



THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 2 ISSUE 18

MARCH 2014

EDITORIAL

It has been longer than usual since the last issue and I am sorry that this has precluded the traditional Christmas and New Year greetings.

Despite the dawn of a new year, nothing seems to have changed in the way our hierarchy operate. We learn that those far-sighted and perceptive persons in the MOD have embarked on a £3 million recruitment campaign to boost numbers in both the regular and reserve forces. Apparently this is their third recruitment campaign within a year, with the previous ones having had as much success as an England batsman in Australia. With the last wave of redundancies, I would think that anybody considering a career in the services might think long and hard on whether they wish to bestow their loyalty, honour and service, when there are accountants, politicians and lawyers, with little concepts of these ideals, ready to pull the rug out from under them. I will give the last words on the subject to Major General David Cullen, Assistant Chief of the General Staff, who said "Cuts are the beginning of the end of uncertainty." Clearly he is a politician in the making.

As we move closer to the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the war to end all wars, I hope that those who can afford to will give consideration to attending the Mons Pilgrimage in August this year. The heroic deeds at Mons were surely the finest feat of arms in our regiment's history.

Finally, it was good to see Major Ron Goodwin MBE receiving the President's Award at the AGM in Chester. The contribution that he has made to the regiment and the CRA in particular is incalculable. I cannot think that there could be a more deserving recipient.

The deadline for the next issue will be Friday 16th May 2014. Please send your contributions to me at: The School House, Dartmouth Road, London SE26 4RD. My telephone number is 020 8290 4268. You can also e-mail me at: george.szwejkowski@sky.com

George Szwejkowski

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 CRA.

NEW YEAR HONOURS LIST

Congratulations to Major R A Goodwin on the award of the MBE in the New Year Honours List. The Goodwin father/son emulation continues!

Also to be congratulated is Colonel N S Chapman CBE.

The link for the CRA webpage is:

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

The Mercian Regiment website is:

<http://www.army.mod.uk/infantry/regiments/23998.aspx>

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Already a quarter of the way through 2014, the centennial anniversary of World War I, and just laying to rest the last surviving decorated Cheshire from World War II, reminds us all (if reminding we needed) that 'time and tide wait for no man.'

It was 2005 when the then Colonel of the Regiment wrote to us all outlining 'The Future Infantry Structure.' By the next AGM, 10 years will have passed and with each passing year, another theft. First our name, then our cap badge, then cerise and buff and now, finally laid to rest, the last Colours bearing our title 'Cheshire.'

Inadvertently eavesdropping on a conversation as we left the cathedral on Mons Day last year: "That's it, finished - no more Cheshires - Endex." Followed by a response: "No, it's not, we are all Cheshires, and we are still here." And, of course, he is correct. I should, I suppose, put in a plug here for the CRA. Something along the lines of "and you are still represented by all 15 branches of your 'Cheshire' Regimental Association. But you know you are, so I won't say it. Except - you are still represented as long as Cheshires support their Association by attending their branches.

Which takes me to the Mercian Regiment. "We are still here" also refers to the young men like 24-year-old Eastham lad, Josh Griffiths of 1 Mercian. He was recently awarded a Conspicuous Gallantry Cross for his "brave and selfless" action whilst serving in Afghanistan. (I am hoping our Editor has found space for coverage of Cpl Griffiths' presentation.) To us, he is a Cheshire. Which is why the CRA needs your support and why we should forge ever stronger links with 'our' Mercian Regiment.

If this reads something like a sermon, then I apologise - but please make the effort to visit Crich on Sunday 6 July. Cheshires and Mercians gather together - and you will be part of it.

See you on Race Day - bring a Mercian!

David Oak

CONTENTS

Minutes of the Branch Officials Meeting	2
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting	3
Award of the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross	4
East Cheshire Reunion	4
Word from the Branches	5-8
Regimental Golf	9
Getting out of Afghanistan	10
The Fairbanks Collection	11
Book Review	11
On Her Majesty's National Service	12
Mercian Cookery Book	13
NI Veterans Association	13
Correspondence	14
Calendar of Events, Club News, Mons Pilgrimage	15
Obituaries, Last Post	16

MINUTES OF THE BRANCH OFFICIALS MEETING

MINUTES OF THE BRANCH OFFICIALS MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2013

Present: Lt Col D M Oak MBE (Chairman), J A Jennings, A Kennedy, D J Waring, Maj T E Pickering MBE (Secretary) and representatives of Birkenhead, Tranmere, Chester, Sandbach, Southern Region and Stockport Branches.

1. Apologies were received from Stoke on Trent Branch

Before the meeting commenced, the Chairman requested that a minute of silence be held to commemorate those members of the Regimental Association who had recently died.

2. The Chairman outlined his thoughts and reasoning for convening the meeting in this new format expressing the hope that all parties would find it useful. He went on to thank the Secretary for his efforts in making Mons Day a success.

3. The Secretary presented the Financial Statement as at 30th September, he was unable to circulate copies because a power cut which had started at 0400hrs the previous day was still affecting the building and copying facilities were not available. He pointed out that in the 11 months to date, the Club had lost £3638 on bar trading but when catering was taken into account, the loss was £1529. This figure will probably increase when the trading period ends on 31 October.

4. Recent past events were reviewed:

a) **Ellesmere Port Commemoration Services 14 July.** The Chairman reported that he had attended and thought that it went well, but could have been better supported.

b) **St Julien Memorial.** Mr Jennings explained the history and background and said that it was successful with about 100 people attending. It is hoped to continue until the Centenary in 2017.

c) **Enid's Walk.** The Secretary outlined the event – Miss Enid Corker (aged 71) had set off from Chester on 31st August to walk around the Mercian Regiment recruiting area in a gesture to honour and draw attention to the deeds of the Mercian Regiment since formation in 2007. She started the walk from RHQ Chester and finished at Worcester Town Hall on 15th September.

d) **Mons Reunion, Service and Laying up of Colours.** It was agreed that the day was successful and memorable.

e) **Dedication of a bench.** The Secretary reported that a bench has been provided in Wilmslow Cemetery in honour of LCpl Jamie Webb. The ceremony was low key but the Standards of the Cheshire Regiment Association and The Mercian Regiment Association were paraded.

5. Future events

a) **Dedication of a War Grave in Flaybrick Cemetery, Bidston.** The Secretary explained that Pte Lawton of 13th Bn had died of pneumonia in October 1918 after having been medically discharged in May 1918 with a war pension. His family were convinced that he should have had a War Grave and put this to CWGC who agreed. The grave will be dedicated on 19th October and CRA Birkenhead and Tranmere Branches will be represented along with soldiers of The Mercian Regiment.

b) **East Cheshire Reunion 26 Oct 13.** Alan Jennings gave an update.

c) **Remembrance Sunday 10 Nov 13.** The Secretary stated that there will now be a Mercian Regiment representative in uniform laying a wreath at all of the major towns in Cheshire. John Fairbanks added that anyone attending the service in Chester is welcome to return to the Club for a "Soup Kitchen" lunch. George Szwejkowski outlined the Southern Region's plans for the weekend (Tower of London, Cenotaph) pointing out that this year's ticket allocation for the CRA is only 24.

d) **Droppin Well Memorial 8 Dec 13.** The Secretary reported that Ken Cooper was organising this as he does every year.

e) **AGM and Meeanee Reunion 15 Feb 14.** The Secretary reported that the calling notice will be sent out with the next Newsletter. He asked for an opinion on catering and it was generally felt that a hot buffet is preferable to a finger buffet.

f) **Mons Centenary 22-25 Aug 14.** The Secretary gave a progress report, saying that uptake for the CRA organised trip was still slow. He is seeking grants to reduce the price. The CO of 1 MERCIAN is keen to take a large representation of serving soldiers to commemorate the occasion.

6. The Newsletter

The Chairman explained that he had requested for the Newsletter publication to be delayed to allow time for articles about the Laying-up of the Colours to be submitted. The editor then stated that he had not received much in the way of contributions. The Newsletter will be distributed at the end of October with the next edition coming out in March 2014.

The e-Bulletin. This is distributed by email and on the CRA facebook page monthly. The Chairman asked that details of Branch events be submitted for it. The Secretary said that publication is planned for the 22nd of each month and submissions should be made by the 21st.

7. The Chairman asked Branches to think about nominations for CRAMC.

8. The Chairman drew attention to the President's and General Martin awards and that nominations should be submitted for consideration. The Secretary requested that nominations be sent to him by 16th January 2014.

9. The Chairman confirmed the date of the Serjeants' Club AGM (2nd November in the CRA Club) and asked that members attend.

10. The Race Day 2013 was discussed and shortfalls acknowledged. Next year's Race Day "Reunion" was confirmed as 9th May 2014.

11. Other Business:

a) George Szwejkowski requested that photographs submitted for the Newsletter show more details, such as Whom, What, Where and When. Correspondents should not assume that he knows everyone.

b) John Fairbanks publicised Chester Branch's Race Meeting social night on 25th October saying that members of other branches are welcome.

12. Date of the next meeting:

18th January 2014.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD IN CHESTER ON 15th FEBRUARY 2014

There were 46 members present.

