues we were not able to parade our Branch Standard.

So into December. The 18th saw members, friends and guest sitting down to enjoy our Xmas dinner. As usual I over indulged myself with the sprouts. No problem as I drove home in my own car, (with the windows open!!!) We were well entertained by vocalist Jimmy Grace, a Runcorn lad, who donated his services, thank you Jimmy.

Thanks also go to Brenda and the ladies for setting up the tables etc.

January brought us to our Branch AGM, with a couple of surprises! At the meeting George Statham advised members that he was stepping down as secretary. In the absence of any other nominations I agreed to take over the position, with an assurance from George that he was always on hand to offer any advice. At the same time Chairman John (Tiny) Davies informed us that he needed a break. He was persuaded to stay on as Chairman in name with George doing a sideways step to become effectively Assistant Chairman thus enabling John to address his current health problems more fully. Mike Dempsey will stay on as treasurer with his wife Shirley looking after welfare. Brenda and Shirley will also head up our ladies section with behind the scenes organizing.

George Ford was re-elected, unopposed, as Branch President. In recognition of his loyal service to the Branch and

the CRA in general Les Stiffin was offered, and accepted the post of Honorary Vice President.

At this point can I pass on sincere thanks from all members to George for his unstinting efforts on behalf of the Branch and CRA. He will be a hard act to follow, but I will do my best!

Gordon Kipps

KIRKHAM BRANCH

All the members of Kirkham Branch were saddened to hear of the death of our friend and branch member George (Phil) Jones last November. Phil was a great man, well liked within the branch, and will be sadly missed by all of us. We send our sincere condolences to Gloria and all his family.

On January 8th it was Kirkham Branch night out, when every member had a pint in every pub in Lytham St Anne's. Once again a great night was had by all.

We are now all looking forward to the Regimental Race Day at Chester on 7th May, which is a day out that we all enjoy. Well that's all for now.

John Gibson

MACCLESFIELD BRANCH

We mustered a party of twenty at the East Cheshire Reunion and I am sure everyone had a good night. As always, many old friends from their service days were able to get together and lots of "Do you remember?" could be heard. This year the Cheshire hot-pot was first class – no complaints at all, and plenty of cheese and crackers to go round, but who took some cheese home for his dog? No names, no pack drill, but a cheese eating pooch??

Before going further, it is my very sad duty to report the deaths of two of our most regular and long-serving members. Phillip Davenport died on 24th October, aged 79. Phillip, who lived in Gawsorth, did his national service in the REME and afterwards joined the 7th Battalion at Macclesfield where he became a bandsman as a drummer. He was also a member of the Bollington Royal British Legion Drum and Bugle Band, playing at CRA events and many village fetes and other functions. Phil had been unwell for some considerable time, but he always had a cheerful smile and greeting for everyone. He loved coming to the branch meetings and will be sorely missed, particularly by his old pal and fellow bandsman, Ken Chancellor. The funeral at Gawsorth packed the old church, in fact it was standing room only. Our deepest sympathies go to Phil's wife and family.

Our most senior member, Jack Downing died on 18th November, at the age of 93. Jack joined the 7th Battalion in 1935 at Macclesfield and went to France with the BEF in 1939. He came through the Dunkirk evacuation and then volunteered for 9 Commando Special Service Battalion. He took part in the raids on the enemy secret installations in Norway, and later went to Italy and was also in the Balkan countries in support of Tito's partisan forces. In his younger days he was a champion swimmer at both junior and senior levels, representing Cheshire on numerous occasions. He was an instructor at Macclesfield baths and played water polo for Macclesfield, competing all over the country. After his Army days were over he joined the Cheshire Fire Brigade and the cortege to the crematorium was preceded by a fire engine, followed by the hearse and seven limousines. Our standard was carried by branch president Andy Wood and about 12 members joined a packed church at the parish church of Macclesfield.

In spite of the severe snow and frost we held a social evening and buffet at the Conservative Club, which was supported by 50 members, wives and friends.

The most recent branch event was the Meeanee service at Capesthorpe Hall Chapel on 14th February, where it was held by kind permission of Colonel William Bromley-Davenport. The service had not taken place for the past two years because of poor support, but Colonel Edward Scott encouraged us to try again, and this time we had support from our friends from Stockport and their standards. There were about 40 people there and we had a warm welcome from the people of Siddington and Capesthorpe, who joined us. The vicar, the Reverend Paul Moulton gave a very good service, relating the history of the British Army in Afghanistan from the Afghan Wars of the 1840s to the present day. Our standard was carried by Andy Wood and the Stockport standard by Keith Mort. I am afraid that I did not get the name of the Mercian Regiment standard bearer, but thank you very much for coming to support us. Afterwards the convoy made its way to the Flower Pot in Macclesfield where an excellent lunch was served. This was a really good day and we must not allow it to lapse again.

Our almoners, Derek Bache and Ken Newton have not been very well for some weeks, Derek in particular is suffering, so if any of our elderly and sick members have missed their regular visits, then that is the reason.

Best wishes to all branches and good luck to the 1st Battalion when they go to Afghanistan. We hope and pray for your safe return.

Frank Worrall

NANTWICH BRANCH

The branch now has some 35 members and continues to have excellent attendance at our monthly meetings, held in the Crosville Social Club, Crewe. There continues to be much lively discussion (and humour of course) with the meetings so ably chaired by Harry Tomkinson.

Teresa and Richard Hoffman have recently joined the branch and received a warm and sincere welcome.

Once again, as always, there was an excellent attendance at the pre-Christmas dinner, held at the Waverley Hotel in Crewe, which had again been organised under the direction of our Vice-chairman, Brian Billington. Another good event and one we all enjoy.

Several of our members have not enjoyed the best of health and "thinking of you" cards have been sent to Ray Young, Bill Cornes, Brian Billington and Jean Webster. We had an excellent attendance of 20 members at our AGM in January, when reports were given by our president, chairman and treasurer and branch accounts were presented and approved. Branch officers elected for the year were: President – Ray Stafford MBE; Chairman – Harry Tomkinson; Vice-chairman – Brian Billington; Secretary – Jim Salisbury; Assistant Secretary – Richard Hoffman; Treasurer – Dave Waring; Assistant Treasurer – Ron Percival; PR Officer – Ray Stafford; Almoner – Peter Hoffman; Standard Bearer – Dave Waring; Deputy Standard Bearer – Wilf Burgess. A tremendous vote of thanks was given to retiring Branch President, Michael Morgan-Wynne, and Branch Secretary Maurice Boon for their exceptional service in support of the branch over the years.

Details of the branch activities and events for the year were being formulated as this newsletter went to press. Members of the branch attended the Association's AGM at St Mary's Centre,

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

Chester and intend to have representation at the Race day on 7th May, the Malaya and Singapore Reunion at Pelsall Labour Club on 19th June, and the Suez Reunion at Ellesmere Port on 17th July.

The branch continues to meet, by kind permission, in the Crosville Social Club, Chester Street, Crewe, on the last Tuesday of each month from 7.30pm. New members are always welcome. Do come and join us.

The branch did appreciate the 1st Battalion's Christmas supplement to the newsletter – most informative!

Ray Stafford

SANDBACH BRANCH

First of all I must apologise for missing the last couple of issues of the newsletter. Our Christmas dinner was a great success, attended by some 45 members and guests. Mr Charles Sullivan, who is 89, won the Christmas hamper, donated by Mr Sam Machin – thank you Sam. Talking to Charles after the cold spell, he said that the hamper saved his life because he was unable to leave the house to get to the shops.

Leading up to the Christmas period, we lost one of our founder members, Mr Eddie Williams, aged 86 who died on 16th December 2009. He was a well liked man in the branch and he was a very active member over the years. He was secretary for a number of years and also the standard bearer for the branch up until his wife was taken poorly. His funeral was well attended by the branch, who gave him a good send off, with Tony Beckett carrying the standard. We would like to thank his wife Phylis, his sons Alan and Charles and daughter Lynne, who donated the collection of £140 to branch funds.

By the time this goes to press we will have held our annual Meeanee Ball on 27th February.

We would like to wish all our boys from the 1st Battalion (Cheshire) a safe tour of Afghanistan and a speedy return home to their families. May God be with you all. Good luck and God bless from all members at Sandbach.

