



THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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APRIL 2015

EDITORIAL

I would like to begin this issue of the newsletter by paying tribute to the wonderful contribution made to the Cheshire Regiment Association by Alan Jennings. On his retirement as a member of the CRA Management Committee, of which he was a founder member, he leaves an enormous void, which I doubt will ever be filled. His organisation of trips abroad, 14 years of managing the East Cheshire Reunion and the small matter of editing 56 issues of the CRA Newsletter are only some of the more public roles that he has filled. His quiet, self-effacing manner will have hidden much of the “behind the scenes” work that he has carried out on behalf of us all.

Thank you Alan, for your exemplary contribution to the life of the 22nd and the Regimental Association. Although you have written your own obituary, I do hope that we can look forward to many more years of your presence, and in particular your wonderful contributions to this newsletter.

I must also make mention of Alan Hughes. After 41 years in the service of the Cheshire Regiment, he followed this with a further 8 years as a co-opted member of the CRA Management Committee, from which he has just stepped down. Thank you Alan, for all your support over half a century of service.

In case you are wondering why I have not mentioned the leaving of Eddie Pickering, it is because he is still there. Although his retirement date has come and gone, he continues to prowl the corridor of RHQ, whilst we await the arrival of his successor. We should all be grateful for his willingness to soldier on and for Martine’s forbearance.

As we run headlong into the next general election it is slightly worrying that none of the main political parties have committed to spending a minimum of 2% of GDP on Defence. I don’t think anyone would consider the world a safer place these days, yet it seems that the number one priority of government is to be entrusted to the bean counters of whatever administration emerges after the election.

Finally, it is a shame that there is no article or photographs regarding the recent Blackpool Reunion. However, I can only publish what is sent to me.

The deadline for the next issue will be 10th July 2015.

Please send your contributions to me at: 86 Edward Road, Penge, London SE20 7JS. My telephone number is 07721 660471. 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.

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

With the Blackpool weekend and the AGM now behind us it is time, from a CRAMC point of view, to concentrate on the issues which will become apparent in the next two years. By 2017 our legacy funding will have ceased, the Mercian Regiment will have shown more, or perhaps less, interest in the various Regimental Associations dependent upon how the Mercian Regimental Association itself fares. Of more immediate concern is the inordinate length of time being taken to appoint the two Secretaries – Regimental and Assistant Regimental (Cheshire).

The lack of a Mercian Regimental Secretary has been ongoing since last September. ‘Post-gapped’ is not the official explanation but for all practical purposes, the expression is apposite. It is worth pointing out again that the President of the CRA is an appointment made by the Colonel of the Mercian Regiment. The Mercian Regimental Secretary is his spokesperson (he also controls the other Assistant Regimental Secretaries, including ours). This, in a similar way, as an Adjutant speaks for a CO, or a COS for a Brigade Commander. The fact remains that whilst our 15 branches are both independent and autonomous, within the constraints imposed by the rules of the CRA, the wider governance is a Mercian Regiment responsibility.

Closer to home and hot off the press, Eddie tells me that we are on the cusp of having a new Assistant Regimental Secretary (Cheshire) appointed. Flash to bang time? Wait out Of concern to me is that Eddie has not been consulted regarding the appointment and the candidate has not as yet visited RHQ!

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CONTENTS

CRAMC Appointments	2
Minutes of the CRA AGM	2-3
Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting ...	4
Word from the Branches	4-8
“Dinner Night at Weeton Camp” by Bill Helliwell .	8-9
John Fairbanks Writes	10
The Story of Tommy	10
Book Review by George Szwejkowski	11
A Message from Eddie Pickering	11
The 22nd’s Christmas Truce	12
A Nostalgic Look Back	13
Correspondence	14-15
Blind Veterans UK	15
SSAFA Vacancies	15
Change Step	15
Dates for Your Diary, Club News	16
Last Post	16

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN (continued)

In contrast to this rather indifferent attitude, the good news is that we do have a fully-formed Management Committee waiting to get stuck in. (The full list of CRAMC members is appended below.) Our mantra at present, to borrow the motto of a junior regiment - "Difficulties be damned." This, of course, is entirely dependent upon Eddie continuing to give his free time and expertise. It is not an exaggeration to say that the whole operation would collapse without Eddie's support.

May I again thank Gen Skempton (as one of our Honorary Vice Presidents) for both attending the AGM, giving a resumé of things Mercian and for taking an overall interest in the activities

of the Association. Thank you also to Pete Gresty for both his professional presentation at the AGM on matters of benevolence and his continued monitoring on our behalf of the quite excellent work the Mercian Regiment does in this area.

Good luck to John Donaldson and his team in getting the newly-formed Halton Branch up and running and finally, might I wish Dave Mapley a full and speedy recovery. You are missed at RHQ, Dave, and you were certainly missed at Blackpool !

Wha wadna fecht for Charlie.

David Oak
Chairman

CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President: Brigadier I J Cave

Chairman (Appointed): Lt Col (Ret'd) D M Oak MBE (Appointed to serve until February 2016)

Secretary (Temporary Volunteer): Major (Ret'd) T E Pickering MBE. As at 15 March 2015

Members Elected:

Title	Forename	Surname	Branch	Remarks	Until
Mr	David	Clarke	Tranmere		2017
Mr	Peter	Jackson	Birkenhead		2017
Mr	David	Mapley	Tranmere		2017
Mr	George	Szwejkowski	Southern Region		2017
Mr	Terry	Finlay BEM	Chester		2018
Mr	Alan	Kennedy	Stockport		2018
Mr	Joe	Murphy	Chester		2018
Mr	Derek	Sykes	Stockport		2018
Maj (Ret'd)	James	Salisbury	Nantwich	Co-opted	N/A
Mr	David	Waring	Nantwich	Co-opted	N/A

MINUTES OF THE CRA AGM

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION HELD ON SATURDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2015 AT REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS CHESTER

Chairman: Lt Col D M Oak MBE
Secretary: Maj T E Pickering MBE

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and asked the Secretary to call the roll of Branches. There were 10 Branches represented. There were 49 members present. Apologies were received from Maj J R Bennet, Brig I J Cave, Brig M D K Dauncey, Brig J P Donnelly, Mr D Mapley, Brig A J MacG Percival, Brig K Prosser, Mr S Pugh, Maj-Gen A R D Sharpe.

2. Major General Skempton commenced by offering congratulations to Brigadier Cave on his recently announced promotion to Major-General. He then spoke about current trends in the Defence world and also on matters regarding the Mercian Regiment expressing the hope that after recent reorganisations, things will settle down for a while. He warned that, post General Election, there will be another Strategic Defence Review. He spoke

about the Mercian Regiment and the recruitment of a new Assistant Regimental Secretary. He reflected on the commemorations of the Battle of Mons and closed by reading a passage from "Ever Glorious" describing the First Battle of Ypres, 100 years ago.

3. The minutes of the 2014 Annual General Meeting were reviewed. There was one matter arising concerning Minute 5, the appointment of auditors. The Secretary explained that McLintock & Partners suggested that in their opinion, there was no need to conduct a full audit and that Independent Examination was sufficient to satisfy the Association's needs. Mr Harold Riley proposed and Mr Tony Cleary seconded the proposal that the minutes be passed as a true record. Carried.