1. **The Chairman opened the meeting** and introduced Major General K Skempton CBE, Vice President, deputising for the President. Gen Skempton thanked everyone for coming and went on to speak about recent events in the Mercian Regiment which are of note to the CRA:

a) The return of 1 Mercian from Afghanistan in April. The sad loss of LCpl Jamie Webb who was killed during their tour, he drew attention to the family links, recalling that LCpl Webb's uncle had been a member of C Coy when he was OC.

b) 3 Mercian are currently serving in Afghanistan and they have suffered one fatality, WO2 Ian Fisher.

c) A Company of 1 Mercian have deployed to the Falkland Islands.

d) The reorganisation of the Mercian Regiment, reporting that each of the regular battalions will have equal numbers of soldiers from the current 3 battalions and thus will carry forward the traditions of the antecedent Regiments.

e) The 1st Battalion will attend the Mons Day Centenary in Audregnies on 24th August.

He mentioned that the next Commanding Officer of 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment will be Lt Col Ben Wilde and went on to congratulate Colonel Nick Chapman on the award of the CBE and Major Ronnie Goodwin on the award of the MBE. Maj Goodwin is currently serving at the Army Foundation College. He mentioned that Maj Ian Parrott has been selected for promotion to Lt Col.

He spoke about the planned refurbishment of the Regimental Memorial Garden at Chester Cathedral and described the plans. The area will be largely grassed over and it is planned to relocate the badge onto the bank on the east side of the garden where it can be viewed and not walked over.

He ended by asking all members to give their support to both battalions of the Mercian Regiment and look upon them as their County Regiment.

2. **Apologies were received** from Brig I J Cave, Brig M D K Dauncey DSO, Mr L Eyton, Mr S Jones, Brig A J Mac G Percival OBE, Brig WKL Prosser CBE MC, Mr D J Sadler, Mr L G Sutton, Mr G E Szejewski, and Mr S Wohlleben.

3. **Minutes of the 2013 AGM and Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising, Mr Alan Jennings proposed and Capt Alan Joseph seconded the proposal that the minutes be accepted as a true record. **Carried.**

4. **The Trustees Annual Report:** The Chairman reflected on a productive 2013 for the Regimental Association pointing out the success of the Presentation of Colours to the Mercian Regiment in June and the Laying up of Colours on Mons Day. The East Cheshire Reunion was enjoyable and well attended. He felt that our links with the Mercian Regiment are growing stronger and to highlight this he asked Mr Pete Gresty to speak about the work of the Mercian Regiment Association Benevolent Committee. Mr Gresty said that in the previous financial year, the MRA had received requests for assistance from 81 former members of the 22nd, some 68 grants totalling over £29000 were made. Those whom the Mercian Regiment could not assist were signposted to other aid organisations.

The Secretary presented the statement of financial affairs as at 31st October 2013 when they were sent for Independent Examination. He talked through the figures and said that each branch will be sent a full copy of the Independent Examiner's report, it will be posted on the Charity Commission website and he will make a copy for any member who wishes to receive one.

The Chairman went on to outline forthcoming events in 2014 and in particular the Mercian Regiment memorial at Crich and the annual pilgrimage which takes place on the first Sunday in July and recommended that Branches consider attending.

He ended by saying that the strength of the CRA lies with the 15 branches and that he felt that branches should work harder to forge links with organisations such as the ACF.

Returning to the annual report, Mr John Fairbanks proposed and Mr Keith Parsonage seconded the proposal that they be adopted. **Carried.**

5. **Appointment of McLintocks and Partners as auditors.**

The Chairman explained that the accounts have been subject to Independent Examination for each of the last 5 years and with the impending retirement of the Secretary, it was right for them to be subjected to a full audit. Mr Peter Gresty proposed that McLintock and Partners be appointed as Auditors; Mr Dave Beech seconded the proposal. **Carried.**

6. **Election to CRAMC:** The Chairman thanked the 3 members who were stepping down from the Management Committee, Mr Gordon Kipps, Mr Keith Parsonage and Mr Martin Walker for their work during their tenure as members. He reminded everyone that there were 4 vacancies to be filled, the final one being the position held by the late Major John Holden.

The Secretary outlined the process followed, stating that initially there were 5 nominations, but one withdrew making an election unnecessary, accordingly the following were appointed to the Management Committee: Messrs David Clark of Tranmere Branch. Peter Jackson of Birkenhead, David Mapley of Tranmere Branch and George Szejewski of Southern Region Branch.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting, saying that the date and time of the next meeting will depend on a number of factors and will be published in due course.

7. **Major General Peter Martin and President's Awards:**

The Chairman presented Mr Brian Hartigan of Stockport Branch and Mr Dave Waring of Nantwich Branch with The Major General Peter Martin Awards for their service and commitment to their branches. Mr Joe Sadler of Walsall Branch was also nominated but could not attend; his award will be presented at a later date.

Major General Skempton presented Major Ron Goodwin MBE with the President's award for service and commitment to the CRA.

8. The Chairman invited questions and the Secretary spoke about upcoming events, especially 2014 Mons Pilgrimage and the Annual Mons Day Service which will form the basis of the Chester Diocese and County service to commemorate the Centenary of The Great War.

The names of the Meeanee prize-winners of the 22 Club draw were announced and the Meeanee Draw was made.

*T E Pickering
Maj (Retd)
Secretary*

AWARD OF THE CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY CROSS – CPL JOSH GRIFFITHS

As mentioned in the Chairman's Column, I am very happy to reproduce part of the article that appeared in the Daily Telegraph recently:

A young soldier who fought off a fierce Taliban assault despite having his back broken by a huge car bomb attack has received the country's second highest gallantry award at Buckingham Palace.

Cpl Josh Griffiths was presented with the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross by the Prince of Wales for "exceptionally brave and selfless actions" which saved the lives of his wounded colleagues.

The 24-year-old of 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment was sitting down to dinner at his patrol base in Afghanistan's Nad-e Ali district in March last year when a minivan packed with half a ton of explosive blew a 40 yard hole in the perimeter wall.

The blast demolished the cookhouse where he was sitting and marked the start of an onslaught by insurgent gunmen who tried to storm into the base.

Cpl Griffiths, from Eastham, Wirral, Merseyside, came to amid the chaos of the flattened building, injured and surrounded by the cries of comrades.

He said: "I knew my friends were in trouble so I thought I've got to go out there and take the fight to them before anything happens to my lads.

"As I went out there fighting, I thought I've got to stay there. Rather than me getting killed or my mates getting killed I wanted to kill them first."

Facing what was described as "a torrent of machine gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades" he fought back with a light



Cpl Josh Griffiths receives his Conspicuous Gallantry Cross

machine gun from close range to try to stop the insurgents overrunning the base.

His bravery helped turn the tide of the assault and halt the attack at the perimeter. As he was joined by uninjured comrades, he had the chance to retire from the fight to have his wounds tended, but instead he and the Sergeant Major led a small team to charge forward and defeat the insurgents.

It was only afterwards that he realised he not only had damaged his eye, but had also fractured a vertebra in his back in the original explosion.

The soldier added: "When I got taken back to Camp Bastion and was lying in a hospital bed I thought about what happened - replaying what happened in my head."

EAST CHESHIRE REUNION

It cannot have been easy to take over the organisation of the East Cheshire Reunion from Alan Jennings and Major John Holden. Nevertheless, Lawrence Dunning did an excellent job, evidenced by the fact that all those who attended enjoyed another great evening.

It was such a shame that Major John Holden lost his battle so close to the event and was therefore unable to take his place as Presiding Officer. It was good to see the Commanding Officer of 1 Mercian in attendance and his assurance that the traditions of the 22nd were safe with his battalion. It was also fitting that Ken Cooper received his President's Award from Major General Keith Skempton CBE. This was in recognition of his excellent efforts in organising the annual Ballykelly Memorial Service.



Kenny Cooper receives his President's Award from Major General Keith Skempton CBE

Once again the evening was made even more enjoyable with the presence of the Bollington Brass Band.



John Fairbanks' attempt to make a "low key" entrance was thwarted by Ron Goodwin

SNIPPETS

This issue, a classic collection of excuses for bad driving...

The car didn't come with an instruction manual.

I had been driving for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel.

When I saw I could not avoid a collision, I stepped on the gas and crashed into the other car.

The pedestrian ran for the pavement, but I got him.

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH

On 19th October 2013 the standards of both Tranmere and Birkenhead Branches were carried at Flaybrick Cemetery, Birkenhead. The occasion was the dedication of the grave of Pte Edward Lawton, a soldier of the First World War 13th Battalion. After long and diligent research by a relative, Mr Peter Threlfall, who is also Merseyside Chairman of the Western Front Association, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission agreed that Pte Lawton had died as a result of war service and provided a headstone. Mercian Regiment soldiers attended, including the 1st Bn's Drum Major to sound Last Post and Reveille. The Regiment and the CRA were therefore well represented and included our Chairman, Ray Hogan.



Ray Hogan, Birkenhead Branch Chairman, at the above ceremony.