Dave Beech

SOUTHERN REGION

It is nice to report that the Southern Region fielded good support for the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey last November. It was almost surreal to see the legendary Charlie Carress pass by our plot on his way to represent the Royal British Legion elsewhere. Fortunately he was recognised and pulled to one side. It was reassuring to see that our plot had regained its separate identity and therefore it was great to have Brigadier Tony Twiss out in front representing the 22nd, with Brigadier Andrew Sharpe OBE alongside him, representing the Mercian regiment.

We were treated to an excellent tour of the Tower of London on the Saturday before Remembrance Sunday, and Dickie Dover did not disappoint with his macabre and gruesome tales from the Tower.

Remembrance Sunday saw us parading on Whitehall, although this time we were so far back that we were nearer to Trafalgar Square than the Cenotaph. We caught the parade RSM's eye when Angus Pritchard-Gordon gave an "eyes right" as we passed the womens memorial. "What a splendid gesture" he exclaimed "But, I will be checking Queen's Regulations in the morning!" We also enjoyed great coverage from the BBC, with

both the cameras and David Dimpleby picking us out. As is customary, we enjoyed an excellent Sunday lunch afterwards.

In January we held our AGM, and it will come as no surprise that all the usual suspects were re-elected as branch officers.

As the newsletter deadline approaches, we are looking forward to another Meeanee Ladies Dinner in Knightsbridge on 27th February. With Trevor Taylor in charge, a good evening is assured. With spring almost upon us we can also look forward to the Army v Royal Navy rugby match at Twickenham on 1st May and no doubt many of us will make the trek north for Chester races on 7th May.

We wish our 1st Battalion good luck and every success as they begin what will no doubt be an extremely difficult and arduous tour.

George Szwejkowski

SOUTH WIRRAL BRANCH

Greetings to all and a belated happy new year to all members and families of The Association. Since our last notes were sent The Association has made a few changes to the committee which are as follows; Tom Sherman (President) John (s.u.s.) Coldick (Chairman) Jeff (Smudge) Smith (Vice-Chairman) Nigel Hunt (Secretary) and finally the elusive Steve (rhino) Ryan (Treasurer).

That's the official business out of the way. Onto last year's adventures, firstly all the members who attended the races stated the addition of the drums display was a real winner. As normal some had winners, most had losers but the day was about meeting old friends which in the end is always a winner. The annual camping expedition was held at Blackrock Sands, Portmadoc and was attended by 68 members and families, most people would say great turn out but as Tom (Slopjock) Sherman and myself were the cooks for the weekend it was bedlam in the field kitchen! Saying that we managed to produce a full English breakfast for all, pasta and salads etc for lunch and five, yes five! choices for the evening meal, by which time both cooks were marinated along with the meats on offer. Entertainment was laid on throughout the day and each evening, including pool matches and as ever cam nets for the kids to crawl under and over, in most cases over. Before this segment closes just a thank you to both our wives and all concerned who acted as the cleaners (hard job) Tom and I were happy they did it.

This year the post Xmas party was held at the British Legion in Upton Chester and was attended by 76 members and guests. Nigel and Jane Hunt slaved away to make sure the function was a hit (thanks from all). Transport was laid on with three pick up points around the town. Once seated for the five-course meal the party as normal got loud except when people ate and drank. After the toast and speeches a quick but excellent raffle was held and as usual Geoff Parsonage managed to win one of the wallets containing £135, never bought a drink though !!, I myself won a hamper full of champers and other goodies. I'm glad Nigel and Jane won a prize it must have been a good one as he's kept quiet over it - fixed were the cries on the night, jealousy is a horrible thing to see ha! Ha!

Onto this year, in April the branch is putting on a function to aid Help for Heroes, which at the next meeting on 5th February we will finalise and contact all branches with information. As usual we will all be making a maximum effort to attend Chester Races, then we have the annual camping at Portmadoc, in which case I will keep you all informed. Finally Tom Sherman completed his climb in the Himalayas and raised a substantial

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

sum for charity. Well done, he even managed to get a pound off Derek Dodd for the pot.

To finish, the branch would like to wish the Battalion and all supporting elements a safe tour in Afghanistan.

We are holding a fund raising event on 17 April 2010 at the Whitby Sports and Social Club (Shell Club) Ellesmere Port. Tickets are £7 and donations to the raffle are welcome.

Tickets can be obtained at the club or contact the secretary Nigel Hunt on 07970888471 or by post with stamped addressed envelope to:- 2 Alvanley Road, Great Sutton, South Wirral, Cheshire CH66 31A

Cheques made payable to The South Wirral Branch CRA.

John Coldrick (Chairman)

STOCKPORT BRANCH

On 31st October the branch hosted the East Cheshire Reunion with over 200 attending. In attendance were Major General Skempton, Brigadier Dauncey, Colonel Donnelly (now Brigadier – congratulations), Colonel Stewart, Colonel Owen, major Oulton and Presiding Officer Colonel Scott. After a superb hot-pot supper, washed down with copious amounts of liquid refreshment and the odd cup of coffee, Brigadier Donnelly brought us up to date on the 1st Battalion's activities as they get ready for deployment to Afghanistan. Once again a great reunion and evening spent with old friends and comrades. We look forward to next year's reunion.

In early November branch members descended on Malta once again for seven days R & R and to attend the remembrance parade in Valetta. Whilst in Malta we visited the war Museum in St Elmo's Fort, which is now fully refurbished and a credit to Malta Heritage for all their hard work and commitment. Our cap badge is now fully restored and resplendent in the main entrance.

On Friday 18th December we held our annual Ladies Christmas Dinner Night, when the ladies were wined and dined in the Mary ward Suite in the Armoury, ably waited on by Eric Longson, assisted by Jim Clere, Geoff Price, Roy Porter, Ivan Vaughan, Ken Hampson, Angus Butterworth. Mrs Kumi Burton, Mrs Sheila Longson and Mrs Rose Kennedy headed the table and a good evening was had by all – including their menfolk reminiscing in the upstairs bar.

At the AGM in December, Branch President Major Sidney Burton TD stepped down after 9 years due to ill health. Our thanks to Sidney for all his commitment and endeavours as President. Mr A J Jennings was appointed as the new President. Also re-appointed as Vice-presidents were Maj J S Holden TD and Mr E Longson. Committee members re-appointed were Mr A Massey, Mr R Porter, Mr G H Smith, Mr B Hartigan and Auditors Mr H Riley and Mr K Hampson.

Several members attended the Droppin Well Memorial Serice in Tamlaghfinlagen Church, Ballykelly. Many thanks to Limavady Branch for their excellent organisation of the event.

On the 167th anniversary of the Battle of Meeanee we held our branch Meeanee Dinner in the Regimental Club, Chester, when 50 members, wives and guests sat down to a superb four course dinner. Mr A J Jennings, Major JS Holden TD and Mr P Gresty made the respective toasts to HM The Queen, our Colonel in Chief and the Regiment. A wonderful evening was had by all, especially the Kennedy Clan, winning most of the raffle prizes. Our thanks to Lynne and Peter Gresty, Iggy Jones and the Regimental Club staff, not forgetting Eddie Pickering and Dave Beech, for all their hard work and organisation.

On Thursday 18th February several members and wives attended the family open day and briefing for Afghanistan in Marne Barracks, Catterick. Our Colonel in Chief attended and took time out to speak to all present, both young and old alike. We wish the 1st Battalion Mercian (Cheshire) Regiment well on their forthcoming deployment, and of course a safe return. In the words of the late comedian Dave Allen, "May your God go with you"

Members of the CRA who were wearing blazers and berets with oak leaves were asked by a serving officer to form a guard of honour, as the Colonel in Chief came down the steps. They did not ambush the Colonel in Chief, as stated at the AGM. Derek Sykes apologised to the RSM at the AGM for the oversight of the officer in not asking the CO's permission to form the guard of honour. Derek declined to name the officer so as not to harm his future career. Hopefully this episode should now be put to bed and we will all have learned from our mistakes in life.

On Sunday 14th February we took the branch and Mercian Volunteer standards to Capesthorpe Hall, family home of Colonel Bromley-Davenport (now Lord Davenport) to join members of Macclesfield Branch for their Meeanee Church Service in the family chapel on the estate. Following a poignant service, and for once we could sing hymns, instead of mumbling through, we adjourned to the Flower Pot in Macclesfield for lunch with Macclesfield members, to end a near perfect weekend.