4. The Chairman gave the following report: "As was expected with the centenary of the commencement of World War I, this year has been busy at both Regimental Association and Branch levels. Parades and commemorations throughout the county and beyond have been both varied and numerous. The Association Secretary has in short order organised, controlled and participated in the Regimental Association and Mercian Regiment pilgrimage to the Mons battlefield in Belgium - a four-day visit taking in not only the battlefield itself but a number of the sites of the fallen,

MINUTES OF THE CRA AGM (continued)

including the service at the Menin Gate. The success of this venture was matched by the commemoration in Chester of the same battle, followed by the cathedral service, march through the city and a commemorative lunch, all well attended. The 15 branches meet monthly and numbers attending these meetings has risen slightly. They continue to parade, invariably with Branch Standards, covering both of civic receptions and funerals. Neither of these events are specific to the Regiment. We find that when a military representation is required, the CRA is requested to provide both expertise and personnel." Mr Peter Gresty then gave a report on benevolence carried out by the Mercian Regiment Association. The Secretary presented the Financial Report, having circulated copies of the Balance Sheet and the Independent Reviewers notes. He pointed out that the higher Income figures were due in part to the late payment of the MRA Legacy Grant for 2013. Net expenditure amounted to £8102.52 for the year and that this was in line with CRAMC budgeting. He stated that every Branch will receive a copy of the report and that it will be published on the Charity Commission website in due course. Any member requesting a copy will also be sent one. Mr Roy Porter proposed and Capt Hod Birkby seconded the proposal that the report and accounts be accepted. Carried.

5. The Secretary proposed that McLintock and Partners be appointed as Independent Examiners of the Accounts for the current financial year. Mr Alan Jennings seconded the proposal. Carried.

6. The Chairman outlined the reasons for the proposal to amend the Rules of the Cheshire Regimental Association. Copies of the amended rules were circulated for study. Mr Alan Jennings proposed that the document entitled "Rules of the Cheshire Regiment Association, Revision 5 dated September 2014" be accepted as the new governing instrument, Mr David Waring seconded the proposal. Carried.

7. The Chairman announced the results of the vote to appoint members to CRAMC: Elected: Mr Terry Finlay BEM, Mr Alan Kennedy, Mr Joe Murphy, Mr Derek Sykes. He thanked all 6 candidates. He thanked those members standing down for their work on behalf of the CRA, mentioning in particular Mr John (Russ) Cooney who died in November.

8. The Chairman remarked upon the difficulties facing the CRA by the lack of a replacement Assistant Regimental Secretary for the Mercian Regiment in Cheshire. He asked members to give their support to the current Secretary who is now working as a volunteer.

9. Date of the next AGM will be either 13 or 20 February 2016. After the meeting had closed the Chairman remarked that Capt Alan Hughes was stepping down as a co-opted member of CRAMC. He thanked him for all the support he had given over the last 8 years since his retirement as Secretary of the Regimental Association. Retirement Presentations were made to Alan Jones, who has retired from the position of Club Steward, and to the outgoing Cheshire Regiment Association Secretary. Alan Jennings also decided to leave CRAMC. Alan was a founder member of CRAMC and has given continuous service since then. He was presented with a Special Merit Award by General Skempton.



Alan Jennings receives his Special Merit Award from General Keith Skempton

After the meeting Alan Jennings wrote the following:

I was very privileged to have received an award at the AGM. It was totally unexpected and I was almost stuck for words. I am greatly honoured by this award and humbled by the citation. This was clearly the work of David Oak and Eddie Pickering and the choice of words on the plaque was exemplary.

I have been proud to serve the CRA in as many ways as I could. I joined Stockport Branch in December 1988 and been an active member, holding office for some 25 years. I am proud that I have been appointed the first Life President of the Branch.

I was a founder member of the CRAMC; first editor of the Newsletter and produced 56 editions and organised the East Cheshire Reunion for 14 years.

I took members of the CRA and others on pilgrimages and trips to Sicily, Italy, France including the Western Front, Germany, India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, The Czech Republic and Slovakia some 40 excursions over 20 years.

With my two years National Service and 14 years TA service plus what I have done since 1988 I have been involved with the military for 42 years – over half my life during which time I have made many friends and have wonderful memories to recall in the future.

Did I enjoy it? Yes. Would I do it again if I had the chance? Certainly.

So on finally retiring, may I say most sincerely, "Thank you all very much" I wish you well.

Alan Jennings



Alan Jennings surrounded by the current and past Chairmen that he has served with on CRAMC

MINUTES OF THE CRAMC MEETING

THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14TH JANUARY 2015 RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Members attending: Lt Col David Oak MBE (Chairman), Mr Peter Jackson, Mr Alan Jennings, Mr David Waring and Major Eddie Pickering MBE (Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr David Clark, Capt Alan Hughes, Mr Alan Kennedy and Mr George Szwejkowski. In addition apologies were entered on behalf of Mr David Mapley who is in hospital.

As a result, there was not a quorum, however it was agreed to discuss the agenda.

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. The Secretary reported that the sum of £952 has been received from the now-closed Berlin Northern Ireland Reunion account.
2. The Chairman reported on events which have taken place since the last meeting. He paid tribute to the late John (Russ) Cooney who was a member of CRAMC at the time of his death.
3. The Secretary presented a resume of Income and Expenditure for the Financial Year 2013/14, a current financial statement and a resume of Income and Expenditure for the current Financial Year to date.

4. The agenda for the Annual General Meeting was discussed. There has been one proposition relating to revision of the CRA Constitution. The Secretary reported that voting is still going on for the CRAMC election, but not many had voted compared with previous occasions.

5. The Secretary updated on the Blackpool Reunion, setting out the arrangements for the weekend. The illness of Dave Mapley has affected the organisation, however, all events have been covered. The Secretary spoke about the Drumhead Service traditionally held on the Sunday morning, it was agreed that it should continue and that CRA member Derek Sykes, a Lay-Preacher be invited to conduct the service. It was agreed that Branch Standards should be invited to be paraded.

6. The Forecast of Events for the coming year was reviewed.

7. A request for assistance in producing a "Peal Board" for St Mary's Church has been received from the group which rang the "Cheshire Regiment Alliance Major" on the day of the Mons Reunion. It is traditional that major bell-ringing events are marked with a Peal Board, however, the Chester Guild of Bell-ringers is a small group with no large funds. The individual members are making a substantial personal contribution and it was agreed to contribute no more than £100 to their anticipated costs of £400.

8. It was agreed that the next meeting take place at RHQ Chester on Wednesday 25th March at 1030hrs. This will be followed by a meeting of Branch Officials.

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH

On 7th December we gathered for our Branch Christmas Lunch which was held once again at The Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight. Welcome guests this year included Lt Col David Oak and Mrs Oak, who fitted our event into their busy schedule, and members of local RASC/RCT and WRAC Association Branches who are by now regular attenders. As well as providing us with his Medicinal Compound, Ron Green recommended a singing group, 'Signature.' This female trio provided excellent post-lunch entertainment. Their repertoire was varied and a failure of their radio mic system meant that they had to sing a capella. This didn't faze them at all. It turns out that they formed when a local operatic society folded up.

The Branch received a bequest from the estate of the late George Ford. George had a long connection with the Army, having enlisted in the RASC in 1938, served in that Corps throughout the Second World War, and was re-called as a reservist in the 1950s. He later served in the 4th Battalion's D Coy of at Ellesmere Port and latterly as MT Sgt. He was a regular attender at Ellesmere Port and Birkenhead Branch meetings and CRA events. Many will remember him following the Mons Parade along Chester's pavements on his mobility scooter when he was no longer able to drive a car.

2015 is not an election year. However after the Branch AGM in January Ray Hogan decided to relinquish the Chairman's post and Tommy Radford, as Vice-Chairman will conduct our Branch meetings for the remainder of the year. The early months of the

year are usually quiet time but will be punctuated by our Sunday lunches. The annual Bowls Match against Stockport Branch will take place on Sunday May 17th the return match is provisionally scheduled for June 14th. And, who knows, we might persuade some of our Branch members to attend on Race Day?