The East Cheshire Reunion is always a convivial and well organised event, which deserves wider support from CRA members. Only four of us were able to attend on October 26th. During the evening, Lt. Col. Mark Elwood MBE, CO 1 MERCIAN, updated us on the battalion's current commitments and assured us that the 22nd's traditions and sporting prowess would be upheld. The organisers are to be congratulated for maintaining this as a commemorative event as well as providing an enjoyable meal, enlivened by the playing of the Bollington Brass Band.

We were very happy to welcome CRA Chairman, Lt. Col. David Oak to our November meeting, pursuing his plan to familiarise himself with all the Branches. On Remembrance Day the Branch Standard was paraded, together with marching escort, at Port Sunlight. Appropriately enough, bright sunlight prevailed as the event took place, the parade being led by the Lyceum Brass Band. The ceremony at the magnificent memorial was followed by the Remembrance Sunday service at Christ Church. In the South-west corner of the churchyard stands an oak tree and brass plaque. Planted by Viscount Leverhulme in May 1995, this is to commemorate every individual who has served in the Regiment from 1689 until the present day. After the service, Branch members customarily pause here for a few moments' reflection and those who have gone before us. This is made more poignant as close to the tree is a family memorial to the late Geoff Hunt, who gave memorable leadership to our Branch as Chairman, from 1996 until 2011.

Our 2013 Christmas Lunch this year was held at The Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight on 1st December. This proved to be a comfortable and readily accessible venue. Branch members were joined by our friends from the RASC/RCT and WRAC

Associations. We enjoyed a truly tasty meal accompanied by the traditional glass or two of Chateau Vert, raffle and Irish bingo.

We are looking forward to 2014, not only to our usual calendar of CRA events but also to witnessing, and being able to participate in, the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War.

Peter Jackson

CHESTER BRANCH

The last quarter of 2013 was definitely one that we at Chester will not forget in a hurry, because in the space of as many days we said out last farewells to five Branch stalwarts. We lost the incomparable Henry Dodds, the unforgettable Alice Sproston and the irreplaceable Joyce Jenkins. They were followed by one of our remaining WW2 veterans Jim Davies, and then the sudden and shocking passing of our Chairman Mitch Elliott. All of them were loyal and steadfast supporters and will be greatly missed. Recovery from these losses has taken a while but life must go on and we now turn our attention to a programme for 2014 in the hope that the Grim Reaper will take a period of leave.

In spite of everything our Christmas lunch which was held on 8th December, was well attended and thoroughly enjoyable. The Christmas draw took place on Friday 20th December and a packed club, well primed with copious amounts of mulled wine, saw a fairly even distribution of some 55 prizes. Whilst yours truly managed to win four prizes, I was outperformed, as anticipated, by John Murphy who went home with seven. He was adamant that it was not true that he had hired a Pickford's lorry to carry home the loot!! Otherwise, as I said, the spread of prizes was amazingly even. There were 34 prize winners for 55 prizes.

The period since Christmas has been noticeable by being extremely quiet and marked by a dramatic fall in attendances on Friday nights. The weather has not helped, as you are all well aware, but we do appear to be in a worrying decline which we hope can be corrected as the weather warms up. I certainly hope so. Until then all of us at Chester say take care and, no matter what, keep smiling.

John Fairbanks

ELLESMERE PORT BRANCH

Greetings from Ellesmere Port.

First of all, I must accord a massive vote of thanks to Tom Simkins. Recently my rather aged laptop went "belly up," I was faced with considerable expense to replace it. Tom came to the rescue with a laptop that he does not use anymore. I am now "back in the loop."

In August Mike Dempsey led our summer (?) outing to the Lake District. They encountered the usual weather, rain all day, but with the typical English stiff upper lip made the most of a very enjoyable day.

November saw our branch well represented at Remembrance Day celebrations, once again with no coverage from local press. Thanks to Richard Minshull there was a video presentation on YouTube.

December saw members assemble for our Christmas dinner and gathering, a very successful evening. Thanks to the helpers working away in the background, with music by DJ "Just Gordon."

At our AGM in January there was no change in Branch officers, with one exception. Our chairman requested a break to

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

deal with a personal matter; I thank John Davies for stepping into the breach. As I addressed the meeting I spoke about recruitment, reminding members that we must double our efforts in this. A random thought came into my head. Many soldiers leaving 1 Mercian did in fact enlist in 22nd Cheshire Regiment, before the merger, following their fathers/grandfathers. Maybe they will want to maintain their contact with the “22’s”??

Also, I sometimes help out in the “post room” at HQ, preparing copies of the newsletter for dispatch. I frequently come across loads of names/addresses of members in the Ellesmere Port area – if only they could be motivated to join a Branch.

Finally, a blast from the past, took a phone call recently from one of my former training sergeants at the Dale Camp. Sergeant Ron Stratton. Lovely to hear from you Ron, please keep in touch. Two guys taught me so much in training, Ron and Sergeant Ken Pinkard.

Gordon Kipps

KIRKHAM BRANCH

This is the first chance that I have had to say thank you to all my friends in the CRA for all the help and support I have received following the death of my much-loved wife Florence on 24th July 2013. This was after a two year fight against cancer.

The phone calls, cards and letters of support were a great comfort to both me and my family. A very special thank you to my mate Paul Hadfield and his wife Dorothy, who attended the funeral and represented the MT comrades. Thanks also to Bill Birkett and Tommy Davies, who represented the Kirkham Branch. Once again, thank you all from the Gibson family.

The members who attended the East Cheshire Reunion at Stockport said that they had a very good time and were made most welcome by the Stockport Branch members.

The branch Christmas party was a good night out and thanks go to the staff at the Stables Hotel for all their hard work looking after us.

We had our AGM on 21st January and we voted to keep the same committee, who have done such a good job for the branch:

Secretary: Ricky Burchett

Chairman: Noel Brookes

Treasurer: Bill Birkett

MTO: Tommy Davies

Branch Scribe: John Gibson

The CRA Annual General Meeting is our next port of call on Saturday 15th February at Chester. All the best and a happy New Year to you all.

John Gibson

MACCLESFIELD BRANCH

It is a while since I last wrote and although it will be March by the time you get this, I hope that you all had a good Christmas and wish you a very happy New Year. We had a very poor 2013, with the sad loss of the following: Irene Worrall, wife of Frank; Pauline Brown, wife of Sam, and Pam Newton, wife of Ken. More recently there has been the loss of Phil Barratt. Phil was a very well-liked and respected member, who died after a short illness. He was very bright and smiley and his funeral in Congleton was packed out with friends and family, along with several branch members and the branch standard, which I carried. He will be sadly missed by the branch and his friends at his bowling club.

I would like to take this opportunity to give my thanks and appreciation to our branch treasurer and secretary, Norman McKinnell. No man has worked so hard over many years in both roles and I know he won't mind me letting you know that he is now 82 years young. I met with him recently when he said that he wanted to pass on the secretarial baton to someone else, but would still carry on as treasurer. I am sure that any chairman will understand what a problem this can cause. However, I may already have an answer in one of our newest members, Tom Cork. Tom Works at Mercedes Benz with my wife Rosemarie and thankfully the CRA was raised in conversation and Tom joined at the January meeting. Thank you to Norman, on behalf of all members.

More thanks and appreciation should go out to Colonel Scott, who we have not seen for a while. It is thanks to him that the Capesthorpe Hall Service was revived over the last three years. We meet up with fellow members from Stockport for the service and then on to the Flower Pot pub for lunch. In all it is a good day with good food and drink in the company of friends and is much enjoyed by our Congleton members. If there's beer, there's Congles! I do hope that we see the Colonel at the service in February.

Our branch meeting venue has recently changed and we now meet at the Queen's Hotel, opposite the train station. It is very easy to find and there is plenty of parking available. I would invite members from any other branch to join us for a pint if you are in the area on the first Tuesday of every month. Meeting starts at 8pm.

Before I sign off I would ask all our members who are fit and well to make an effort to attend our meetings when possible. Attendance numbers are dwindling of late and although we had two new members at the January meeting, this does not make up for the members who have stopped attending. So come on down, have a couple of pints with the other old sweats and swing a few lights. All the best and see you soon.

Andy Wood

NANTWICH AND DISTRICT

Firstly may I say on behalf of the branch, a very happy, peaceful, prosperous and healthy New Year to all within the CRA. The branch continues with a fairly good membership and attendance at our once-monthly meetings. As always there is much lively discussion and of course good humour and comradeship.

Branch members held their pre-Christmas dinner at the Peacock in Nantwich, organised under the direction of Brian Billington. Some of our members continue to be unwell and “thinking of you” cards have been sent on behalf of the branch.

The branch AGM was held in January, when reports were given by our president, chairman and treasurer. The yearly accounts were presented and approved. Branch officers for the current year were:

President and PRO: Ray Stafford MBE

Chairmen: Harry Tomkinson and Brian Billington.

Minutes Secretary: Grahame Ravenscroft.

Treasurer: Dave Waring

Almoner: Peter Hoffman

At the monthly meeting after the AGM it was unanimously resolved that £300 should be sent to the Mercian Regiment Benevolent Fund.