Twenty members attended the AGM and Meeanee Reunion at Chester on Saturday 20th February, where Brigadier Donnelly and CSM Matt Henry brought us up to date on the 1st Battalion's activities. Three former Malaya veterans were awarded the General Peter Martin Award for services to their respective branches. Brian Bellington, Les Sutton and our own Alan Kennedy, congratulations to one and all. After a very interesting meeting the Meeanee Draw was held and our own Brian Hartigan won first prize of £500. This is the same Brian Hartigan who only the previous weekend, at our own Meeanee dinner stated that he never wins anything. He is now looking forward to our weekend in London for Trooping the Colour. AGM done, we retired to the Regimental Club for a superb supper washed down with copious amounts of ale etc. Just to keep Iggy's bar takings up and Eddie's stress levels down, Stockport Branch were once again some of the last to leave the club after a great evening spent with old friends and comrades.

Wha wadna fecht for Charlie.

Keith Mort

TRANMERE BRANCH

As I start these notes there is six inches of snow outside and the roads are quickly icing over. I hope that by the time you are reading this it is a lovely spring March day, and, hopefully we can all look forward to a warm and pleasant summer for our respective reunions.

At the end of October "Joe" Cotgrave and I attended the East Cheshire Reunion and like last year it was an excellent night out. To our delight the first soldier we met at our hotel was the iconic and sprightly Brigadier Dauncey DSO. He immediately bought us a pint and it was great recalling old times and incidents with him. Also attending this year was our old friend and great battalion athlete, Tony Melville. He had travelled from Jersey in his camper van. As it was a cold night I invited him back to our hotel for a drink – he was still with us for breakfast!

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

On 6th November Joe and I attended the funeral of Phil Jones at Lytham St Annes. Major Mike Huntriss, Alan "Iggy" Jones, Graham Percival and all the lads from Kirkham Branch were in attendance. Phil was a great lad and a dedicated member of our Association. He will be sadly missed by us all.

The following week in Belgium we visited a barn in Wormhout, where over one hundred British soldiers were murdered by the SS. The Kirkham lads laid a wreath in Remembrance of Phil and while the Last Post was sounded, scattered his ashes in the barn. It was a very moving ceremony and I was assured that Phil would have been very pleased.

Our Treasurer, Alan Rowe, opened the purse strings and we had a "freebie" Christmas Dinner Night at the Castle towards the end of November. The food and entertainment and quiz, all combined to make it an excellent night out. Our thanks go to Alan Jones who, as always, looked after us superbly well. Alan Rowe's doctor assured us that he would get well soon and that he had just been a victim of a "one off" generosity attack!

A good attendance of 80+ saw our Christmas Social and prize draw get off to a flying start. Over £700 worth of prizes were on display. The artist gave us all a very good night and the buffet was outstanding. Our thanks to all who supported us and particularly to Joe Cotgrave who sells hundreds of draw tickets for us every year.

Adelphi Alert. We have had a great offer for a Veterans' Weekend at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool on May 28/29/30. This comprises the three night, breakfast and dinner, one hour free bar each evening and also entertainment each evening. Our Secretary Dave Mapley has sent details to all branches. The cost is an unbelievable £99 for the whole weekend and guests are welcome. Members wishing to go must book themselves by phoning: 08712 220029 and quote Reference RRAD2801.

Our best wishes to you all for 2010.

Rusty

WALSALL BRANCH

We again had a full complement (16) on the minibus to attend the East Cheshire Reunion. Our thanks once again go to Alan Cooper, who organised the transport and drove as well. Without him it would have been very difficult for many members to attend. Once again it was a very good night. The appearance of a military band and drums makes all the difference to the evening. Many thanks to Len Hurcombe, who provided the refreshments on the bus.



Malcolm Hartshorne, Brigadier Dauncey DSO, Marshall McDermott and Harry Tomkinson at the East Cheshire Reunion.

About twelve members turned out at Walsall Cenotaph for Remembrance Sunday. The parade was very well attended and we were also near to the band, which makes a big difference to the marching when you can hear the beat of the drum. Also a well done to the citizens of Walsall who turned out in force.

Christmas was upon us so quickly once again. It was nice to see that the numbers for our Christmas dinner and dance were slightly up this year. This was partly due to our friends from up north visiting us. It was a pleasure to see you lads, hope you can keep it going. Many thanks to all the lads who gave a hand with all the jobs to be done on the day, and to Reg Smith who organises very good entertainment on small money. It was nice to see our President's wife, Mrs Jean Tarbuck, well enough to attend the evening.



Paul Hadfield, Mike Tarbuck, Ray Turner, John Eddows and Eric Thomson at Walsall Branch Christmas dinner.

The wintry weather set in at the beginning of the new year, and we had to cancel our January meeting. The first few months have been quiet for us and we were unable to get our transport for Meeanee. Fortunately four of our members, Les Sutton, Reg Smith, Jim Pyatt and Mac Hartshorne did make their own way there, so we were represented.

After my mistake with the date for our Malayan and Singapore Night, I will confirm the correct details:

Saturday 15th May 2010 at Pelsall Labour Club. Tickets £8 each. Doors open 1930 hours. There will be entertainment, a fish and chip supper, cheap beer and some first class company provided by yourselves. Hope to see you there.

Mick Bird

SNIPPETS

Never Say Die

Old golfers never die, they simply lose their drive.
 Old card-players never die, they simply shuffle off.
 Old bowls players never die, they simply jack it in.
 Old archers never die, they simply bow out.
 Old yachtsmen never die, they simply keel over.
 Old fishermen never die, they simply smell that way.

VIEW FROM THE CASTLE



This edition of the Newsletter carries the minutes of the Annual General Meeting, a legal requirement for all charities and organisations such as ours. 63 members braved the wintry conditions and dutifully followed the business and voted in the appropriate places and then listened spellbound as WO2 Matt Henry talked about life in 1 MERCIAN as they prepare for their Ops tour in Afghanistan.

I couldn't help wondering what would have happened if all of the membership of the CRA suddenly decided to turn up to the meeting! Where would we sit them? We would have had to hire Chester City Football Ground for the event (and as it is not being used for matches at the moment, they might have been glad of the income).

Worse yet, how long would the meeting have been if lots of people came up with propositions "for the good and benefit" of the CRA? I don't suppose that I need to worry though, it will never happen... But sadly, if people do not take sufficient interest, the Association will wither and die. I am frequently told "it's not for me" by people and so as they stay resolutely on the outside; it will never be "for them." It might be that the CRA does need to look at the way it does things at every level to attract more interest and certainly from looking at Facebook, there is a legion out there which is proud of having been in the 22nd and doesn't forget those times. But is the virtual world any substitute for the real one? Nothing can beat the atmosphere of meeting up with old pals, as is demonstrated every year at Race Day, but there is a coyness about showing the flag at other events. Why don't we meet more often? I guess my point is that you can only change things by joining in and influencing those around you, so why not do just that before the CRA disappears in front of your eyes?

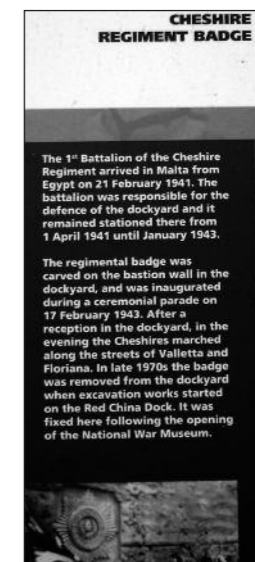
The Cheshire Military Museum, which is all about YOU, has a new website; www.cheshiremilitarymuseum.co.uk which has a page listing all CRA major events. The museum itself welcomes gifts of photographs, slides and artefacts which can help it tell the story of "Soldiers of Cheshire" and is currently assembling material for an exhibition of Army Sporting Life planned for Olympic Year. Items do not have to be given to the museum; they may be loaned for the duration. If you can help, please contact us by telephone on 01244 327617 or email cheshiremilitarymuseum@live.co.uk.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a Gift Aid declaration, if you have donated any money or paid subscriptions to the CRA in the last 2 years or are considering doing so in the future, would you kindly complete it and return it to the Secretary CRA?

Eddie Pickering

MALTA EXPERIENCE by Peter Gresty

Lynne and I recently took a short break to the Island Fortress of Malta and whilst there we took the chance to visit the War Museum which is situated in Fort St Elmo. The purpose of the visit was to see the Regimental Badge that had been relocated here from the Bastion Wall in the docks where it had been since it was unveiled on Meeanee Day in 1943 by Admiral KHL McKenzie the Supervisor of the Dockyard.