Peter Jackson

CHESTER BRANCH

The year ended with the usual sequence of events. A tasty Christmas lunch attended by 40 happy eaters, followed by a non-politically correct Bingo session for the addicts, and an interesting – and for one person, who shall be nameless – a very lucrative session of poker dice for non-Bingo players. Two weeks later a well-attended Christmas draw took place. It was an enjoyable evening, made memorable by watching John Murphy win an enormous number of prizes. Such was his haul it was suggested that next year we should simply give him all the prizes and thus save time and stress. The draw was the last function of the year and also was the first event attended by Alan Jones (known to all as Iggy) in his new found status as ex steward.

Alan gave us brilliant service, often well beyond the call of duty, and never let us down and will be sorely missed. As will the cheerful, dedicated, reliable, willing, greatly appreciated and extremely successful efforts of Linda to feed the ravenous members on a Friday evening. A heart-felt thanks to both of them from all at Chester.

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES

The Regimental Club is now in the hands of Mick Smith, to whom we offer a warm welcome and the assurance that we will do all we can to assist him with his plans for the future. We wish him and Heather good luck and much success in the future.

They will need support from all members of the CRA who should never miss a chance to call in for a pint, or a cup of tea, on Friday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes. So how about it? Pay us a visit – you know it makes sense.

John Fairbanks

ELLESMERE PORT BRANCH

Greetings from Ellesmere Port. Not much to report this time. December saw thirty-five members, friends and families enjoying our traditional Xmas repast at Whitby Club, Ellesmere Port. Followed by usual raffle etc., and background music via my laptop.

Our Branch meetings, (now at Labour Club Ellesmere Port, 4th Friday of month,) are still well attended, with an average of twenty members signing in.

This brings me to the subject of declining membership. We must find more recruits and I endorse a recent remark by Chairman David Oak. I know for a fact that there are a vast number of members, quite happy to sit back and receive their copies of the Newsletter, whilst giving no visible support to any particular Branch. Gentlemen, consider the "gauntlet" well and truly thrown down!! We NEED you, at Branch level. Your advice, attendance, and expertise would in our opinion give CRA a new lease of life. "STAND FIRM, TOGETHER, AND WE WILL SURVIVE!"

In January I paraded our Branch Standard at Station Road Cenotaph Ellesmere Port, when a name was added to the Roll Of Honour: George Keats (see below). A member of South Wirral Branch, Jack Gibson, gave a faultless rendering of Last Post etc.

Gordon Kipps

Missing name to be added to Ellesmere Port War Memorial

More than one hundred years after World War One began and 95 years since George E Keats died on a Great War battlefield in France, his name is to be added to an Ellesmere Port war memorial.

George was only 14 when he lied about his age to join the army and serve his country in the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. The Keats family had moved to Ellesmere Port from Walsall to work in the iron industry and George, from Victoria Road, is buried at the cemetery at Christ Church in a military grave. But his name was never added on to the war memorial.

In a special ceremony led by Reverend Gordon McGuinness, with many veterans and representatives of veteran groups present, wreaths were laid by Mayor of Ellesmere Port Councillor Brian Jones, Chair of the local branch of the Royal British Legion Chris Williams, and family member Ray Wardle.

Susan Wardle, an active member of the local branch of the Normandy Veterans Association, at the request of Ray Wardle, a nephew of George E Keats, contacted Councillor Brian Jones and the Council agreed to add his name to the memorial.

Councillor Jones, who led the wreath laying ceremony, said: "It was with great respect that I could lay a wreath in honour of George E Keats, whose name has finally been added to the memorial.

"It was good to see so many people present at the ceremony, including members of his family. It just goes to show that we in Ellesmere Port never forget those people who have served us."

Executive Member for Culture and Economy, Councillor Stuart Parker, said: "I am delighted that we have been able to help the family by adding the name of George E Keats to the memorial.

"Now all who visit can see that Ray's uncle was also among those who lost their lives fighting for their country. In these centenary years of the Great War it is especially important to keep commemorating lives lost."

This is the third name to be added to Ellesmere Port's war memorials in the past few years. Last year the names of A. Lilley and S. Taylor were added to the war memorial on Civic Square. The projects have been funded from the Council's town centre improvement budget.

Local councillor, Pat Merrick, said: "George Keats gave his life for his country nearly a hundred years ago and I am pleased that Ellesmere Port residents and visitors will now recognise the sacrifice he made as his name is added to the memorial for all to see for many years to come."

Member of the local branch of the Normandy Veterans Association, Susan Wardle, said: "Thank you to everyone who has been involved in getting George Ernest Keats' name put on the cenotaph at Christ Church. At last in his place of honour."



Wreath laying image: left to right: Gordon Kipps carrying Cheshire Regiment standard, Reverend Gordon McGuinness, Susan Wardle carrying Royal British Legion Little Sutton standard, Mayor of Ellesmere Port, Councillor Brian Jones, Ray Wardle (nephew of George E Keats), Gordon Jones carrying Normandy Veterans Association standard and John Dennit who said the exhortation.

SNIPPETS

With the general election coming up, here are a few political quotes:

A politician needs the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month and next year.

And to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't happen.

Winston Churchill

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.

Oscar Ameringer

Politics is supposed to be the second oldest profession. I have come to realise that it bears a strong resemblance to the first.

Ronald Reagan

HALTON BRANCH

My name is John Donaldson, Chairman of the new Halton Branch. This branch was started in October 2014, after the unveiling of the Todger Jones VC memorial statue in Runcorn in August 2014. After seeing so many ex-Cheshires on parade, it was mentioned that a Branch should be started up in Runcorn. After advertising via Facebook, e-mails and word of mouth we got together and a venue for meetings was found in Halton Royal British Legion. The membership at the moment is 29 from 1 and 3 Cheshire, which was boosted by attending HRBL Rally night, held each year on the nearest Friday to Remembrance Sunday. This night is for ex-service personnel and was an excellent way of introducing our branch.



An early rogues gallery of the newly-formed Halton Branch.

Our branch was invited to South Wirral Branch by Nigel Hunt on 6 March, for which I would like to thank all South Wirral Branch for making us so welcome.

On our last meeting on 11 March, we invited David Oak, who later e-mailed me to say he had enjoyed the evening. We hope now to go from strength to strength. If you live in the Halton area and would like to join us we hold our meetings on the second Wednesday of the month at 1930 hours at Halton Royal British Legion, Halton Village, Runcorn.

John Donaldson

KIRKHAM BRANCH

This is a quiet period for the Kirkham Branch. We had a good Christmas and New Year with our Branch party at the Stables Hotel going down well.

We had our AGM on 20th January and members voted to keep our present committee:

- Chairman: Noel Brookes
- Secretary: Ricky Burchett
- Treasurer: Bill Birkett
- MTO: Tommy Davies
- Scribe: John Gibson

Branch members enjoyed the Meeanee Reunion at Blackpool and now that the AGM at Chester is over, we are all looking at 8th May and Chester Races as our next port of call. That's all for now.

John Gibson

MACCLESFIELD BRANCH

Time has certainly flown by. It seems like yesterday since last year's branch AGM, and last week we had this year's! Reading last year's minutes, there was a note commenting on Jack Schofield's birthday and after a short meeting a few of us went up to celebrate with Jack, this year on his 95th birthday. Congratulations Jack!

We recently enjoyed the Grand Meeanee Reunion in Blackpool, where myself, my wife and father had the pleasure of joining our colleagues from Stockport for many a laugh and even more drinks. It was a good weekend and we even had sunshine, even though I couldn't see it through the windows of the Norbreck Castle Hotel. Anyone know of a good window cleaner with a very long ladder?

Once again I would like to pass on my thanks and praise on behalf of the branch to Norman McKinnell, who has worked as secretary and treasurer for so many years, and I intend to propose honorary membership for Norman, Jack Schofield and Frank Worrall.