Details of branch events and activities for the year are being formulated as these notes go to post. The events will no doubt include Chester Races, Mons Reunion and the East Cheshire Reunion.

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)



Members of the Nantwich & District Branch.

Branch representatives attended the CRA AGM in Chester, including Michael Morgan-Wynne, Ray Stafford, Harry Tomkinson, Dave Waring and Jim Salisbury. Congratulations to Dave Waring, our branch treasurer since 1980, who received the General Peter Martin Award at the AGM.

The branch continues to meet in the Crosville Social Club in Chester Street, Crewe on the last Tuesday of each month from 7.30pm. New members are always welcome. Do come and join us. The next meeting is on Tuesday 25th March.

Ray Stafford

SOUTHERN REGION

As usual, the month of November was a busy time for the branch. It began with the Field of Remembrance in the grounds of Westminster Abbey. Brigadier Tony Twiss presented the regimental plot to HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. This year HRH brought along an apprentice in the shape of Prince Henry of Wales, known more usually as Prince Harry.

It was good to see so many members of the CRA and also from the other antecedent regiments of the Mercian Regiment. It was very kind of Colonel Bob Stewart DSO MP who took some of us into the Palace of Westminster for lunch.

Saturday saw us once again at the Tower of London and it was thanks again to Dickie Dover for making it possible. The fish and chips, washed down with a few mineral waters in the Yeoman Warders' Mess, rounded off another great day.

Remembrance Sunday was thankfully dry and reasonably warm as we stood on Whitehall waiting our turn to march past the Cenotaph. We are very grateful to all those who supported us



Brigadier Tony Twiss and HRH – Probably discussing the Army v Navy Rugby

on the day and it is always a pleasure to have Thomas Jones (aged 97) and his daughter Karen who travel down from Wolverhampton to march with us.

In January we held our Annual General Meeting and it will come as no surprise that all the committee were re-elected.

February saw us commemorating the Battle of Meeanee with our annual Ladies Dinner, held at the Victory Services Club in London. Although we were slightly down on numbers, with thanks once again to Trevor Taylor, it was a very enjoyable evening.



Harry Hewitt and Trevor Taylor meeting up with ex-Bandmaster John Huggins on Whitehall. John was marching with the London Ambulance Service



Back on Horse Guards after marching past the Cenotaph

We look forward to supporting Chester Races on 9th May and no doubt some of us will also be looking forward to the annual encounter between the Army and the Royal Navy at Twickenham on Saturday 3rd May.

George Szejkowski

STOCKPORT BRANCH

October 25th saw the Funeral of Mitch Elliot held at Blacon, followed on a lighter note by the Annual East Cheshire Reunion. And what a brilliant night to hear 170 voices (not all in tune) singing "Abide with Me" – it was inspirational, to say the least. This prestigious event was supported by members from all over the country. Time to 'swing the lights,' 'pull up the proverbial

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

sandbag' and chat over bygone days. This is exactly what reunions are all about, together with Hot Pot (nowhere near as nice as Range Stew as served on Sealand Rages all those years ago) and the obligatory beer or two. The late Major John Holden would have been chuffed to bits that night.

'Des' Jones's Funeral was well attended with several of the Regimental Veterans gracing the Armoury. A toast in remembrance of both Mitch Elliot and 'Des' Jones was also conducted that evening.

As our Branch AGM rapidly approached once again the usual rogues and vagabonds put themselves forward for election. It was looking as if the 'If it ain't broke don't fix it' applied again.

Our Association and Branch Standards were paraded once again before a bumper crowd at the Annual Armed Forces Concert at the Plaza Theatre and Cinema here in Stockport – a sell-out theatre with entertaining music and singing plus a host of Association Standards paraded and dipped on stage.

Talking of the Plaza Theatre, some of us had the pleasure of attending a musical evening there, provided by the Military Ladies Choir (Chivenor), truly a magnificent display and one not to be missed.

We also had a visit to the Armed Forces Commemoration evening in the Manchester Airport Concord and Nimrod Hangar with all local Forces Associations present. A fitting venue considering the history involved in such an important WW2 location.

Our Remembrance Day Parade took place once again with the crowds increasing each year. A beer and a welcome hot pot followed at the TA Centre afterwards and a welcome chance to catch up with some Old Comrades.

Poppy selling and preparing for our annual Ladies Dinner occupied most of our time in the run up to Christmas. Our Branch AGM was held with Alan Kennedy being honoured with a Life Membership. A Vote of thanks went to Paul Lomas for standing in as Branch Secretary during Keith Mort's enforced absence. Paul had to stand down due to work commitments with yours truly drawing the short straw to take his place.

Once again our Branch was represented at the annual Droppin' Well Memorial Service by Brian Hartigan and Eddie Bottomley, Peter and Lynne Gresty along with the Branch and Association Standard. Our thanks go to Peter Gresty for his valuable assistance in this matter. One happy note to add is the fact that Eddie Botts DOES indeed own a wallet as was proved in the confines of the Ex Services Club. This dispels any rumours to the contrary. (Whether or not it was ever opened is another matter).

Our Annual Ladies Night Dinner was held with a three course meal, wine and port, and was an enjoyable evening with the ladies dressed immaculately. Both Peter Gresty and I were once again 'Dixie Bashing' that night. Our Chairman wished all present the Seasonal Greetings as we toasted The Regiment. Despite fewer numbers this year this one occasion in our Diary is one we must retain. If it wasn't for the support of our Branch Ladies throughout the Year in all our activities then all would be lost.

It was with deep sorrow we learned of the death of one of our branch widows. Mrs Ann Beard passed away on December 28th 2013. Ann was a stalwart member of our Branch Bowls Team and her late husband served with B Coy 1st Bn in Malta during WW2. We gave her a good 'send off' complete with a guard of honour at the crematorium - nothing less for a loyal Branch member.

It looks like our Annual Bowls Challenge has been resurrected with the away leg at Birkenhead on 8th June with the return leg TBC.

Our Meeanee Dinner is to be held at the Regimental Club on 1st March; more on that later.

The Season's Greetings went to everyone in our regimental family and our thoughts went out too, at this time of the year, to those who have lost members of their families... you are always in our thoughts.

As we now prepare for 2014 and all it entails we find our Branch diary filling up rapidly, various WW1 commemoration events, plus our Annual Bowls Challenge v Birkenhead Branch, are now being prepared for. Certainly a very interesting year ahead.

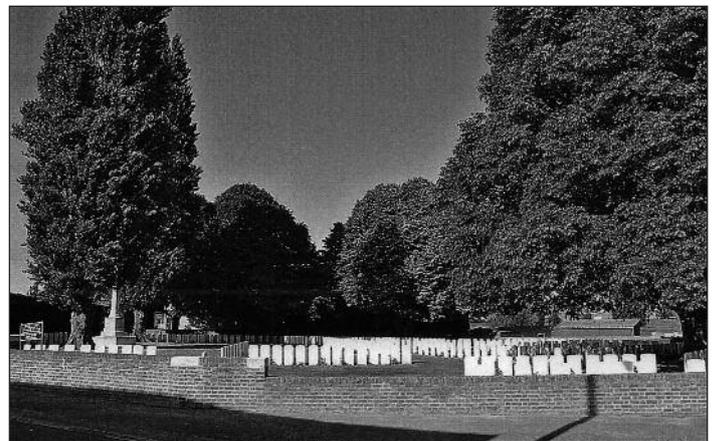
Gordon H Smith

St Julien Dressing Station

In continuance of the friendship forged between our Regimental Association and the farmer and family who look after the St Julien Dressing Station, the farmer Willy Veraverbeke has kindly sent us two photographs (before and after) of the refurbishment of the Dressing Station alongside his farm.

It should be explained that Willy Veraverbeke wrote to HRH the Prince of Wales when he saw what had been done to the cemetery. Although HRH was unable to intervene personally, Willy's letter was passed on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. They explained that it was done because the trees had overgrown the landscape and were adversely affecting the integrity of the graves and memorials.

It all seems a bit drastic and I think we all prefer the former picture.



St Julien Dressing Station before



St Julien Dressing Station after

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

WALSALL BRANCH

Apologies for the mix up that caused me to miss the last newsletter. We had a very good turnout of 92 for the Malay/Singapore Reunion. A good night was had by all with fine cuisine and first class entertainment.

We had an attendance at the presenting of the new colours and still managed to attend our monthly meeting the same evening. The Mons church service was very moving with the colours being laid.

We had our AGM, with 16 members attending, in September where the committee agreed to stand for another year, but unfortunately Les Sutton, our treasurer, had to stand down due to ill health, but Mac Hartshorne said he would help out as much as he could.

Cliff Easthope and myself, plus wives, visited Tangmere Military Aviation Museum in Chichester and strongly recommend it to anyone who is ever in the area. Web site www.tangmere-museum.org.uk.