CHESHIRE REGIMENT BADGE

The 1st Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment arrived in Malta from Egypt on 21 February 1941. The battalion was responsible for the defence of the dockyard and it remained stationed there from 1 April 1941 until January 1943.

The regimental badge was carved on the bastion wall in the dockyard, and was inaugurated during a ceremonial parade on 17 February 1943. After a reception in the dockyard, in the evening the Cheshires marched along the streets of Valletta and Floriana. In late 1970s the badge was removed from the dockyard when excavation works started on the Red China Dock. It was fixed here following the opening of the National War Museum.

On entering the dockyard and even before seeing the badge, which is just inside the fort on the left, I met up with a Maltese security guard who had served in the British Army. Whilst chatting to him we discovered that he served with 7RHA and was attached to the 22nd during the 1986/87 tour of Belize and had very fond memories of his time with us. We took some time to catch up and talked about mutual friends, if anybody is visiting the museum ask for Charlie and he will be sure to make you welcome. Charlie was good enough to invite Lynne and I to spend a day with his family but it was not possible on this journey.

The museum have made an excellent job of relocating the cap badge as can be seen by the photographs which show the badge and the information board situated adjacent to it. The museum itself also holds several items relating to the 1st Bn as can be seen by the following photograph;



If anybody is visiting Malta then entrance to the museum is a very reasonable €4 per person and is worth the time and effort.

THE BRAVEST LITTLE STREET IN ENGLAND by Peter Hennerley

It was most unfortunate that the date for the unveiling of a Blue Plaque clashed with the Mons Reunion. Having gone through a long ten months of Council bureaucracy, and having my first proposed dates turned down, I agreed the 13th September and only realised what I had done when I received my CRA newsletter.

At this point I would like to thank the CRA Management Committee, and Alan Jennings, who proposed that this event should be acknowledged at the Mons Reunion. It was most considerate and much appreciated.

I had it all planned in my head for the ceremony; at least two standards, Major John Holden and Alan Jennings as my readers, an old drummer pal, Bob Wakeham, as my Standard Bearer Marshal. Well it turned out also that it was the Battle of Britain weekend. To make matters worse, now with time closing in, even getting cadets on parade, to say nothing of standard bearers, buglers etc was not easy. However, I pulled through with the Reverend Major Sutton, dashing down, in-between two Sunday services, and attending in uniform as I had asked him. He looked splendid, sporting his red beret.

I managed to get the County RBL standard bearer to accompany the Altrincham RBL and also my fellow standard bearer of Bowden Branch, who carried my union standard. The fourth standard being 145 Squadron Air Cadets (Altrincham). The Mercian Cadets were on camp. The race was now on for a bugler. Around a month beforehand I was asked to take my standard to attend a ceremony in Bramhall for a commemorative bench in memory of an old WWI soldier, a VC from the Rifles. I asked the attending Regimental Secretary if he could help me with a bugler, as there were two at the ceremony. Unfortunately they had a ceremony in London the day before. In the end I secured the services of a young lad of fifteen from Altrincham Grammar School, a brilliant trumpeter (He was remarked upon in the press and is now playing for the Ashton-on-Mersey Show Band). I also had lined up a very smart young lady, a Squadron Leader now, to go forward, when the time came, to invite the Mayor of Trafford to unveil the Blue Plaque – unfortunately she was on duty elsewhere. I had as my Guest of Honour Bill Speakman VC, an Alty lad and Korean veteran (his VC was the first that our Queen ever presented).

It was with great pride that the youngest of my five grandsons, also Peter and seven years of age, assisted the Mayor to unveil the plaque commemorating the fact that this small street, formerly known as Chapel Street, saw no less than 161 residents volunteer for the Great war, no less than 72 were in the Cheshire Regiment. Quite a number of them going over with the BEF and were at Mons, like Hugh, my grandfather and his younger brother John. I am now the eighth and last from my family to have served the old County Regiment.

The little booklet that I put together for this ceremony raised £1,100 for the RBL appeal fund, after most costs were met. The Reverend and I made it clear, while we remembered those men of the Great War, we were very conscious of our present day brave and courageous troops.

Albeit that I ended up being head cook and bottle washer, the day went off very well, and the Trafford Leader, Mayor and MPs letters to me, said that they were honoured to have been invited and been a part of this Blue Plaque Ceremony.

This little, all but forgotten street, is now fully marked up and indicated so all that pass this way will see.

Probably all done just in the nick of time, and as I have found, time and patience is what you need in a matter like this. Thanks to all that contributed to my booklet, also the good wishes I had from so many people.



Peter Hennerley with the outgoing and incoming Leaders of Trafford Council, the Mayor of Trafford and the MP for Altrincham & Sale West.

OPERATION ANTHROPOID by George Szwejkowski

I suppose that I was around twelve years of age when I first read a book entitled “Seven Men at Daybreak” by Alan Burgess. I think that it was one of the first war books that I read and over forty years later the impression it left is undiminished. It was the story about a group of Czech soldiers who, in 1942, were parachuted back into Czechoslovakia, from Britain, in order to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, better known to the Czechs as Hangman Heydrich for his reputation as a close ally of Hitler and a key planner in the genocide of the Jews.

Although I had visited Prague before, I had not previously had the opportunity to visit the scene of the operation, and more poignantly, the scenes of the terrible retribution unleashed by the Nazis afterwards. Last December I was finally able to put this right.

By September 1941 Czechoslovakia had already been subjected to over two years of Nazi repression and things were



Reinhard “Hangman” Heydrich

about to get much worse. SS Obergruppenfuhrer and General of Police, Reinhard Heydrich, probably the most feared man in the Third Reich, was appointed as Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia. His arrival came just as the Czech Government in Exile (based in London) was realising that it was serving little purpose and that to date Czech resistance had been almost negligible. An understandable situation since they had been very much the

losers when the Munich Agreement was made.

By the end of 1941, and with the help of the SOE, a plan had been devised to assassinate Heydrich and a small group of Czech

OPERATION ANTHROPOID (continued)

soldiers parachuted back into their homeland in order to carry out Operation Anthropoid. A number of scenarios were selected and then rejected, before finally the group decided to attack Heydrich in his car as it slowed to negotiate a tight bend in the road as he was driven to his office in Prague Castle. On 27th May 1942 the attack took place but ran immediately into difficulties when Sergeant Major Gabcik’s sub-machine gun jammed. Sergeant Major Jan Kubis was able to throw a grenade but only appeared to cause superficial wounds to Heydrich, who then got out of the car and, along with his driver, opened fire on their attackers. The attackers beat a hasty retreat, believing that they had failed in their mission. However the grenade had caused more damage than first thought and the splinters caused blood poisoning from which Heydrich was unable to recover, dying on 4th June 1942.

In reply the Nazis unleashed a reign of terror that included the destruction of the village of Lidice and later the village of Lezaky, killing all male occupants and deporting the remainder to concentration camps. The erstwhile assassins escaped and with the help of the Orthodox Church they were concealed in the Cathedral of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Resslova Street, Prague. Under the daily pressure of executions and terror, and perhaps because of the large reward offered by the Nazis, the parachutists were betrayed. On the morning of 18th June the Gestapo deployed some 800 soldiers outside the cathedral, with orders to take them alive. Three parachutists were in the nave at the time of the first assault, but managed to hold out for almost three hours before being overwhelmed and killed. The remaining four were discovered in the crypt but refused to surrender. The Nazis dynamited the crypt entrance and launched waves of attacks but the parachutists held out. The attackers then made use of a ventilation shaft in order to pour machine gun fire, smoke and finally to pump the crypt full of water, but still they held out. Finally, with the crypt filling with water and ammunition low, the parachutists had no options left. Refusing to surrender, they kept their last bullets for themselves. As I stood in the crypt, looking up at the ventilation shaft high above me, I could only wonder how they managed to hold out for so long.



The bullet-scarred ventilation shaft into which the Nazis poured bullets, smoke and water in order to overcome the parachutists.

Still not content, the Nazis then arrested all the clergy and their families and although not involved in the event, Bishop Gorazd offered his own life in order to save the church and all those arrested. Again the Nazis were uncompromising and over the following months executed Bishop Gorazd and some 270 others including members of the clergy and congregation. The Cathedral was closed down and the Czech Orthodox Church



The memorial to the parachutists and Bishop Gorazd unveiled in 1947.

declared illegal. Never doing anything by halves, the Gestapo even broke open the coffins in the crypt, throwing out the bones of the priests who had been interred there over the years.