Our annual church service at Capesthorpe also occurred in February, where we were welcomed by Sir William Bromley-Davenport. Afterwards we met for lunch at the Flower Pot, along with our friends from Stockport and the Reverend Ian Arch, who conducted the service.

Well, luckily we have no obituaries to report at branch level, thank goodness. Let's keep it that way.

All the best for now and good luck to all.

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 to meet monthly with a fairly good membership and attendance. There is always much lively discussion and of course good humour and comradeship. Branch members held their pre-Christmas dinner at the Royal Oak in Worleston, Nantwich, organised under the direction of Branch Chairman, Brian Billington.

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

- President: Ray Stafford MBE
- Chairman: Brian Billington
- Vice-Chair: Tony O'Connor
- Secretaries: Maj Michael Morgan-Wynne and Graham Ravenscroft
- Treasurer: Dave Waring
- Almoner: Peter von Hoffman

At the meeting tributes were paid to the late John Tilsley and Gerald Walker, who had passed away during the year. Several members also attended the CRA AGM in Chester.

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.

The branch meets 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.

Ray Stafford

SANDBACH BRANCH

I really must apologise to Sandbach branch for missing the last two editions of the newsletter. Just to keep you informed, Mr Charles Sullivan is doing well in his new care home. He is now more himself and he is 95 this year. Mr Percy Cooke has been poorly; he is now much better, he is 94 this year. Percy hopes to go to the next golf match but only to the 19th hole for the meal with C.R.A. Golf Society.

Craig Roughley is doing a splendid job as Chairman in his first year in office; he is one of our younger members.

Quite a few members from Sandbach attended the Mercian freedom march in Crewe on Meeanee Day 17th Feb. After the march Charles, Percy and others enjoyed the reception in the pub with all the young squaddies.

We are running another coach again this year to the National Memorial Arboretum on the 19th September for the N.I.V.A. Service of Remembrance. If anyone from Nantwich branch wishes to go, give me a call 01270 767922 – coach £10 a head.

Calling all ex-servicemen local to the Sandbach area and ex Cheshires. Come along to our meetings held at the Swan and Chequers, Sandbach every other Thursday, meeting start at approx. 2000hrs.

We wish all our members who have been poorly a speedy recovery; all the very best to you all. We also wish all members of the CRA good health and happiness. God Bless you all.

Dave Beech

SOUTHERN REGION

It has been a relatively quiet start to the year, marred by the loss of Peggy Sims, wife of Fred Sims. Our thoughts are with Fred at this difficult time.

Our Annual General Meeting was held in January, and surprise, surprise all the usual suspects once again agreed to serve on the committee for another year.

We held our Meeanee Ladies Dinner slightly later than usual, and for the first time we held it at Browns of Covent Garden. It was a memorable evening with Brigadier Tony Twiss giving the "State of the Nation" address, edited down to less than ten minutes! We also witnessed Dave Taylor singing and a number of anecdotes from Brian D'Arcy RVM, who celebrated his forthcoming 80th birthday with a surprise cake. The raffle was a great success and we have to thank Lynne Taylor and Lynne Szejewski for all their efforts. We must also thank Pete Hughes for his generosity all evening, but perhaps most of all for out-bidding everyone (especially me) for the bottle of "Ever Glorious" beer.



The Bollinger went down well – Thanks to Pete Hughes

Our thanks go to Trevor Taylor for once again pulling all the strings to ensure that we all had a memorable time.

We now look forward to supporting the CRA at Chester Races in May, and of course supporting the Army in its annual clash against the Royal Navy at Twickenham the following day.

George Szejewski

STOCKPORT BRANCH

We here at Stockport hope everyone enjoyed the festivities over Christmas and the New Year. Prior to our Yuletide break we attended yet another funeral. On November 26th we, along with our Standards gathered at St Bartholomew's Church, Wilmslow for the funeral service for the late Major Sidney Burton TD. The wake was held at the Stanneyland Hotel where over 200 mourners gathered. Major Burton was a long standing trustee of the Stockport CRA and will be sorely missed. Our sincere condolences went to his family on this sad occasion.



● Former Cheshire Regiment soldiers Alan Kennedy (centre), Roy Porter, Gordon Smith, Brian Hartigan and Keith Mort with the replica chocolate bar from the Sainsbury's advert. Below: Having a kick-about



Another visit to the Macclesfield Branch AGM for a catch up and chat in warm surroundings, then on December 4th a party of five were the guests of Sainsbury's (Stockport). Sainsbury's were responsible for the well-publicised TV advert and WWI chocolate, and following a suggestion made by our branch chairman two of us met with the management at Sainsbury's (Stockport) and as a result we were invited for a photo shoot to commemorate the WWI football match in which the 1/6th Battalion featured in their TV advert. Alan Kennedy, myself, Roy Porter, Keith Mort and Brian Hartigan took part that day with

WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

many of the general public stopping to witness the event as five veterans were kicking a football about and laughing, despite bruised shins (mine) due to over-acting by Roy Porter. Publicity was duly given not only to our Regimental WWI history but to the RBL Poppy Appeal Fund also. Many thanks Sainsbury's!

Moving on to our Annual General Meeting, where Derek Sykes became a Vice President in recognition of his unfaltering Welfare work. Alan Jennings accepted the position of Honorary Life President upon his 'retirement' from President of the Branch. Other committee changes were Treasurer now Steve Whaite (Stuart McDonald upon retiring became Branch Auditor) and Harold Riley became Vice Chairman. Paul Wilkinson took charge of the bowls section and Tony Cleary became one of our Branch Standard Bearers. There being no other changes.

December 29th and the funeral of Ken 'Paddy' Foulkes where many of his family, ex-cadets and members of the Stockport CRA paraded to pay our respects. The cortege was headed by the Pipes and Drums of the Scots Guards Association who after the Service then marched off playing our Regimental March. It was a fitting tribute to a long-serving member of our Branch.

On Friday 23rd January a small party from Stockport were the guests of the Royal Welsh Regimental Association in Pontypool at their annual celebration Dinner and Dance on the 136th anniversary of the defence of Rorke's Drift. It was a very impressive evening to say the least. Such is the busy social life we lead.

Friday 23rd also saw the Mercian Regiment march through Stockport and on to the Armoury to be greeted by our Standards and members of the CRA. Our annual Meeanee Church Parade and Service took place at Capesthorpe Hall and as guests of the Macclesfield Branch we adjourned later to the Flower Pot for lunch and refreshments.

Next and on to Blackpool for our Meeanee Reunion. Great food, great entertainment (a little too loud for some of us) and great to meet up once again with old and not-so-old comrades. To see our '22' flying proud from the flag pole was a treat to see. Many thanks to the organisers for a first class weekend. We took a short break to visit Blackpool RBL where, to our surprise, Roy Porter took to the stage and serenaded us all. The appreciative audience held an impromptu whip round and presented Roy with the proceeds (£1.41 in 1p coins). Nuff said.

Moving on to our AGM at Chester with CRAMC members up for election. Yet another chance to say hello again to many of

our comrades. Our intentions are to hold a Branch Curry Night sometime soon at the Regimental Club. Our annual two-legged bowls tournament arrangements are well under way with a 'Eddie Bottomley Memorial Rose Bowl' to be held in support of MacMillan's Nurses. Donations can be made if one chooses, to this event.

Till the next time. Bye for now.