The next event was East Cheshire Reunion where we had nine in attendance, including our newest member, Len Eyton, who has submitted this account: *It was my first East Cheshire Reunion and what a great night it was. I met Roy Porter who I hadn't seen since 1964 when we were on the Battalion Boxing team together. Also there was Major Mike Huntriss who was my Company Commander in Ballykelly. General Skempton surprised me by recalling an incident whilst at BATUS in Canada involving a certain Captain Skempton's backside, some very large cactus spines, myself and a pair of pliers. The secret is safe with me.*

Our Christmas Dinner was next up where we had 60 attending a sit-down, four-course dinner with white or red wine. The entertainment was a young man called Scott David and if any reader sees him advertised I would strongly recommend you see him. I tried to rebook him for our Malay/Singapore Reunion on 14th June 2014 at Pelsall, but he is fully booked for the month.

Reg Smith

REGIMENTAL GOLF

Curzon Park was the second outing of 2013 for the Golf Society. We had 28 playing, which was a good turnout. The weather was good and the course was in excellent condition as always. The food was good and we were well looked after by the club. The people that played said that they always enjoy this venue. The winner was Vic Boddy who had 40 points, which is a fabulous score; he has lost two shots off his handicap. Second with 35 points Grenville Livens, he will lose one shot. Congratulation to you both – Bandits.

We played our annual match against **Eastham Lodge**, with 24 playing members. This is fast-becoming one of the highlights of the season. The banter between the two clubs was intense. The game is played in good spirits. We had a good band of players, (some new faces and the old stalwarts). We started with the captains of both teams teeing off with others watching and cheering us on. Mitch Elliott was following the team around and taking some photos. (Thanks Mitch).

The tension was mounting as each player was coming in, and the scores were taken off them; the thrill of one finding out who was winning was electrifying. Once all the players were in and showered, we sat down for a meal with our playing partners going over the game, with the normal banter flying across the room. The Captain of Eastham Lodge (Bruce Sherlock) welcomed the 22nd Cheshire Golf Society to the club, toasted our good health, and then said a few words. This was returned by our captain, Frank Barham, thanking them for a great day and the hospitality that the members gave our team. We have yet to beat Eastham Lodge, but this year hopes of this were high. The team scores were Eastham Lodge 429, (22nd) Cheshire 405 – we are getting close. This event is now in its 6th year and players from both sides look forward to the event. The members of Eastham do have a connection with the Regiment with their grandfathers, fathers and son's who have served in the Regiment.

Pryor Hayes was the next event; Pete Murphy won this with a good score of 40 points. Close behind (as always) was Ralph Brown, also on 40 points, which he lost on the count-back. Next time Ralph – when you can count.

Delemere Forest was the last event of the year. Again, a good turnout. Jeff Evans won with 36 points; Mark Turly was

second with 34 points. There was a count-back for the third place with four players on 33 points – John Tyson got the third placing. Eddie Bates (still a Sgt) was in the running on 33 points as well. (Next time maybe).

To round up the year's golfing was The Bigland Trophy. This is for the best 3 scores out of 4 events. The overall winner was Pete Murphy with 104 points. Runner-up was Frank Barham with 97 points. Ralph Brown lost the runner-up on count back again. Thanks to all those who attend the golf events and for supporting the Golf Society. Let us have a good 2014.

Upcoming Golf Days

Curzon Park – May 16th

The Oaks Mollington – June 13th

Aldersey Green – July 18th

Eastham Lodge – August 8th

Pryor's Hayes – Sept 5th

If any serving or past serving golfers would like to join us, please inform the Castle you are more than welcome.

Frank Barham



Jeff Evans – First Prize at Delamere

GETTING OUT OF AFGHANISTAN by Arthur Clarke

COMING HOME

The troops are coming home this year after ten years of fighting, dying, suffering and sacrifice. What the man in the Dog and Duck wants to know is, "Has the job been done?" It is not an unreasonable question to ask. We all know that Osama bin Laden has been killed and Saddam Hussain likewise rubbed out in Iraq. But when Philip Hammond, the Defence Minister, was asked about the future prospects for Afghanistan he admitted that no one can predict what will happen after NATO forces leave. "The best we can hope for is a more stable country," he said. The Commons cross party defence committee predicted that the country could descend into civil war within a few years of departure. It's not much of an achievement for all the sacrifices the troops have made.

No one denies that the threat from international terrorists using Afghanistan as a training base has been greatly reduced. But these people haven't suddenly become peace loving bank clerks. They have moved elsewhere. We even know where their new bases are. What makes it more alarming is that there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of young British Muslims amongst them.

Our experience in Iraq and Vietnam is a cautionary lesson. As I write these words it has just been announced on the radio that a bomb detonated by a suicide bomber in Baghdad has killed 58 people.

WORLD WAR ONE

I have just been invited to join a small committee, to plan a few events for the village in which I live, to commemorate the 1st World War and to remember the terrible suffering of those days.

As a result, I have been doing a bit of research and general reading about that war. What strikes me immediately is how little was achieved after all that misery and carnage.

The soldiers were promised a 'Land fit for Heroes' and a 'War to end Wars.' What many of them got was unemployment, poverty, homelessness and hopelessness – my mother's father was out of work for ten years. This was not only true in England but also in Germany, Russia and France. In Germany, runaway inflation with all its attendant ills led to the rise of the Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler, the holocaust and ultimately to World War 11. In Russia, it led to the overthrow of the Tsar, the communist revolution, the slaughter of the kulaks and tens of millions more innocent people. Not quite what was promised! But it bought us two decades of freedom from warfare.

LEARNING FROM THE PAST IN AFGHANISTAN

To return to Afghanistan, "*The experience of the past years clearly shows that the Afghan problem cannot be solved by military means only. We should decisively reject our illusions and undertake principally new steps, taking into account the lessons of the past, and the real situation of the country.*" That was said by Colonel K. Tsagalov, addressing the Soviet Defence minister in 1987. It's a pity those who went into Afghanistan in 2003 hadn't read those words. Stanley McChrystal, the ISAF commander, wrote, "Afghanistan's social, political, economic and cultural affairs are complex and poorly understood. [NATO] does not sufficiently appreciate the dynamics in local communities, nor how corruption, incompetent officials, power brokers and criminality all combine to affect the Afghan population." In other words, we should have studied the nature of Afghan society and previous wars before we went in. He was sacked soon afterwards! One Russian general said that they should have studied Kipling before they invaded.

Obviously no one knows what will happen in Afghanistan but if North Korea, Iraq and Vietnam are anything to go by, as Philip Hammond says, "We can only hope..." That's the best there is on offer; it's not much to show for ten years of sacrifice and suffering, not to mention the billions of dollars spent on the enterprise.

As an armchair warrior, I can only offer a personal perspective but it seems pretty obvious that the whole lawless border areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and one or two former Soviet republics will simply revert to a turmoil of low level ethnic and religious warfare supplying vast quantities of drugs for the junkies in the West to consume - someone has to supply them!

The jihadis, including 700 from Britain, I believe, are already setting up training camps along the wild Syrian border with Turkey. Hardly 'a war to end wars' more like a recipe for 'a war without end.'

However, one interesting development which could alter the whole picture, is the renewed interest of Russia and China in the area: "Russia may return to [Afghanistan] by establishing maintenance bases for Russian made military equipment after NATO winds down its operations there..." Russian Defence officials have confirmed. And China is building up the infrastructure; including a massive road building project in rebel controlled areas (supported and protected, of course by the Taliban themselves). The irony of the year must be the statement by Oleg Tikhanov, the leader of the Afghan War Veterans in Siberia, "Someone has to help the Afghan people build a peaceful life. They've known nothing but weapons and war for so long."

I hope that they've read Kipling.

Arthur Clarke

WORLD WAR 11

A young student teacher was asked at short notice to take a history lesson on warfare in the twentieth century, to a class of 8 year olds. She told her tutor that history wasn't her subject but he assured her that she would be OK if she just stuck to the National Curriculum notes. She delivered her lesson very well, faithfully adhering to the notes but referring several times to World War Eleven!

Arthur Clarke

SNIPPETS

The accident was caused by me waving to the man I hit last week.

No one was to blame for the accident, but it never would have happened if the other driver had been alert.

The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.

I knocked over a man. He admitted it was his fault and had been knocked over before.

As I approached the intersection, a stop sign suddenly appeared in a place where no stop sign had ever appeared before. I was unable to stop in time to avoid the accident.

I didn't think the speed limit applied after midnight.

I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law and headed over the embankment.

THE FAIRBANKS COLLECTION

A WINTERS TALE

To:
The Secretary
The Sporrán Ski Club
Edinburgh

Hotel Alte Post
Gotzens
Tirol
Austria

February 12th

Dear Hamish,

Thank you for your letter. I must say that bearing in mind the unruly conduct of your members during your stay here, I was astounded to hear that you managed to get them all safely back to Scotland.

I am afraid there is not a lot I can do to help you find your missing skis. At present, as a rough estimate, I would say there are perhaps a million skis in this part of the world, and a large percentage of those are red too.