The openings for the coffins used by the parachutists to protect themselves against the murderous machine gun fire.

Thousands of Czechs died as a result of Operation Anthropoid and to many the question has always been “Was it worth it?” Although it is easy to say over sixty years later, I have no doubt that it was worth it. The status of the Czech Forces and Government in Exile was certainly much enhanced as a result of the operation and from then onwards the Nazis leadership knew that they were no longer untouchable.



Memorial to the murdered children of Lidice.

Immediately after these Nazi atrocities, towns and villages throughout the world changed their names, or districts, in memory of Lidice. Today you can find places called Lidice in such far flung places as Mexico, USA, Israel, Hungary and Peru.

Perhaps at the end it was words rather than actions that were the most telling. The last words that rang out from the crypt - “We will not surrender, never!” certainly inspired the Czech people and to this day still fills them with enormous pride.

By Brigadier Keith Prosser CBE MC

50 years ago at the end of the Malaya/Singapore tour the battalion embarked on the troopship "The Oxfordshire" in July 1960 at Singapore, for the 30 day journey back to Southampton. I had been on the advance party, going out to Malaya in July 1957 and we flew out by air, a journey which took 5 days, so I am not able to make any comparisons of the journey out and back by sea, but some will be able to do so. I am sure they know that POSH is derived from "Port Out, Starboard Home" from the days of ships rather more basic. We were seen off from Singapore by many friends, regimental bands, the ship festooned with streamers and balloons, and our Charwallah Ramit Ullah hoping that we had paid our bills from the last three years. It was a very relaxed journey, no serious training and many happy memories of our time in the Far East.

I shared a cabin with Denis Kane which is a story in itself, which I might put to print one day. We had the late Jeremy Hopcraft next door. First port of call was Columbo in Ceylon (I prefer to use the old names), where I remember some soldiers saw an opportunity to make some money. They went ashore with "ships money," which was then exchanged into local currency on the black market at a very favourable rate, then back on board exchanged into the official rate before repeating the process many times. Eventually it was stopped when the Bank of Ceylon was close to collapse! Next port of call was Aden, for camel rides, followed by the Suez Canal, now nationalised by Nasser. I do not recall any further stops, but perhaps my memory fails me. Our arrival at Southampton was greeted by families, friends, regimental band, the Depot and the Advance Party, who were already established at Airfield Camp, Carlisle, where we were to spend only a few weeks before moving on to Ballykinlar. What a contrast between Carlisle in the early winter, and sunny Singapore.

I had met my future wife, May, a Singaporean, during my last three months there. We said our goodbyes not quite at the docks and remained in touch with lots of letters. May decided to come to England and arranged for her Singapore firm to transfer her to the head office in London at the Aldwych. She also did the sea trip to Southampton, travelling on the P & O passenger liner

"The Corfu," arriving February 1961. To complete the story we were married at a Regimental Wedding in Tyrella Church, Ballykinlar, 10th February 1962, with the CO (the late Peter Martin) giving May away and Philip Oulton, the Adjutant, my best man.

Singapore to Southampton – March 2009

So, having travelled by sea separately from Singapore to Southampton all those years ago, we decided to repeat the journey, together this time and in style. We flew back to Singapore on the new Singapore Airlines 380 Airbus, business class – the most comfortable 13 hour journey in the World – proper beds etc including wonderful service by beautiful Singapore girls!

We embarked at Singapore on the new Cunard liner, the Queen Victoria, on her first round the World cruise. It is not possible to compare the Oxfordshire with the Queen Victoria, even allowing for 50 years. The Queen Victoria, at 80,000 tonnes, is three or four times larger, carries 2,000 passengers with a crew of 1,000. It is absolute luxury with pools, gyms, a theatre seating 700, bars casino, restaurants, concerts, orchestras, shops, black tie dinners, gala balls, fantastic foods and wines, with Pearson runs around the deck, each circuit almost half a mile. Unlike the Oxfordshire trip, there were frequent stops and excursions, Phuket in Thailand, Cochin in India, followed by Bombay. My wife had spent the war years there in a refugee camp. As a small girl she and her Jewish family escaped from Singapore in January 1942 before the surrender to the Japanese. So she was very happy to return to see how much the city had changed, and amazed her taxi driver by joining in his Hindustani songs. Other ports of call were Dubai (not recommended), Aqaba in Jordan to visit the lost city of Petra, the Suez Canal, with a stop at Cairo to visit the pyramids at Giza – rather disappointing. Kasadasi in Turkey to visit the Roman city of Ephesus, Istanbul – always impressive, the beautiful Greek island of Mykonos (shades of Mama Mia), Piraeus for Athens, Civitavecchia for Rome and the final port of call, Barcelona. We arrived at Southampton after 32 days at sea, the trip of a lifetime and strongly recommended to any who want to repeat the Oxfordshire journey.

MISSING THE OBVIOUS by Arthur Clarke

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson were camping out in a field. They ate their evening meal and went to bed. In the middle of the night Holmes woke up and nudged Watson. Looking up at the stars, he said, "Watson, as you look at the stars what does it tell you?" Watson thought for a moment and then said, "There must be billions of stars up there. There could be life on one or two of them. It is a clear night so we could be in for a nice day tomorrow."

"Anything else?" asked Holmes. "Not really." said Watson, "What about you?"

"It tells me that someone has stolen our tent." replied Holmes.

Fitness Levels Dropping in Children

Reports have just been published which show a steep decline in the fitness of British children. Children don't climb trees any more, they don't play games in the streets, they don't ride their bikes to and from school, they get ferried everywhere by car. The level of fitness in children worldwide is dropping by around 4%

year on year on average but in the UK it dropped by 8% in one year.

As a result, children are getting fatter and flabbier. You might think that there have always been fat kids around. It used to be blamed on their genes. I was once told by a woman that she had a fat gene which made her put on weight much more easily. When I commented that there weren't many obese people in Belsen she stared at me in stony silence.

The conclusion drawn by the researchers is that children spend far too much time watching television or playing computer games. What else can they do? The streets are far too dangerous to play in with the number of cars and clueless drivers swanning around, there are perverts lurking around schools and play centres, and places where children can play are getting fewer and fewer. The Government and local authorities have only to see a few square yards of green space and they want to build houses on it. The problem is serious. The medical profession say that a decline in children's fitness will inevitably lead to more unfit adults, more people suffering from cardio vascular problems

(and, at a much younger age). In other words, year on year there is a decreasing number of young men capable of doing 20 pull ups, running a mile in 6 minutes or carrying 120lbs of equipment for 30 miles on a route march.

One in Five Infantrymen unfit for Combat

Recently published figures by the Ministry of Defence show that 20% of all British infantrymen are unfit for combat. That is one in five. Some, of course, are incapacitated as a result of physical or mental injury incurred whilst fighting in combat zones but not all by any means.

Hopefully, many of them will return to full fitness in the near future. It makes one wonder about the state of fitness of some of the more sedentary units.

Fall in Recruitment in US Infantry

The US is having great problems in recruiting men for their fighting units.e.g. infantry, marines and special forces. In 2005, for example, the US army fell short of its recruiting target for the infantry by 42%. Apparently, the Engineers, Artillery, Logistics and Education are meeting their targets But it's hard to fight a war without fighting soldiers.

When I was a child living in Manchester, there was a saying "What Manchester does today, the rest of the world does tomorrow." I suspect that it wasn't original and that if I had lived in Little Stanney or Dunham on the Hill there would have been an identical saying with the names changed to suit. However, what America does today the rest of the Western world often seems to follow soon after - a trend which is all too obvious in music and general culture, although not in everything, baseball and American football have conspicuously failed to attract many supporters outside the US.

Recruitment in Britain

The recruitment of young men for the British Army is somewhat alarming; in April 1990 there were 137,000 men and women in the Army, in 2007 there were 102,000 – a drop of over 25%. And this at a time when Britain is facing an increasing number of threats, internal as well as external. A fully functional infantry battalion normally has between 700 and 800 soldiers. Nineteen battalions currently have fewer than 500

In the financial year1980/1 the army recruited 29,000 men and women. In the year 2006/7 it recruited 13,000. But, 16,000 trained soldiers left the service that year – a net loss of 3000. In addition, around one third of all recruits left after basic training.