Gordon H Smith

WALSALL BRANCH

It is with deep regret that I have to pass on my sympathies to the family of Gerald Walker. He passed away on 15th December 2014. I first met Gerald in January 1959 when I joined "C" Company 9 platoon in Singapore. We got on very well from the start even with our different accents and remained friends until January 1960 when we returned to Blighty for demob. We then went our separate ways to Civvy Street. Thanks to the CRA we met up years later at a reunion at Tranmere. Even with the passing years and him sporting a full beard I recognised him straight away standing next to another old mate Harry Tomkinson. We stayed in touch through reunions and phone calls and other occasions. Also remembrance from other C Company lads; Alan Cooper, Arthur Simms, Jim Pyatt, Graham Page and Ron Bartley in Australia. RIP Jez.

Our branch members, wives and friends, 35 in total, went to Chester Christmas Markets on the 27th November. A good day was had by all.

Our next event was the Walsall Branch Christmas Dinner Dance/Cabaret on the 3rd of December where 70 members, wives and friends enjoyed a 4 course meal with red/white wine and of course the traditional mince pie. 20 raffle prizes, first class cabaret with dancing to finish the night.

Into the new year and we were on the coach again, 28th January this time to the Quays Manchester for the Imperial War Museum. Entry is free and well worth a full day visit followed by the Trafford Centre for the ladies to do a bit of window shopping. Again 36 on the coach with a few lads and wives from the Staffords.

We have the coach booked again for our next two outings which I will report on next newsletter. The next event is our usual Malaya Singapore chip supper. We have a new venue for it this year as the Pelsall Club has closed down. The new address is: St. Francis Social Centre, 20 Mill Road, Shelfield, Walsall WS4 1RH. Telephone: 01922 682484. *Reg Smith*

DINNER NIGHT AT WEETON CAMP 1973 by Bill Helliwell

Having, recently returned from an emergency tour in Belfast, I felt we should hold a regimental dinner night, as soon as possible. The tour had been a strenuous one for most of the senior ranks, who I felt deserved to have a few sherbets and let off some steam. After a short democratic meeting with the mess committee I unanimously selected the menu, and the theme for the evening's entertainment, a re-enactment by the band and drums of the 1812 overture.

Prior to the dinner the paymaster, Captain Charlie Key, had requested a room for a warrant officer, who was on an annual visit to audit his accounts. I agreed to the request and also invited them both to the dinner. I thought that a little patronizing might help to alleviate any cock ups the treasurer might have made in our mess accounts. The bandmaster, David Price, agreed to organise the

band and drums and I personally briefed the Pioneer corporal on the pyrotechnics, and illuminations, emphasizing that I wanted the display to be the loudest and most realistic 1812 ever performed.

The night began with an exceptionally good meal, accompanied by far too much wine for some members, who were trying as hard as possible to make up for five months enforced abstinence. The PMC was busy noting any etiquette offenders, in order to ensure a continuous supply of spirit into the tappers cup. With an excellent ambience in the building, and the Craic flowing, we were set for a very lively night. However it was not a night for long speeches so I limited mine to a welcome home, and congratulations on a successful operational tour. The visiting warrant officer was then invited to say a few words on behalf of the guests.

DINNER NIGHT AT WEETON CAMP 1973 (continued)

He began by thanking the mess for the invitation and the excellent gastronomic evening, and then proceeded to inform the masses of his vast expertise in seeking out regimental fraud, especially the fiddling of travelling expenses by senior ranks. The only members showing a genuine interest in this verbal diarrhoea were two sergeants from the Chester area who, according to their applications for leave passes, were planning to spend two weeks in John 'O' Groats. Not satisfied with alienating the entire senior structure of the battalion, the speaker carried on with a lengthy, mind numbing description of his role in the forces. Within seconds heads were drooping, and several sergeants were demonstrating their appreciation of an excellent meal by nodding off. There were several others who were possibly just resting their eyes, which could be construed as their concentrating on the gist of the guest's words. After five minutes of verbal crap the bandmaster, sitting on my right, was almost comatose and the P.M.C, on my left, appeared to be close to anaesthetization, yet both managed to murmur the odd word of disapproval. However the room was suddenly brought back into life with a bang as the bandmaster, who had previous form for falling off bar stools, suddenly plummeted beneath the table. In doing so he not only managed to break a finger, but also ruined an excellent decanter of port and wrecked the cheese board at the same time. From under the table an audible reference to his nether regions was heard, and when he finally managed to surface he just grunted, and re-focused as if it was perfectly normal mess behaviour. There were several members who appeared quite annoyed at being so rudely awakened from their siesta, and seemed to be planning some fiendish method of terminating the orator. We were by now running very late, and the moronic speaker was talking as if auditing accounts was of the same importance as the Normandy landings. The minor disruption caused by the BM however gave me the chance to signal the mess corporal to tell the band to proceed immediately with the 1812, before the guest could send any more members to the land of nod.

Even though I had had the misfortune, in my younger days, to be too close to an explosion the power of the first blast that began the performance, took me completely by surprise. It not only reverberated around the camp, but it caused the wooden structure of the Mess to shake violently and the silver display to wobble like jelly. The guest had gone a lighter shade of pale, and had the look of a rabbit caught in a cars headlights a condition which was not helped by the PMC who suggested we take cover. The explosions were followed by the finest pyrotechnic display since the VE day celebrations in London. The drummers covered in plasma entered the mess followed by the band playing the Marseillaise, and then the Russian anthem. The plan was that after a couple of laps of the mess the fireworks would cease, and the band would then play the French retreat and leave the scene. But there seemed to be no end to the racket, so the band and drums, looking extremely perplexed, just kept playing the same tunes over and over again. The only way I could see to stop the mayhem was to dispatch the mess corporal to locate the Semtex happy pioneer, and strangle him.

When calm finally descended on the camp the mess corporal reappeared, and whispered to me that a large number of residents from the married quarters, mostly officers, were close to mutiny. Although I could put their complaints down to jealousy I was going to have to come up with a pretty quick answer when I was informed that the Chief Constable of Blackpool had dispatched his Swat Team to the camp. It appeared that the residents of Kirkham had phoned the police, and informed them that the camp was under attack. There was only one solution. A quick nod to the PMC for a ten minute pit stop and smoke break while I confronted the intruders.

The police vehicle, a sort of fortified mini-bus, arrived escorted by the guard commander and came to a halt about two feet from my nose. A rather large plump member of the Lancashire Constabulary, one of life's, persistent salad table dodgers, eased himself out of the vehicle and muttered to the driver, 'I just want a word with Guy Fawkes.' But before he could speak I ushered him into the bar and offered him and the squad some light refreshment, and at same time apologising profusely for the duty officer who had abjectly failed to notify the police. It is always good practice to place one's blame on junior orderly officers, even if they are blameless. Because by reveille they are usually so knackered they do not remember much about the previous night anyway. After ten minutes at the bar, it became pretty obvious that my main problem was going to be how to get rid of eight beer swilling police officers before they could do serious damage to the mess guests bar account. Meanwhile the PMC, trying his best at semaphore, was requesting permission to begin the blood sports program. After approximately a further ten minutes the boys in blue received a call. I never knew what the crackling radio message said, but it caused the laughing policeman and his posse to exit the mess extremely rapidly.

With the mess games in full flow, and the wounded piling up, we could have re-enacted the 1812 with real casualties. The visiting RSM declined an offer to join the warrant officers rugby team versus the sergeants which was a wise decision, because he would have definitely been in great danger not only from both sides, but also the onlookers. The night, or rather morning, ended with more senior rank injuries than the entire tour of Belfast. Looking around the mess at breakfast, the furnishing appeared to be back to normal, with the exception of the heating pipes which were drooping from the ceiling. However on the bright side, I had the weekend to put things right, and think up enough excuses to combat the backlash from the Chief Constable, and the disgruntlement from the married quarters.