You are correct in your assertion that the journey from the airport at Munich to the resort took far longer than advertised in the brochure. The reason is as follows. When your bearded, kilted group disembarked from the plane and crossed the tarmac waving bottles of whisky and wailing like banshees, hardened airport police paled visibly and suddenly discovered urgent business elsewhere in the neighbourhood. As I watched them departing, closely followed by apprehensive customs officers, and as the first notes from the pipes shattered the airwaves, I decided to take the longer route to Gotzens over the mountains. I did so, not in order to let your members view the magnificent scenery, but to try and avoid an international incident at the main border crossing into Austria. You will no doubt recall that I was only partially successful. It was only the judicious gift of a large

bottle of whisky that persuaded the young border policeman to refrain from arresting the idiots who tried to fly the saltire from the check point flag pole.

Contrary to what you may claim I consider that, especially on Burns Night, the entire staff of the Hotel Alte Post were most helpful and cooperative. Not only did they reserve the entire dining room for your exclusive use, but they even let you prepare and consume your own private stock of food and drink.

The latter point is completely alien to normal practice in Alpine hotels and guest houses and is a true indication of the staff's eagerness to help make your celebrations enjoyable and memorable. And as for the haggis! Neither the hotel chef, nor I had even seen one before, never mind cooked one. So under the circumstances, and the influence of not a little whisky, I think the chef did remarkably well to prepare the 'Beastie' to your satisfaction.

I doubt if you are aware that your ski club's visit in general, and the Burns Night festivities in particular, now holds a unique and permanent place in the annals of winter sports in the Tirol. So much so that there is to this day one unfortunate waitress who is considered by her family to be quite mad. This is because she insists that one dark winter's night she watched a tall bearded man, who wore a skirt, stab a strange looking sausage with a knife he carried in his sock. He did so whilst talking utter gibberish as he performed the strange ritual. And she was deemed to be crackers!!

In the hope that you managed to get all of the splinter out (that will teach you to slide along a rough wooden bench with your kilt rucked up), and in the hope that we will see you again next year, I am,

Yours sincerely,

John Fairbanks, Resident Rep.

BOOK REVIEW

WOJTEK THE BEAR

By Eileen Orr



Having Polish ancestry, I have long been aware of the story of Wojtek, the bear that went to war. What I didn't know about until I read this book, was that his name still lives on in so many ways and is the catalyst for an ever-growing, Polish-Scottish relationship.

This is the true story of one of the most unusual characters in WW2. Wojtek, when a bear cub, was adopted as a mascot by the Polish Army that was forming in Iran. Having no contemporaries he very quickly adopted the human traits of the soldiers and as he grew older he even developed the soldiers' love for beer and cigarettes. He came to see himself as an equal of the

soldiers, and although a brown bear over six feet tall he was given a military rank and number. When the Polish soldiers saw active service, Wojtek played a full part as a member of his troop, carrying heavy artillery shells from the supply line up to the guns. Although almost taken for granted by the Poles, British and American soldiers who witnessed Wojtek's activities looked on with disbelief.

At the end of the war, Wojtek, with many of his Polish compatriots, arrived in Berwickshire, where he became a familiar and much-loved member of the local community, before eventually moving to Edinburgh Zoo.

Despite his war-time exploits, a great deal of the book is dedicated to Wojtek's life in Scotland and the more recent activities in trying to create a memorial to his life to be erected in Edinburgh. He continues to inspire a new generation of both Poles and Scots, and the final part of the book is where Neal Ascherson, a historian, reflects on the Polish experience in the Second World War and gives full recognition to the Poles' heroic sacrifice and the extraordinary influence they had on the countries in which they served.

This is not a book about war, but more about humanity, loyalty, kindness and perhaps most of all about a brown bear who yearned for human contact and who possessed an unflinching empathy for the soldiers with whom he had shared a dreadful wartime experience.

George Szwejkowski

ON HER MAJESTY'S NATIONAL SERVICE by Mike Evans

1956, Brook Barracks, Berlin – Suez Year. Major Anderson, the PRI was given an instant posting to read aerial photos in Egypt. There was no time for the usual handover. It came up over mess lunch that somebody with accountancy knowledge was needed. I mentioned that in my short civilian life, I had learned the difference between debits and credits.

Lunch over, Dick Sharpe, the adjutant told me that the CO, Colonel Ken Trevor wanted to see me. The outcome was that this National Service 2Lt found himself in an excellent, warm, double-glazed parquet floored office with instructions to “carry on” to sort out the regiment’s financial affairs. Incidentally, I also found myself responsible for a dozen pigs and a disgusting rabbitry.

The PRI also included a rather good shop run by a German civilian, who was also responsible for the German labour in the barracks. I was also Civilian Labour Officer! Colonel Trevor obviously considered that I was not fully employed and so appointed me the Battalion Messing Officer. Fortunately for the regiment a very capable cook sergeant actually did the work as he knew what had to be done. All that seemed to be required from me was a daily signature to approve the menus for the day! Disciplinary matters I found best left to the sergeant to be most efficient, short-lived and paperless.

On a couple of exercises with the Americans, Colonel Trevor gave me my fourth title as his Liaison Officer. Not bad, a major’s, two captain’s and a lieutenant’s appointments all at the same time – and no extra pay!

Bill Helliwell is responsible for this rambling, as he reminded me of the Fire Practice. I will fill in the complete events of his delightful article to be found at the top of page 13 of the October 2013 CRA Newsletter. About six weeks prior to the event I was called to the CO’s office “Ah Mike! I want you to be the Battalion Fire Officer”. I was about to protest (you could if you were NS, as life’s career did not depend on your current performance) that had I not sufficient titles/jobs, as this would be job number 5? However, he then went on to say “Unfortunately, it will require you to go back to UK for a two-week training course with the Kent Fire Brigade, in the village of Watlington, where you will be housed in a country hotel”. I quickly decided that a protest was not needed as this was rather better than good!

The Fire Training Officer in his welcome to his new intake of Army officers explained that no-one ever failed their course, as they liked running it. From out in the country, where we took our turns driving the 1930s fire engine and extinguished fires we had just lit, and the visits in the evening to London will tell you how demanding was this two weeks. To aid my recovery I was given a three-day weekend leave where I met up with my girlfriend, who was on holiday with her parents and I achieved a further objective, that we should get engaged – and we did 57 years ago!

However, back to the Fire Practice. In a fit of keenness in my new role I would see to it that we would have a proper fire practice, one when nobody except me knew that it would happen. The usual tip off to the fire piquet and a smoke bomb in a dug-out was not good enough! I investigated the top floor of the Orderly Room Block and found it un-used. Naturally for my responsibilities I had a capable NCO – or was it in reality often the other way around? I asked him to obtain red and black smoke bombs. He said “What for?” I said “Wait and see!” We took the bombs to the top of the building, opened the windows, set the bombs off and beat a hasty retreat to the far side of the square. Smoke emanated and a Lance-Corporal with one of his platoon, stopped, having noticed the smoke. He considered the situation and being a bright NCO ran to the guardroom to tell the piquet – and anyone else interested.

The reaction was speedy, despite not having any of our modern communication aids, and men, buckets, pumps etc. appeared from all directions. I then returned to the “fire” and brought about all the water being sent up, to be emptied out of the back windows. Only three men at the top could see what was really happening. The fire practice was going well!

Then it happened. A wind change and the smoke poured back into the building. National Service Private Huddleston (who, by coincidence I was at school with) and two other soldiers passed out, overcome by smoke.

Strangely, this had not been part of my unwritten plan for the event. An emergency call to the medics and an ambulance arrived to take the three unfortunates to BMH Berlin.

Bill’s article as to the events which followed is, I am sure an accurate recollection and refers to my probable well-being and its likely jeopardy if I returned near the Orderly Room. That was nearly the least of my problems. I had forgotten that I had told Colonel Ken that I intended to hold a practice. He said “Fine, but not on Tuesday morning as I am inspecting B Company lines prior to the Brigadier’s Inspection”. Yes, you have guessed it – the practice was that morning and I had forgotten.

That afternoon a call to my posh office said “Adjutant here, the Commanding Officer requires you now”! This gave me a hint, as it was not the usual “Mike, the CO wants you”. “I told you that you were not to hold the practice Tuesday morning” said Ken Trevor. I did not feel on safe ground, until suddenly I had an inspirational moment. You see, readers, the Battalion Fire Officer is directly responsible only to the Brigade Fire Officer, as we learned on our fire course.

I explained (having apologised) that the practice had been a huge success and I would be sending an excellent report to Brigade. With that, Ken Trevor seemed rather pleased and said the usual “Don’t let it happen again”- and I heard no more about it. I was probably expecting a few extra Orderly Officers! The three squaddies efforts were well rewarded with a week’s company of nurses in the BMH.

Forty years later I met Ken Trevor on a cruise and I was flattered that he remembered my efforts in Berlin, where I brought about a big increase in PRI funds in readiness for the Presentation of New Colours, as he had requested. He also remembered the fire practice!

The sergeant who was my permanent Fire Assistant and I gained a weekly perk. I had convinced Ken Trevor that the only time we could get an accurate weekly stock-take of buckets, pumps etc. was when everyone was out of barracks, so we never had to do the Saturday cross-country runs!