John Stuart Mill, the famous (in his day) 19th century English MP and philosopher once wrote, "*War is an ugly thing but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.*" This, of course, assumes that our Government is fighting on the side of the angels and not, as was in the case of Nazi Germany, on the other side.

Very Few Fat, Lazy Soldiers

To return to the state of our childrens fitness. This is obviously linked to the lack of suitably qualified recruits for

combat units. It is extremely difficult for a fat, unfit, lazy person to suddenly change and become lean, fit and active. There is something in the human physiology by which lifestyle patterns established at an early age create bodily metabolism which is very difficult to change in later years. Unfit, fat, lazy people rarely make good soldiers as the forefathers of ancient Sparta and Rome well knew.

As a result of the shortage of suitable recruits in the US, recruiters are lowering their standards: police records are hidden and medical histories are falsified. One audit in the 1990s, discovered that 20% of all US army recruiters were found to be involved in what the authorities called "recruitment improprieties." That percentage doubled in the first decade of the 21st century.

Getting substandard recruits through the door is not the end of the matter. When they reach their battalions the problems start to multiply: more time has to be spent on training, fitness programmes and on supervision. Fewer are capable of being promoted and there are more disciplinary problems.

A Few More Possible Solutions

Numerous solutions to the problem have been examined. For example, in the US a massive pay rise has been awarded; new recruits are being offered £12,500 just for signing on. Anyone who wishes to do a university degree is offered £44,000 towards their fees plus free health and dental care for themselves and their families. Even so, the number of recruits is continuing to fall, as is their quality.

Advertising worldwide for soldiers with the promise of US citizenship automatically granted to them and their families after 4 years service has been proposed, i.e. the creation of a mercenary army. The trouble with that solution is that mercenaries have no loyalty to the country paying them and could turn out to be supporters of the other side – as the incident at Fort Hood, when an army major shot over 40 of his comrades killing 13, showed only too plainly. Some potential recruits have been assured that they will not be required to serve in a combat situation – that seems to be a contradiction of what serving in the army is all about - it might be better to employ civilian clerks.

The use of robots and drones to do the front line dangerous job is another idea being experimented with. I'm not quite sure how a robot could distinguish between a hostile and a friendly stranger in an alien environment. Most of these solutions appear to be the last rather pathetic gasp of an effete society.

I'm sorry that so much of the information is based on American studies but the figures and background for the UK are a bit more difficult to obtain. In any case, the fitness of children in the UK is declining faster than it is in America and, as I said earlier, what Manchester does today, the rest of the world does tomorrow.

Arthur Clarke

For further reading:

The British figures were released by The MOD on Tuesday 12th January 2010 and published by www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8453369.

JOHN FAIRBANKS WRITES

TRAVELS WITH A HOOKER

During my life, as far as I am aware, I only ever made the acquaintance of one hooker. He was a butcher by trade, from Dewsbury, and in his younger days had enjoyed, for want of a better word, a professional career with that town's Rugby League team. He was a calm, taciturn, giant of a man who stood six feet eight inches, weighed in at seventeen stone, and possessed two magnificent cauliflower ears and a nose which was literally spread right across his battered features. Going on the evidence of his battle scars I calculated he must have spent most of his playing days trapped beneath innumerable collapsed scrums.

I met him, and his wife, on a coach holiday to the Tyrol. It was their first excursion abroad and it turned out to be a momentous travel baptism. The tour started well enough but within hours had acquired all the hall marks of a disaster. It soon became apparent that we were in the hands of two of the most incompetent courier/drivers I have ever had the misfortune to travel with. Neither of them had ever been east of Brussels, had not the slightest knowledge of any foreign language, and were in total ignorance of the whereabouts of our holiday destination. They began the journey by missing the channel ferry, then getting hopelessly lost in Brussels. It was only with the assistance of a passing taxi driver that we finally arrived at our overnight hotel well past midnight. It was too late to obtain a meal so we were told to go to bed, not only hungry, but also minus our overnight bags which the drivers, in their infinite wisdom, had refused to offload. This stupid decision caused some of my fellow passengers, led by the fearsome looking hooker, to display a distinct inclination towards mutiny by refusing to leave the coach. Our leaders only avoided a full scale uprising by announcing that the next morning's planned early departure time would be put back from 7a.m. to 10 a.m. so that everyone could enjoy a good night's sleep and partake of a leisurely breakfast. That this gesture worked was due mainly to the fact that neither the bulk of the passengers, nor the drivers, had any idea as to how far away our holiday resort was or how long it would take to reach it.

As I lay in my bed that night I pictured us late on the following night, roaming through the Alps in the darkness, (there's not a lot of street lighting in the mountains) trying desperately to locate a small village, the name of which our drivers could not even pronounce.

So at breakfast, in order to help my fellow travellers get through what would be a long, trying day on the road, I buttonholed the drivers and made them an offer they could not refuse. When I told them I was a German speaking ex courier who had once lived near our destination I was immediately installed in the courier's seat and given virtual control of the trip. I will draw a veil over the traumas of that interminable exhausting day on the Autobahn. Suffice to say that the 10a.m. start did not help. Indeed there was a large orange harvest moon hanging over the sleeping village as at midnight, after fourteen hours on the road, we drew to a halt at our hotel. It was then that the relieved passengers gave me three cheers and a prolonged round of applause.

I saw a lot of the tight-lipped hooker during the rest of our stay but cannot recall him saying anything other than "Good morning" or "Good night." Except on one memorable occasion. With the holiday over we were on our way back home. Somewhere in Holland we stopped at a restaurant for lunch. After the meal I went to pay and was told my bill had been settled by the Hooker. I went to thank him but he forestalled me by

putting together the longest sentence I ever heard him utter. "It were nowt lad," he said. "If it weren't for thee we'd still be in Austria lookin' f't flamin' 'otel!!"

THE WAY WE WERE

During a recent cleaning frenzy in the cellars of Chester Castle a few more fragments of an ancient 1950's Advice to New Recruits leaflet were uncovered. Following patient restoration work it is now possible to publish the material without further comment.

Aiming-Rules of

Much time and effort is spent in teaching recruits the 'Rules of Aiming.' Unfortunately most soldiers who follow these rules consistently fail to hit anything they aim at and as a result could be in danger of being bayoneted by the on rushing enemy. Experience shows that saying a quick 'Hail Mary' or two, before unleashing a veritable barrage of bullets in the general direction of the enemy is often most effective. And more commonly used.

Ambush

The art of mounting a surprise attack from concealment. Laying an ambush is much loved by soldiers because it means lying about, in hiding, for hours on end, usually in the wrong place.

Anti Aircraft Drill

All infantry soldiers receive instruction on how to fight off attacks by enemy aircraft. However, the speed of modern jet aircraft is such that they have dropped their bombs, and disappeared from view, long before your average squaddie can hear them coming. The two most popular methods of dealing with such attacks are (a) to dig a very deep foxhole in the first place or (b) flee your position at a speed that would leave a world class sprinter gaping in awe!!

APTC

The Army Physical Training Corps is a small but highly trained band of sadists whose sole aim in life is to inflict cruel and inhuman punishments on any personnel unfortunate enough to cross their path. The sadomasochistic practices of the APTC range from the moderately bearable five mile cross country run, through the painful press ups, to the ultimate in excruciating humiliating torment – chin on the bar pull ups!!

Barrack Room Lawyer

This is usually an old soldier who, due to having spent a large proportion of his lengthy service incarcerated in a variety of detention centres, is able to quote much of Queen's Regulations from memory. He is ready at short notice to offer seemingly convincing advice on matters of military discipline to anyone willing to listen. However, such counselling is best ignored unless the recipient wishes to speedily become an inmate in one of the aforementioned penal institutions.

Barrack Room Orderly

Each day one of the inhabitants of a Barrack Room, or Barrack block, is detailed to guard the said accommodation, and its contents, whilst the other residents go about their day's work. This is a much sought after post because it means a day free from parades, fatigues, training, guard duty and all the other irksome tasks which blight the soldiers life. It is not surprising therefore

JOHN FAIRBANKS WRITES (continued)

that it is often necessary for large sums of money, or other valuables, to change hands in the pursuit of this position.

Officers' Mess

Contrary to what you may imagine an Officers' Mess is not a pile of rubbish left behind by untidy or careless commissioned ranks, it is the name given to the part of a camp set aside as the Officers' living quarters. In many units, for totally inexplicable reasons, this area is known as The Piggery.