In fact on Monday morning all went quite well until the Medical Officer informed the Commanding Officer not only of the latest casualty list, but also that since my return to the battalion, dinner night casualties now numbered one platoon sergeant with a broken leg, a band sergeant with a broken arm, and a warrant officer with a broken finger. It was during our tour of the camp later in the morning that the C.O. remarked "I heard you not only had a good dinner night, but you also managed to awaken and illuminate the whole of West Lancashire." I assured him the main complainants were just a few brown baggers who only complain when they miss a good night's entertainment.

It has always been my philosophy to work hard and play hard, within the boundaries, which my peers and I had been allowed to do as young sergeants. However it was something Jean did not always appreciate when I staggered home battered and bruised. In reminiscence perhaps it is time I apologised to all those residents in the Blackpool area, and the senior ranks who may have fallen foul of the Royal Army Pay Corps after the auditor left. But as we always said in the forces 'if you can't see the bright side then f....g polish the dull side!'

Bill Helliwell

SNIPPETS

Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve.

George Bernard Shaw

I remain just one thing, and one thing only, and that is a clown. It places me on a far higher plane than any politician"

Charlie Chaplin

JOHN FAIRBANKS WRITES

EXODUS

During my time in the Suez Canal Zone 52/54 I, like many of my comrades, spent countless hours guarding things. Apart from regular and vast amounts of time spent pounding the perimeter wire of Hodgsons Camp, we also were expected to keep an eye on the Sweetwater Canal Filtration Plant, the source of our drinking water, the cold storage depot on the outskirts of Suez, and on occasion huge ordnance depot at Abu Sultan. Also on the list of places to practice crime prevention was the infamous Kilo 99. This was a check point on the Suez/ Cairo Road which marked the border of the Canal Zone. If my memory, or what passes for one these days, can be relied on this was a tented platoon strength encampment, separated from an Egyptian army unit by a narrow no-man's land complete with barbed wire and a few 'Danger – Mines' notices.

Our main duty, traffic control, was not easy. Inspecting and searching cars was routine and heavy goods vehicles produced few problems. But until you have boarded a coach filled with surly men, and burka clad women accompanied by innumerable baksheesh begging kids, and their dogs, goats, chickens and sheep you are unlikely to discover the true meaning of the word apprehension. It was during one such search that I discovered that fear can actually cause the hair on the back of the neck to rise. Such was the likelihood of a knife in the back the practice of boarding the vehicles was stopped and all passengers were required to leave the coach to be checked. At the road side, by the actual check point, we flew the Union Jack from a very tall flagpole. Not to be outdone the Egyptians had erected a flagpole of equal height and then each evening a dual sunset ceremony took place. It became obvious that Nasser's finest were determined that their flag remained the highest for the longest time. They seldom achieved this aim. Because we had the only bugler and we were always briefed in advance as to the speed at which he would play the last post, and consequently we could judge the rate of descent.

Kilo 99 was a God-forsaken place (and still is) known to many of us as the Last Outpost of the Empire. It was even claimed by some that the threat of a month at Kilo 99 was the real reason why Beau Geste joined the Foreign Legion. Because we were quite a distance from Suez visitors were few and far between but one regular caller, given to turning up without prior warning was the CO, known to all as the Red Ant. For a variety of reasons his visits were usually eventful and always appreciated by some, but not welcomed by others. Like the day he turned up, accompanied by the RSM, at 2pm just about the hottest part of the day. It was siesta time and on both sides of the wire - peace and silence reigned. As Guard Commander, I and the soldiers on duty on the road block, were the only personnel awake. This state of affairs did not last long. The Red Ant ordered the duty drummer to blow stand to. He obeyed and all hell let loose. As the sound of the alarm echoed across the location from our tented lines soldiers, clutching, rifles, brens and rocket launchers ran to take up their defensive positions.

On the Egyptian side of the wire the situation was not quite the same. As the bugle notes died away their troops, dressed in a variety of civilian clothes, and visibly unarmed disappeared en-masse, at high speed in the general direction of Cairo which was many miles distant. In a few short moments the Egyptian camp was completely deserted. And at the road block an empty bus, which shortly before had been packed with civilians stood forlornly in the road. The entire passengers and crew had also joined the exodus.

THE STORY OF TOMMY

THE STORY OF TOMMY; A STORY WITHOUT A MORAL By Rudyard Kipling

This is the story of Tommy, aged twenty and drunk in his cot; Marvellous drunk was Tommy, and the night was marvellous hot;
And the fever had held him all day, till Tommy was told by his "chum"
That the worst of fevers would yield to a couple of "goes" of rum.
So he drank till the bare plain rocked 'neath his regulation boots,
And kept the liquor in place with a dozen *bazaar* cheroots.

Marvellous hot was the night (hot as they make 'em in June), Merrily came the mosquito and cheered his soul with a tune,
Over the nose of Tommy softly the punkah swept.
But coolies are only human, and somehow that coolie slept.
Sweating and swearing profusely, dizzy and dazed with his smoke –
Mad with the drink and the fever, Tommy, aged twenty, awoke.

"*Zor se kencho you soor!*" Never an answering wrench,
Peacefully slumbered the coolie, "*Kencho you budzart, kench!*"
Three times Tommy had called him; gaily he slumbered on.
In at the barrack-room windows softly the moonbeams shone.
Gleamed on a polished belt-jag – gleamed on a barrel brown,
Stuck in a rack, and inviting Tommy to take 'em down.

Only an arm's length away, swaddled in paper and twine
Ten regulation "pickets" – if you subtract one, nine.
Tommy has settled that question as "Little Jack Horner" or yore,
Clutches the smooth, brown barrel, staggers across the floor.
Only a tug at the lever, only a jerk of the thumb,
Now for the last temptation. Query. Will Tommy succumb?

Mistily muses Tommy – finger laid on the trigger:
"Ain't it a bloomin' lark to frighten a blasted nigger"
Now fur to wake up the *soor!*" Never a sign from the coolie.
Tommy has shouldered the rifle – strives to present it duly.
Little night-owls are chuckling. Loudly the coolie respire,
Laughing aloud as he does so, Tommy, aged twenty, fires.

Merrily hiccupped Tommy when they locked him up in the dark.
Tried to explain to the Guard how it was only a "lark."
Didn't remember at trial aught that he did or said.
Wherefore was justly ordained to be "hanged by the neck till dead."
Waited a couple of weeks, while the *padris* came and harangued,
Then, in the Central Jail, Tommy, aged twenty, was hanged.

SNIPPETS

One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors. Plato

We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office. Aesop

BOOK REVIEW

The Junior Officers' Reading Club By Patrick Hennessey



This book has probably made me think more than any other book that I have read. I experienced ever-changing emotions as I thumbed through the pages, and even my opinion of the author changed, almost with every chapter.

This is the story of Patrick Hennessey, from the time of his induction into Sandhurst, through Public Duties as a Grenadier Guards officer to his service in Iraq and then Afghanistan. I don't think that I am exposing any prejudices when I say that the author came from a privileged background and was an Oxbridge graduate prior to becoming a Guards Officer. Having learnt these facts I expected the book to go the way of so many others written by those from a similar background. I was wrong!

It was fairly early on that I settled into the author's rhythm and made an early note to myself that this was the way that I would like to write a book. Another incorrect thought, as it transpired. The early pages began with a little bit about his background and his time at Sandhurst. All very interesting, but nothing of particular note, although I did enjoy his honesty and the style of writing that let you into his thoughts and mind-set.

Patrick Hennessey was clearly champing at the bit to see active service and he was clearly disappointed to find himself doing public duties after leaving Sandhurst. I am not sure what else he would have expected, having been commissioned into the Grenadier Guards. Nevertheless he seemed to enjoy the attention

A MESSAGE FROM EDDIE PICKERING

May I take this small space up to say "Thank You" to those members of the Cheshire Regiment Association who contributed to my retirement present which I received at the Meeanee Reunion? I am still reflecting on just what to do with the money, wishing to turn it into something by which I can remember my many years of involvement with you all.