Mike Evans

1955-1957 The Dale – Eton Hall OCS – Berlin – Barnard Castle

SNIPPETS

I started to slow down but the traffic was more stationary than I thought.

I was backing my car out of the driveway in the usual manner, when it was struck by the other car in the same place it had been struck several times before.

The telephone pole was approaching fast. I was attempting to swerve out of its path when it struck my car.

Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don’t have.

I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way.

BARBARISM

Readers of the *Daily Telegraph* or *Daily Mail* may well have found some amusement in an edict that recently emanated from General James Cowan, Commander of 3 UK Division, based in and around Bulford. As well as a lengthy discourse on letter writing and other matters, he gives advice on etiquette, with particular attention to standards in the mess. Advice includes:

Sandwiches

'Quite a few officers in the divisional mess seem to be under the impression that they can eat their food with their hands. The practice of serving rolls and sandwiches in the mess is to stop. A gentleman or lady always uses a knife and fork.'

Cutlery

'And while on the subject of knives and forks I see a great many frankly barbaric techniques on display. The fork always goes in the left hand and the knife in the right. Holding either like

a pen is unacceptable, as are stabbing techniques. The knife and fork should remain in the bottom third of the plate and never be laid down in the top half.'

Officers

'Ten years ago, officers would stand up when the commanding officer walked into the room. This doesn't happen anymore. I expect a junior officer to make an effort at conversation. Start by introducing yourself and talk on any civilised subject outside work.'

Successful marriage

'I recently went to a Burns Night, spoilt only by a curious decision to sit husbands next to wives. The secret of a successful marriage is never to sit next to your spouse at dinner. It displays a marked degree of insecurity.'

Anybody posted to Bulford in the near future?

MERCIAN COOKERY BOOK

Dear Families and Friends,

I am writing to you on behalf of The Mercian Regiment Benevolent Fund, which as you know provides assistance to those soldiers who have served in the Regiment or the constituent Regiments prior to 2007 or are serving and their dependents who find themselves in need, hardship or distress. The demands on the Fund are increasing each year and this looks set to continue for the foreseeable future. In an effort to raise much needed support without asking you to donate money, I am wondering if you would donate RECIPES!

The idea is to collect as many of your favourite recipes as possible from families and friends to create a Mercian Cookery Book, which we will be able to sell for a small profit! It is important that these are your own recipes and not taken from cookery books, as we do not want to infringe copyright laws. Please make sure that your name (or the name of the person who has donated the recipe) is attached so that it can be included. I would also be very grateful if you would double check quantities and cooking times etc. to prevent any disasters. Even better if you can also include a photo of the finished dish. The recipes can be for any dish or for baking cakes etc. and I am reliably informed that the Master Chef in each Battalion will want to lead the way.

In order to make it more interesting we will have a competition, with suitable prizes for the three most interesting recipes submitted by those who are not professional cooks/chefs. If you are able to take part, and I hope many of you will, could you please send your recipes to me at RHQ by 1st June.

I will be trekking through Nepal again during May to raise funds for the Regiment's Benevolence Fund and as somewhere different to spend your 72nd birthday, so hope to be able to start drawing this together in June. Please join in and let's prove that the Army and in this case The Mercian Regiment really does march on its stomach!!

Many thanks.

Miss Enid Corker

RHQ The Mercian Regiment
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Staffordshire WS14 9TJ

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N.I. VETERANS ASSOCIATION

NORTHERN IRELAND
VETERANS' ASSOCIATION
SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE
NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM
11.30AM SATURDAY 20th SEPTEMBER 2014

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association Service of Remembrance 2014 will be held at 11.30am on Saturday 20th September 2014 at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire.

The service will commemorate and remember all those who lost their lives in service of the Crown as a result of the conflict in N. Ireland.

The service will be followed by a parade down to the Ulster Ash Grove for the laying of wreaths.

Following the laying of the wreaths, there will be a 15 minute pause before the parade forms up for the return march to the visitor centre during which the guest of honour will take the salute.

The service is open to all and all Associations are welcome to parade their standards. It would be appreciated if Associations arranging for groups of their members to attend could notify us of numbers and confirm if their standard will be parading.

We look forward to welcoming you to our annual memorial service.

Yours,

David Langston

Email: nivaservice2014@gmail.com

SNIPPETS

The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran him over.

I did not think the train ran on those lines any more.

Leaving home for work I drove out of my drive straight into a bus; the bus was five minutes early.

To avoid hitting the bumper of the car in front, I struck the pedestrian.

The gentleman behind me struck me on the backside. He then went to rest in a bush with just his rear end showing.

I bumped into a lamp-post which was obscured by pedestrians.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Editor,

I would like to give a report on my final project regarding Chapel Street. This will be a 24 page, A4 size mainly pictorial review of this brave little street in Altrincham, to mark the centenary of WWI

This will be a more limited edition than the previous booklet entitled "The Bravest Little Street in England," and the DVD that followed "Chapel Street Remembered."

From just 60 little terraced houses, 161 men volunteered to the call to arms in 1914. An archive press report stated that 88 went immediately, the others followed as the call came out for more. Of these 161, 72 were in various battalions of the Cheshire Regiment.

The street was swept away in post WWII re-building and all but forgotten about. The younger generation and newcomers do know that it ever existed. Suffice to say that this has all changed and my new issue will once again give the story. The RBL and CRA received the proceeds from my past issues, but I intend that the Mercian Regiment Benevolent Fund should receive the proceeds this time.

I am commissioning 150 issues this time and I am asking for a minimum donation of £8 to acquire one. As with my previous booklet, there is a strong CRA theme running through it, right up to the presentation of new colours at Worcester. My telephone number is: 0161 491 0018.

Best wishes to all.

Peter Hennerley

THE ROYAL HOSPITAL, CHELSEA

Currently there are no former soldiers of the Cheshire Regiment living at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Should you live on your own and have served in the Army, providing you meet the criteria below you could apply to live in the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The key criteria are:

1. Over 65 years of age. Either a former non-commissioned officer or soldier of the British Army;
or
a former officer of the British Army who served for at least 12 years in the ranks before obtaining a commission;
or
have been awarded a disablement pension while serving in the ranks.
2. Able to live independently in the sheltered accommodation (known as Long Wards). The Royal Hospital Chelsea does not usually accept direct entries in to the Infirmary.
3. Free of any financial obligation to support a spouse or family. If you are in receipt of an Army Service Pension or War Disability Pension you will be required to surrender it upon entry to the Royal Hospital. Please note that if your Army Service or War Disability Pension does not meet a minimum threshold you will be required to 'top-up' to that amount, providing it does not place you in financial difficulty.

The website for the Royal Hospital is:
<http://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/home>
This site contains an application form for entry candidates.

22nd BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The following CRA members have their own businesses. Members are invited to consider them when looking for services.

GUEST HOUSES:

Dave Henshaw, The Clydesdale, Paignton, South Devon.
www.theclydesdale.co.uk

Steve Dutton, The Parthian Guest House, Blackpool, FY1 3EU.
01254 404507

Seàn Kelly

Les Ondines, Chambre d'Hôtes B&B, CONDAC 16700, France
www.lesondines.net
Reductions for the 22nd out of season

HOLIDAY COTTAGE IN NORTHUMBERLAND:

Andy Taylor, 07832 249 699 www.sandsedgescottage.co.uk

BATHROOMS, TILING AND PLASTERING:

Curt Hodson, Total Tile and Bathrooms, Crewe.
01270 210 230. www.totaltilestudio.co.uk

Paul Russell, Cheshire. www.russvac.co.uk

HEATING, PLUMBING, ELECTRICAL:

Nick Redgrift, NRG Heating & Plumbing, Wirral
(Gas Safe Registered)
07734 281 652 or email nrg4gas@hotmail.co.uk

WEDDING MUSICIAN

Andy Taylor. Live Music for Ceremonies and Receptions. Also available for Private Parties and Corporate Events
www.solosax.org.uk Email: andrew@solosax.org.uk
Mobile: 07832 249 699 Home: 01670 783 693

The list does not constitute an endorsement of services offered. Members wishing to be included in future lists should send their details to: cheshire.reg.t.association@hotmail.com

Inclusion is restricted to CRA members who are the proprietor or main owner of a business. Companies wishing to advertise should contact The Secretary, CRA for details and rates.

PTSD RESOLUTION

If you know of any ex-service men or women struggling with nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, depression, anger issues, or any of their families being affected by their behaviour, please help them contact the charity PTSD Resolution (charity number 1133188) on telephone number 0845 021 7873. They will be put in touch with a local counsellor trained to deal with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress, and other general mental conditions. Treatment is free, local, confidential, brief, immediate, non-intrusive and delivered through a network of 200 therapists UK-wide.

SNIPPETS

I thought my window was down; but found it was up when I put my hand through it.

The car in front of me stopped for a yellow light, so I had no choice but to hit him.

The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth.