Out of Bounds

In any town, or country, whenever a particular neighbourhood is declared 'Out of Bound' it immediately becomes the most popular destination for all ranks. This is because it is well known that the best sources of drink, entertainment, and women are to be found in these forbidden zones. Such places are also

extremely popular with both Military and Regimental police who are well aware that flying visits to these particular fleshpots will produce a rich haul of law breakers. There is no doubt that being arrested in these infamous quarters is a far greater honour than being acknowledged as a good skiver.

Training Area

Training areas are cold, treeless, uninhabited, windswept swamps miles from anywhere. In such desolate spots soldiers spend long boring hours waiting for something to happen, and when it does they get wet, dirty, hungry and often completely lost. It is small wonder that most personnel spend hours working out devious methods of avoiding being seen in such outlandish places.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

John Raymond Willett (nickname Willie), now 91, served in the Cheshire Regiment 1939 – 1944 (?) 4th Battalion, serial number 4127518. He is seeking information on three of his close army friends who served with him, D.Wimbush, B.Watson and B(?). Rathbone.

He enlisted three months prior to outbreak of World War II – 15 July 1939 sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force and later involved with the retreat at Dunkirk. He was discharged on 18 March 1946 with the rank of Corporal. Known army

comrades: Wimbush (D?), Watson (B?), Wadsworth (?) and Rathbone (B) – not sure of first names now (but recalls being known as the 4 Ws)!

His address is:
44 Rye Lane
Attleborough
Norfolk
NR17 2JH

M62 COACH BOMB

On their way to visit the 1st Battalion in Catterick, members of Stockport Branch called in to Hartshead Services in order to pay their respects to the memorial to those soldiers and families who lost their lives when making their way to Catterick Camp on 4th February 1974 when a terrorist bomb detonated on their coach whilst on the M62.



Left to Right. A Massey, R Porter, E Bottomley, B Hartigan, G Smith.

POEM

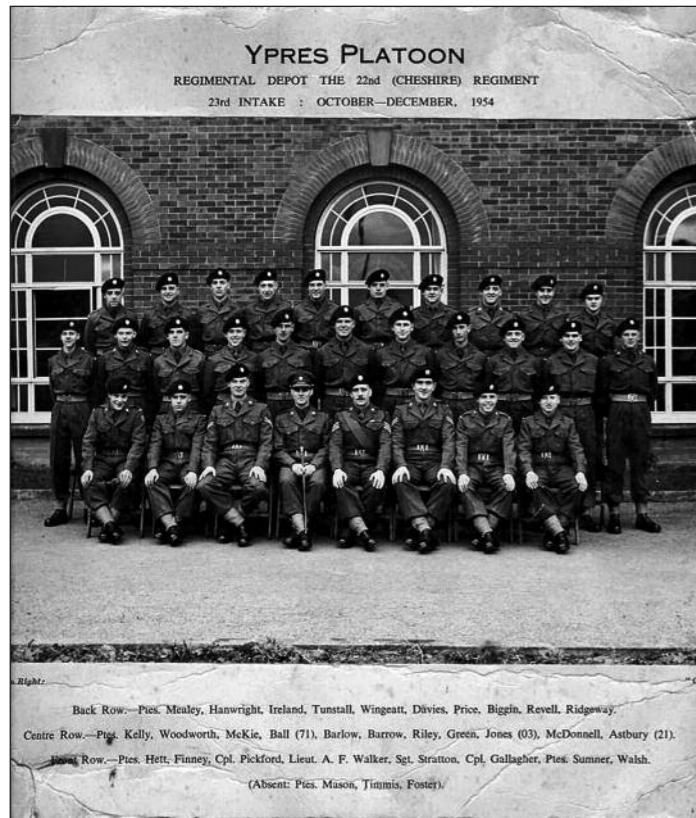
I Received this poem from **Paul Lomas**, an Ex REME associate member of Stockport Branch. He wrote it in memory of Ken Ward who passed away last year:

I'm just trying to be a father, raise a daughter and a son
Be a lover to their mother, everything to everyone
Up and at'em bright and early, more business in my suit
I'm dressed up for success from my beret to my boots
I don't do it for the money there's bills I cannot pay
I don't do it for the glory I just do it anyway
providing for our futures my responsibilities to keep us free
Yes, I'm real good under pressure being all that I can be
I can't call in sick on Mondays when the weekends been to strong
I just work on through the holidays, sometimes all night long
You can bet that I stand ready when the wolf growls at the door
Yes I'm solid, I'm steady and I'm true down to the core
I will always do my duty no matter what the price
I've counted up the cost and I know the sacrifice
I don't want to die for you but if dying is what's asked of me
I'll bear that cost with honour because freedom don't come free
Beside my brothers & sisters I will proudly take up the fight
When liberty is in jeopardy I will always do what is right
I'm out here on the front line so you can sleep in peace tonight
When it's over and I'm standing at the gate
And St Peter ask me what I've done of late
Then I'll tell with pride of what I've done
I'm sure he'll say come on in son
Come in Sergeant Major and ring the bell
Because I'm sure you've had your share of hell

Dear Editor

First I must thank you for the regular receipt of the Cheshire Regiment Newsletter - I always find it very interesting. The last issue November 2009 - page 13 Platoon photograph from Terry (Tex) Donovan - brought back many memories and prompted me to write this letter. I did my basic training at the same time as Terry but was in Ypres Platoon, (photo attached). I would be grateful if you could make a mention in the next issue that Jim Hanwright - now living in Auckland New Zealand would like contact with any of his old platoon members especially my mate Phil Price, (believed to be in Australia)...

Thanking you in anticipation, Jim Hanwright.



Dear Editor

I was called up for my National Service in February 1956, to The Dale, Chester, to join the 22nd Cheshire Regiment. After our training was finished we were each presented with a platoon photograph, not unlike the one printed on page 13 of the November Newsletter. I treasured it for years, until someone borrowed it and very shortly after the man sadly passed away, and alas I have not seen my photo since. I wonder if you could print this letter in the March edition as I would love another copy of this photograph. My status was Private William Taylor, 23284227, known as Taylor 27, as there were two Taylors in the Squad. We all finished the biggest part of our time at Brooke Barracks, Berlin.

Unfortunately Bill Taylor does not say which platoon he was with at the Dale, however if anybody remembers him, or has that elusive photograph, then please contact him through the editor.

Dear Editor

Here are 2 photos of 1 Platoon in Libya 1967, this being the last time anyone from the Cheshire Regiment served there. We were there attached to Mons OCS. The standing photo has from left to right Cpl Taylor, L/Cpl Nolan, L/Cpl Hulett and crouching L/Cpl Myatt.

The seated one has Pte Fielding, Cpl Blondie Taylor, L/Cpl Mick Nolan, Pte Tigger Tighe, Pte Alan Stockton and standing Pte Pete Newman.

Yours Albert (Blondie) Taylor



Dear Editor

A passing reference towards the end of the CRAMC Chairman's Report published in the November 2009 edition of the Newsletter drew my attention to the existence of a CRA Diary. There had not been any previous advertisement of this apparently because of the success of the sales at the Mons Reunion.

I was pleased to learn that my letter published in the March 2008 Newsletter regretting the loss of the Regimental Diary and suggesting that the CRA might consider undertaking to produce one had in fact borne fruit.

Dear Editor

You probably don't remember me (I certainly do, Ed) so let me introduce myself, My name Keith Jones 24212551, served with you from Sept 1972 -Sept 1995 my rank was C/Sgt MTWO. I was always together with Denis Rochel, Terry Finley, Alan Joseph, Ronny Warren, I have not been in touch with the regiment for a long time, although I receive the newsletters, I'm not one for putting pen to paper, this is just a few lines to let you know that I'm still alive and would like to keep in touch. I noticed in the November Issue Peter Gresty, Terry Finley, and just behind Terry is Dennis Rochel. They were very good friends of mine once but I lost touch and would like one day to get in touch again.

My e-mail is: jkeith2421@sky.com

Dear Editor

The Grand National won't be long now and that takes me back to the 1933 one when the CO at the Castle gave everyone the day off to go there. All except September Squad 1931, who were confined to barracks, because four days later the squad of 25 were due to go to Malta to join the 2nd Battalion. By mid-day on Grand National Day there was no-one about, so 24 of us went over the side gate and went home. The 25th member was from Ireland, a bit too far for him. I sold a new pair of Army boots and a new shirt for 2/6 to an old soldier - which got me and another chap nearly home to Northwich on a bus. We had to walk the rest of the way. We were all back at the castle on the Monday night and Tuesday we all got three days CB, and three day's pay stopped. When we got to Malta they said forget about the CB, but we lost the three day's pay. A few months later 20 of the squad were off to India to the 1st Battalion and a year later a couple more of us also went out there. It was six years before we got back to England.

This year for the Grand national: Tricky Trickster

Les Stelfox

(Les Stelfox is well into his 90s, and still travels over 50 miles to attend Southern Region meetings - Ed).

Gordon Kipps recently had the following read out on Radio Merseyside:

Hi, I received an "ASBO" in 1955 by virtue of the fact that I had reached the age of 18 (National Service). I found, after three weeks of basic training (HARD WORK) I enjoyed the life so much I signed on for an extra year.

I could see that the regime could only bring me benefits. People argue that offenders would not integrate into service life. I served with some of the "hardest" men from the North End of Birkenhead. Later on in my service life, as a Corporal, I had to "control" these guys. I can honestly say that they turned out to be excellent soldiers, who I could always rely on in any circumstances (Cotgrave, Goodacre and Parnell).

One aspect could be the rehabilitation of persistent car thieves. Enrol them into the Royal Corps Of Transport, when released after say 12 months they would have the qualification of heavy goods drivers. Give them some element of self esteem and the means of obtaining gainful employment.

Gordon Kipps
Cheshire Regt - 1955-1958

A quick telephone call to Eddie Pickering at CRA HQ enabled me to purchase a copy which arrived very quickly for which I am grateful.

However I was sorry to see no sign of the Regimental Badge on the outside cover, although it does appear on an inside page. I feel that this is a missed opportunity to show to the public at large when the Diary is produced that "the spirit of the Regiment (i.e. the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment) is being kept alive" and wonder if this can be followed up for future productions of the Diary.

I was interested to see also in the November Newsletter the photograph of the Dettingen Platoon taken at the Dale in November 1954, but was surprised at the small number of members (16 including one Corporal). I still have a copy of the photograph of Gaza Platoon (February to April 1956) taken against the same background and which numbered 39 including one Officer, one Sergeant, three Corporals and one Lance Corporal).

Congratulations on your production of the Newsletter. Alan Jennings was a hard act to follow for anyone.

Kind regards and best wishes to all members of the CRA

John Haynes

Dear Editor,

Arthur Clarke's interesting article on the Nazi party rally grounds brought back memories, for with my brothers I attended what I think turned out to be the last Reichsparteitag celebration in 1938.

We had been to Innsbruck and were motoring home and my brother, a London barrister, had applied to the German Embassy for seats. The arena was indeed vast and being filled as it was with servicemen and weapons, the party members and foreigners could not help being impressed. The fat Goering, goosestepping, leading the German Air Force March Past, and Hitler was a sight to remember! Hitler spoke at length. He was sabre rattling, rather than glorifying war. The villains then were the Czech Pygmies, who he said were ill treating the Sudeten Germans (the German minority living in Czechoslovakia) - absolutely untrue. Hitler was applauded ecstatically - it was mass hysteria. All the best accommodation was reserved for VIPs and party members and we stayed in a bed & breakfast flat about 30 miles away. Before we left the owner of the establishment insisted on showing us the view from the roof. There was no view, but she felt safe to say "You must stop this man Hitler, he is going to make war." It was of course, too late. German had by now re-armed, contrary to the Peace Treaty. The French had allowed it to happen, stupidly relying on the Maginot Line.

At a bar in Frankfurt on the way home we were recognised as English and swamped with drink. It had been announced that Chamberlain was on his way to negotiate with Hitler. The result of these talks is common knowledge, but what is not well known is Chamberlain's statement in the privacy of his home. "I have been dealing with a mad man," he said. How right that was. Hitler was a megalomaniac and no man has ever inflicted so much misery on so many. Few Germans wanted war, but Hitler was unstoppable.

Yours sincerely

David Hughes

Major

5th Cheshire 1940-43 Home Forces

2nd Hampshires 1943-46 CMF

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010

9 April	Officers Association Lunch Crowthorne
15 April	Regimental Golf Day Prestbury
7 May	Regimental Race Day, Chester
13 May	Regimental Golf Day Wychwood
15 May	Malaya & Singapore Reunion Pelsall
24 June	Regimental Golf Day Vicars Cross
17 July	Suez Reunion Ellesmere Port
24 July	Berlin/NI Reunion Chester
2 August	St Julien Service Stockport
10 September	Regimental Golf Day Pryor's Hayes
11 September	Officers Association Dinner, Chester
12 September	Mons Reunion and Lunch, Chester
30 October	East Cheshire Reunion Stockport
11 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster
5 December	Droppin Well Memorial Service Ballykelly

REUNIONS AND EVENTS

The next Malayan and Singapore Reunion takes place at Pelsall Labour Club on Saturday 15th May 2010. Doors open at 1930 hours.

The next Suez Reunion will be held on Saturday 17th July 2010 at Ellesmere Port Civic Hall, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BE (Junction 9 M53 Motorway), from 1800 to 2330 hours. All persons who served in Suez and their wives/partners are invited to attend. The function is open to other past members of the Regiment who wish to join us. The entrance fee will be £10.00 per head, which includes a smorgasbord and entertainment. Bar facilities will be available. To obtain your ticket please send an SAE with a cheque or postal order for the full amount payable to CRA SUEZ REUNION A/C, to one of the following addresses:

Mr G U HUNT	Mr J G Ball
6 Winstanley Road	18 Downing Close
New Ferry	Prenton
Wirral	Wirral
CH62 1AP	CH43 5XQ

MEEANEE DRAW 2010

	Ticket No	Prize	Name
1	1024	£500	Brian Hartigan
2	21302	£250	Marc Evans
3	21469	£125	Ben Bennett
4	10056	£100	G Ford

22 CLUB WINNERS

November: £100 RB Howard (Donated to CRA), £50 TM Lamb, £25 AK Makin

December £100 JM Bowers, £50 JD Siddall, £25 AJ Forrester

January £100 KJ Fletcher, £50 HEJ King, £25 JP Grove

February (Meanee) £250 N Joinson, £100 N Hunt,

£100 J Fairbanks, £50 WD Fisher, £50 JG Ball,

£50 CRA Walsall Branch, £50 TM Lamb

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.

LAST POST

Thomas Barnett died 13 Nov 2009 – served North Africa.

John Bourne died 21 Jan 09 – Served C Coy and Med Centre, Tidworth, Ballykelly, Hong Kong.

Maj John Bowers died 31 Dec 2009 aged 80 – served 6 yrs from 1947, Egypt & N Africa then transferred to RAFC/RCT.

Levi Bradford died 5 Sep 09 aged 85 – served Leicestershire Regiment transferred to Cheshire Regt.

George Brown died 12 Dec 2009 – Ex 1st Bn 1961-71. Record-breaking hammer thrower for Regt.

P Davenport died 24 Oct 2009 aged 79 – Ex 7th Bn.

Edith Dawson died mid Dec 09 – Widow of Tommy Dawson.

Jack Downing died 18 Nov 2009 aged 93 – Ex 7th Bn. After Dunkirk transferred to Commandos and SAS.

Thomas Dooley died 11 Sep 2009.

Tom Johnson died December 2009 aged 80 – Ex Cpl Inst MBTC 1950-52 & Sgt A Coy 7th Bn.

George (Phil) Jones died 2 Nov 2009 aged 62 – Ex 1st Bn.

Gwen Jones died 18th December 2009 – wife of Ken Jones (ex 1st Bn Corps of Drums).

Donald Kellett died 10 Sep 2009.

Pete (Springer) Leek died 03 Feb 2010 aged 46 – Ex 1st Bn.

Lt Robert Malir died 6 Dec 2009 – Ex Cheshire and D Coy Mercian (V).

Derek Mills died January 2010 aged 72 – Ex 1st Bn Malaya.

Leslie Robinson died Feb 2010 – served 1956-59.

Steve Robinson 1959-68, 1st Bn Cheshire Regt, A Coy Anti-tank.

Jimmy Stafford died 30 Jan 2010 – Ex 1st Bn 1955-57.

Tony Swindells died 14 February 2010 aged 76 – served 1954-1957 (Corps of Drums).

Lt Col A Unwin died 2009 in Kenya – Adj 4th Bn 1950-53.