In my attempt to kill a fly, I drove into a telephone pole.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2014

2014

4 Apr	Officers Lunch Wellington College, Crowthorne
9 May	Chester Race Day
16 May	Regimental Golf Day, Chester Curzon
13 Jun	Regimental Golf Day, The Oaks, Mollington
14 Jun	Malaya & Singapore Reunion, Pelsall
18 Jul	Regimental Golf Day, Peover
8 Aug	Regimental Golf Day, Eastham Lodge
21-25 Aug	Centenary of Battle of Mons, Belgium
5 Sep	Regimental Golf Day, Pryor's Hayes
6 Sep	Officers Association Ladies Dinner, Chester
7 Sep	Mons Day Parade and Lunch, Chester 100th Anniversary
25 Oct	East Cheshire Reunion, Stockport
7 Dec	Droppin Well Memorial Service, Ballykelly

News of major events is published on the CRA page of www.cheshiremilitarymuseum.co.uk and also on the CRA facebook page.

MONS PILGRIMAGE 2014

There are still places left on the pilgrimage to Mons 22-25 August 2014. The outline programme is:

22 August – Depart Chester at 0500hrs. Departure point: The Dale Barracks, car parking available. Arrive Best Western Hotel Lessines by 1900hrs local time. Dinner.

23 August – Breakfast. Depart hotel for Ypres at 0930hrs, visit to Cement House CWGC Cemetery, the German Cemetery at Langemarck, Tyne Cot Cemetery, Bayernwald Preserved Trench system, Passchendaele Memorial Museum. Free time in Ypres, prior to attending the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate. Dinner under own arrangements.

24 August – Breakfast. Depart hotel for Audregnies at 0900hrs. 1000hrs Arrive in Audregnies, coffee.
1030hrs CRA fall in behind 1 MERCIAN for march to cemetery, others join civil procession. 1100hrs Ceremony and wreath laying.
1130hrs March/procession to battlefield.
1200hrs Ceremony and inauguration of a memorial.
1240hrs March/procession to village centre.
1300hrs Salad lunch provided by the people of Audregnies.
1300hrs-1430hrs various stands, village centre.
1430hrs optional visit to exhibition in village
1600hrs Battlefield guided visit.
1730hrs(approx) return to hotel. Dinner

25 August – Breakfast. Depart for home at 0900hrs.

The cost is £355 per person (a single room supplement of £75) which includes 3 nights Bed and Breakfast in a 3 star hotel and 2 dinners. This offer will close on 1st May, please contact: RHQ Chester, phone 01244 327617, email cheshire.reg.t.association@hotmail.com to book your place.

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.

Normal opening times are:

Monday	1200-1400
Wednesday	1200-1400
Friday	1200-1400 1900-2330

Saturday - by arrangement

Sunday 1200-1400

For all Club enquiries, contact Alan Jones on 07906 753699

22 CLUB WINNERS

October

£100	CRA Tranmere Branch
£50	Mr W G Price, Northwich
£25	Mr E T Smith, Coleford

November

£100	Maj (Retd) J R Bennett, Chester
£50	Mr A Swindale, Market Drayton
£25	Mrs J M D Trevor, Chester

December

£100	Mr P J Gresty, Manchester
£50	Mr A B Pearson, Tarporley
£25	Mr T Donovan, Rhyly

January

£100	Col J D Reynolds, Rushwick
£50	Col (Retd) R Savill, Craven Arms
£25	Mr S C Leedham, Runcorn

Meeanee Grand Draw

£150	Mr R Burchett, Preston
£100	Mr A Rowe, Buckley
£50	Mr S Lamon, Wilmslow
£25	Mr D Ball, Ellesmere Port

MEEANEE DRAW WINNERS

£200	Mr H Tomkinson, Crewe
£150	Mr G Smith, Stockport
£100	Mr R Williams, Worcester
£75	Miss N Jones, Chester
£50	Mr M Powell, Chester
£50	Mr P Hadfield, Macclesfield
£25	Mr R Burchett, Preston
£25	Mr L Sutton, Wolverhampton
£10	Maj Gen K Skempton, Ruthin
£10	Maj M A Baxter, Pirbright

SNIPPETS

The accident happened because I had one eye on the truck in front, one eye on the pedestrian, and the other on the car behind.

I was sure the old fellow would never make it to the other side of the road when I struck him.

OBITUARIES

Mrs Madge Crawford

Madge Crawford, who died, aged 95 on Christmas Eve 2013 joined the staff of the newly formed RHQ in Chester Castle in 1961 as a Typist. Eventually promoted to Clerical Officer, she worked in tireless support of Regimental Secretaries and Assistant Regimental Secretaries for the good of the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment until her retirement some 22 years later in 1983. Shortly before retirement, she was made an Honorary member of the CRA by the then Colonel of The Regiment, Brigadier Dauncey. Her commitment to the Regiment did not end on her retirement; she was a member of Chester Branch for the rest of her life and took a full part in Branch activities until illness prevented her from doing so.

Norman Davies

My dad Norman Davies passed away on 10th October 2013 aged 80, he was in the Cheshire Regiment 2nd Battalion and boxed for them as well, he served in Malaya in 1957 and was also in the Military Police, he was from Walsall and attended the Mons services and loved reading the newsletter. Thank you for your time from his very proud son Peter Davies. P.S. He is buried in Skegness where he was the head of security at Butlins for many years.

Peter Davies

Major Paddy Ellwood

Died on Monday 13th January at his home near Llanelli, aged 88. He joined the army as a Private in the Queen's Royal Regiment in 1943 and was commissioned into the Leicestershire Regiment in 1944. Transferring to the 22nd in 1947, he served with the 1st Bn; Depot Mercian Brigade; Trg Maj 7th Bn; School of Infantry and finally as Commandant ATA Haltern in Germany from where he retired in 1980. He remained as Commandant at Haltern as an RO2 for a further 5 years.

Professor Keith Panter-Brick

Keith Panter-Brick was an academic who survived a German labour camp to become a leading specialist on international relations. Born in Wallasey, Merseyside, on September 29 1920, and educated at Wallasey Grammar School. His father ran a boot and leather business and served as mayor of the town. Keith's youthful hopes of attending university were dashed by family circumstances, and instead he secured an office job and joined the Territorial Army.

Mobilised in the late summer of 1939 he served in the 2nd Bn Cheshire Regiment to defend the Maginot Line in eastern France. On May 19 1940 he was driving the lead truck of his platoon, his lieutenant a passenger to his left. They were ambushed, the lieutenant killed in the first few seconds of gunfire, and Panter-Brick taken prisoner.

Five years of hard labour in a POW camp convinced Panter-Brick to enter academic life. When the war ended, he went up to Keble College, Oxford, to read PPE, following his first degree with a BPhil in politics.

His memoir was based on the scraps of diary and postcards he had written during his captivity – and was this unusual in being a picture of POW life based on record, rather than fallible memory. It even included his death certificate, for he was listed “killed in action” by the War Office in May 1940 before a German radio broadcast reported that he had been taken prisoner.

His published academic work included Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to the Civil War (1970), and Soldiers and Oil: The Political Transformation of Nigeria (1978), as well as many articles in scholarly journals on the prospects for democracy and the right to self-determination in the newly-independent countries of the African continent.

Long after his retirement in 1985 he remained a keen observer of the emerging nations of the southern hemisphere, achieving particular pre-eminence as a scholar of the former French colonial empire.

His 1988 essay “Independence, French Style (Decolonisation and African Independence)” remains an indispensable guide to French decolonisation.

LAST POST

Mrs I Ashton widow of Joe, died 11 January 2014 aged 96

Philip Barratt died 15 October 2013 aged 81
Ex 1st Bn 1951-53, & 7th Bn served in Cyprus & Suez

Roy Buckley died 30 January 2014 aged 79
served 1952-54 Suez

Chris Bridger died 21 October 2013 aged 88

George Cameron died Feb 2014 aged 83
Friend of the Regiment and supporter of the Military Museum

Simon Chase died 17 January 2014
Terrorist attack in Afghanistan. Ex 1 Cheshire

Ex Sgt David (Zeke) Collins died 6 November 2010 in
Australia. Served 1956/59 1st.Bn. Berlin & Malaya.

Madge Crawford died 25 December 2013 Ex Clerical Officer
at RHQ Cheshire from 1 Apr 1961 to 30 Aug 1983

Mike Davies died 7 January 2014 aged 71 Ex 1st Bn 1961-83

Norman Davies died 10 October 2013 aged 80
Ex 1st Bn 1951-53 & 55-58

William Donaghy DCM died 10 February 2014 aged 94.
Ex Sgt who was the last decorated soldier of the Cheshire
Regiment in WW2

Steve Duffy died 15 January 2014 aged 57 Ex A Coy 2 Pln

Eric Egerton died 18 November 2012 aged 82

Mitch Elliott died 18 October 2013

Maj Patrick Ellwood aged 89 Ex WW2 veteran

F Hellon died 6 July 2013

Des Jones died 13 October 2014 Ex 1st Bn

Prof Keith Panter-Brick died 18 October 2013 aged 93
Ex 2nd Bn & POW WW2

Edward Rea served Malaya & Singapore

John Smith died 8 July 2013 ex drummer 1st Bn

Maj John Wilkinson died 4 June 2013
Ex Cheshire & Staffordshire Regt

Alan Williams died 2 May 2012