It has been an interesting time since 2007 when I first took over the role as a volunteer when the incomparable Alan Hughes retired. There have been many challenges to overcome, not least, the loss of a regular income from the Days Pay Scheme which underpinned so much of the CRA's work previously. (It is good to see that the Mercian Regiment Association continues to look after the welfare of our members who find themselves in need.) There have been some memorably good times as well as some unbearably sad ones, mainly at funerals of CRA stalwarts who had become good friends; 2010 was a particularly sad year when I attended over a period of 6 months, some 27 Regimental funerals.

Our branches are beginning to struggle because of the unwillingness of a younger generation to join in. Most branches are being organised and run by the same stalwarts who were there 20 or so years ago when I first became actively involved and I would like to pay tribute to everyone who works so hard to keep the 22nd spirit alive in their locality. Thank you all for your never-ending support to me.

Administration of all CRA business and events at The Castle

and those of us who saw public duties whilst stationed at Caterham in the 1980s will be familiar with some of his remarks.

He finally got his boots dirty in Iraq, although most of the real action was in the past by the time that he arrived. Again he seemed disappointed not to have had the opportunity for some "gung ho" action. This was about to change, as shortly afterwards he found himself in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, where the real meat of this book is to be found.

His narration of events in Afghanistan is quite exceptional and perhaps only a fellow soldier, and infantryman in particular would truly understand his mind-set. Perhaps what may be quite surprising is that an Oxbridge graduate and commissioned officer should have these particular thoughts. Patrick Hennessey is to be commended for that honesty and the guts to express them so publicly, although some may take them to re-inforce the aforementioned prejudices about Guards officers.

Readers of this newsletter may recall an article entitled "Men Fight for their Mates" by James Delingpole. I think that Patrick Hennessey would certainly concur with many of the sentiments expressed in that article. What also comes over clearly is that he has a great respect for Terry Taliban, perhaps a lot more than he has for the RAF and the REMFs (Rear Echelon types) both of whom he maligns on more than one occasion.

My main criticism is the usual one about the over-use of acronyms and having to constantly thumb to the glossary of military terms, found at the back of the book, often to find that it is not there!

In conclusion, some of you may find his almost casual attitude to fighting and killing the Taliban a little disturbing but then, if it wasn't for people like that, then we mortals would not be sleeping peaceably in our beds.

George Szwejkowski

relies on the expertise and willingness of 3 ladies, Sue, Tracey and Marion all of whom I had worked with in 3 CHESHIRE previously; it is true to say that without their constant support, very little would have been achieved these last few years. In my opinion, the CRA, Museum and the Mercian Regiment are well served by them.

Behind the scenes, I have been supported by 2 willing volunteers, Dave and Dave, who have cheerfully busied themselves with whatever tasks came their way. Sadly Dave Mapley was taken seriously ill shortly before Christmas and is now on the long slow road to recovery, I hope to see him back to health and strength before too long. Thank you both.

As I settled down to write this, I received news that a new Assistant Regimental Secretary has been selected and may be in post by mid-May. Until then, I will continue to keep an eye on CRA affairs and sign the cheques before finally going into my long promised retirement.

To conclude, I would like to thank you all for your help, support and for keeping me on my toes for the last 7 years or so and wish you all the best for the future.

Eddie Pickering

SNIPPETS

A politician is a fellow who will lay down your life for his country. Texas Guinan



This painting "Let's Play, Not Slay" (symbolically) depicts a football match between British troops (6th Battalion Cheshires) and the German 40th Battalion (Saxon) Regiment that took place on no-man's land on the Western Front in 1914.

The soldier on the left about to kick the ball depicts Pte Ernie Williams 6th Bn Cheshire, and the soldier running on the far left depicts CSM Frank Naden, later in the war to be promoted to Colonel and highly decorated. The British officer having his cigarette lit by the German officer is Lt Charles Bertram Brockbank, also of the 6th Bn Cheshire.

CSM Naden wrote the following about Christmas Eve and Night:

On Christmas Eve as each fireball went up from the German line our men shouted "Hurrah" and "Let's Have Another." They also sang Christians Awake and Christmas hymns. On Christmas Day one of the Germans came out of the trenches and held his hands up. Our fellows immediately got out of their trenches and the Germans got out of theirs, and we met in the middle, and for the rest of the day we fraternised, exchanged food, cigarettes and souvenirs.

The Germans gave us some of their sausages, and we gave them some of our stuff. The Scotsmen started the bagpipes and we had a rare old jollification, which included football, in which the Germans took part. The Germans expressed themselves as being tired of the war and wished it was all over. They greatly admired our equipment and wanted to exchange jack-knives and other articles. Next day we got an order that all communication and friendly intercourse with the enemy must cease, but we did not fire at all that day, and the Germans did not fire at us.

Signaller Blease, serving with the 6th Battalion wrote the following to his father:

On Wednesday December 23rd we went to the trenches. We had a very wary time with shells and "Jack Johnsons." It started to freeze on Christmas Eve and was jolly cold. On Christmas

Day, when dawn broke it was very foggy so we were able to have a short run on top of the trenches to get us warm. Anyhow the fog lifted and our men as well as the Germans were expected to fire, but none fired.



Then the Germans started to wave umbrellas and rifles, we answering. They sang and we sang. Then getting bolder, we advanced towards their trenches, they leaving theirs, both parties unarmed. When we met we found they were fairly old fellows. We exchanged greetings, they gave us sausages, cigars, cigs, sweets and parkin. We all mixed up together and men played mouth organs and tin whistles and danced, and my word the Germans can't just sing. Some of them exchanged addresses and souvenirs were freely exchanged. The time came when we had to part. Shaking hands and shouting, they and we went back to the trenches.

No firing was done on Christmas Day making it a peaceful day.

This edition of the newsletter is Volume 2 Issue 22. As we thank Alan Jennings for his dedication to the CRA over the years we take a nostalgic look back at the front cover of Volume 1 Issue 22 from 15 years ago. A lot has changed since then!



THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Volume 1 Issue 22

June 2000

REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS & MUSEUM	MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT
<p>As I write RHQ is preparing for the onslaught of hundreds of Chester citizens for the Retreat – we hope! This year the Clive Band are playing for the Museum Appeal and Sandbach Branch are very kindly donating an old recruiting poster to the Museum in honour of the 80th Birthday of Lawrence Stubbs – a Dunkirk period veteran.</p> <p>Richard Mottershead of KCR, and soon to become a Regular Officer in the Regiment, has just successfully crossed the inhospitable mountains from Ras al Khaimah to Muscat in 41°C. He did it for the Museum and, if all the pledges come home, raised over £500. Well done and thanks to him and all who supported his prodigious feat, or is it feet?! I hope he will give a slide lecture later in the year.</p> <p>Regimental History</p> <p>We have just published a photographic history of the Regiment from 1850-2000. Dr Barr very kindly selected and compiled the work. We await the first copies from the printers at £9.99 for the Museum shop. They will be on sale at Blackpool. Please buy from us – orders accepted. The publishing company are donating 5% of all sales to the Museum. I feel it is an excellent start to our new publishing enterprise. The Regimental History 1938-2000 will follow within the next two years. Watch this space!</p> <p>For the Museum we urgently need WWII early battle dress and denims and also post war items – can anyone help!</p> <p>We have no more news on the tenure of the Castle, Chester Branch development but we are still very much hoping we can go forward on the development of a "CRA Club" just as soon as we have a safe occupancy agreement.</p> <p>The 1st Bn is enjoying Cyprus and we hope to visit them next year for a week probably in March 2001. There is talk of the CRA chartering an aircraft and taking over a hotel some 4 or 5 miles away from where the 1st Bn is stationed at Dhekelia (some 30 minutes from Larnaca Airport). It could involve around 250 people and it will not be a stag trip. Looks very interesting and while it will be cool in Cyprus compared to the heat of the summer it will certainly be a lot warmer than England. More details will be published in the next edition.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Ellis</p>	<p>Our last newsletter had a great deal about Dunkirk and we will have a small contingent at Dunkirk for the final parade on Sunday 4 June. Other CRA members will be with their Dunkirk Veterans Branches but we wanted to make sure The Cheshire Regiment Association would be present to remember those men of our three Battalions who were at Dunkirk. Many made it back to the UK, others were to spend five years in captivity and some will remain forever on the way to the beaches. They are not forgotten. Alan Jennings has organised the Pilgrimage and we will be visiting various cemeteries and attending the official programme events.</p> <p>Since our last newsletter we have had our Race Day and it was a great day! Many thanks to the ladies and men of the Chester branch for lunch and liquid refreshments, to RHQ for the organisation and to Capt Tyson and the Crewe team from Kings Cheshire for all their hard work at the Race Course. This is a very special event and it was good to see so many members of the association present.</p> <p>Millennium Reunion</p> <p>I would like to thank so many of you for supporting my appeal for raising the money for an overseas holiday as one of the main prizes at the Millennium weekend in June. You donated some £500.00 from all ranks and I hope we can now turn this into a "real money generator" at Blackpool to help both the event costs and the Museum Appeal.</p> <p>Blackpool is nearly upon us and I look forward to seeing many of you "taking the air"! I hope we can use the occasion to renew old friendships across our Branches and also to make new friends. The Regiment has always had a reputation for doing a <i>great</i> job and knowing how to party. This time it's the party bit!</p> <p>Looks as if there will be 520 plus sitting down to the Gala Dinner on the Saturday night. The programme is: Friday night will be a get together with dinner at 7.30. Saturday starts with a relaxed morning, followed by an in house race meeting with an eight race card in the afternoon. The evening starts with a wine reception at 6.30 followed by the Gala Dinner at 8pm. On Sunday morning there will be a drum head service in the Norbreck Ballroom Suite at 10.30 when Standards will be paraded. A free afternoon. In the evening there will be a buffet style meal followed by a nostalgic night of entertainment. Departure after breakfast on Monday. See you in Blackpool.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Bill Jones</p>

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Editor, I've never contributed to the newsletter before but after reading Linzi Jones' article in the December 2014 issue it set me thinking as to just how much serving in HM Armed Forces can set you up for later life.

I joined B Coy 1 Cheshire in 1984 and had a wonderful 6 years before changing uniforms to join Merseyside Police.

When I went to what was then the northwest training centre at Bruche near Warrington I was in a minority of other recruits from both Merseyside and other forces who had come out of the military.

The one thing that then set those people apart was that the basics were already ingrained into them. Apart from being smart and punctual (be at the designated place 5 minutes early) they were just better prepared for what lay ahead. I actually got told off by the cleaners on my first morning because I swept my room and made my bed; that was their job apparently.

Obviously the drill was second nature but the main thing was that the ex military were used to working on their own and to making snap decisions, as well as planning ahead in other aspects, use of the 5 P's really did work wonders.

And so after eventually passing out of basic training for a second time I got posted to my station, one of the first people I met was another ex-Cheshire, who I won't name but had last seen sitting in the pouring rain in Belize a few years earlier, holding a red torch as part of Recce Platoon to guide us onto our start line.

Over the next 20 odd years several other ex-Cheshire's have also come into Merseyside Police, it's a vast organisation and we haven't worked together much, but on the odd occasion we have been on the same operation or similar, people are usually greeted with their old rank which does cause confused looks from their colleagues to hear that person addressed as corporal, colour, etc. a terminology few other people understand.

I've also noted that ex service personnel are drawn towards the more specialist roles within the police, such as search teams, drug teams, public order, surveillance and of course firearms, roles which they usually excel in and are well thought of within.

I'm not saying that ex-servicemen make better bobbies than anyone else, but there's certainly something in their DNA which sets them apart.

Cheers, *Andy (Olly) Almond*

Dear Editor,

An interesting piece document was passed to me recently by Gordon Kipps from the Ellesmere Port Branch. Frankly, it stopped me in my tracks.

Used to reading about and hearing of deaths of members of the Regiment in conflict virtually the world over, to be faced by members of the 8th Bn being killed on Merseyside was, as I say, a real shock.

Maj Tony Astle, then Assistant Regimental Secretary, is responding to a request from Graham Bell seeking assistance as to the final resting places of members of the 8th Bn killed in a German air raid on 12 March 1941.

The document then becomes self-explanatory. 23 officers and men from G Company at Tranmere and 14 from C Company at Wallasey killed either on 12 March or died of injuries sustained in the air raids on the following two days. The discrepancy in totals indicates that one soldier listed in list A did in fact survive. The 'L' marked to the left of some names appears to indicate that they are in fact buried at the Landican Cemetery.

They also served

David Oak

Below is a composite of the document written by Major Tony Astle on 12th November 1997 (Ed).

List of those killed on 12th March 1941 from 8th Battalion Cheshire Regiment in Merseyside air raid:

G Company at Tranmere – Capt Russell and 22 NCOs and men.

C Company at Wallasey – 14 killed.

It can be assumed that any man buried at Landican Cemetery – marked with (L) was C Coy.

List A – Died on 12th March 1941

Pte William J Amos (L)
Pte Donald W Beasley
Pte John Berry
Pte Arthur Boardman
Pte Harry Casey (L)
Pte Carl Coulstring (L)
Pte Alex Dale
Pte James Dodd
Pte William Gilbert
Pte Dennis Glazier
Pte Thomas E Hamlin
Pte Joseph W Harper
Pte Frederick A Holgate (L)
Pte Joseph Hoye
Pte William Humm
Pte John H Hyndmao
Pte Joseph Lamb (L)
Pte Sidney Lee
Pte Norman Leigh (L)
Pte William A Price
Pte Harold Robinson
Capt Francis T Russell (G Coy)
LCpl Albert E Smith (L)
Pte Geoffrey L Smith
Pte William Smith
WO2 Joseph Stages (L)
Sgt Alfred Stone (L)
Pte George E H Symes
Pte Jack Whittaker

List B – Died on date shown

Cpl Ernest J Bell (shown only as 3/41)
Pte William Brown (13/3/41)
Pte Richard Dalton (14/3/41)
Pte George J Hinkley (14/3/41) (L)
Pte Thomas J Sankey (27/3/41)
Pte George Tomkinson (shown only as 3/41)
Pte Robert Watkinson (22/3/41)
Pte Sydney Watts (shown only as 3/41)
Sgt Charles Williscroft (13/3/41)

These two lists do not identify which companies they were from. The total is 38. 23 were from G Company (Tranmere) and 14 were from C Company (Wallasey). At least 1 man from List B was not killed or fatally wounded in the air raid. Those who died on 13 and 14 March can be assumed to have succumbed to air raid injuries.

CORRESPONDENCE (continued)

The 12th of March 1941 was the most tragic night in the Battalion's story. In an intensive raid, the headquarters of G Company at Tranmere and C Company in Wallasey were both destroyed by direct hits from heavy bombs. Capt F T Russell, commanding G Company and 22 NCOs and men were killed, and 7 wounded, and in C Company 14 were killed and 18 wounded. Severe damage was done all over Merseyside and the men from all the companies worked long and hard with the civil fire services. The award of the BEM to Sgt J W Joyce of C Company was well earned, for he entered a burning building three times and saved the lives of three men.

BLIND VETERANS UK

Sight loss support for vision impaired ex-Service men and women

Blind Veterans UK believes that no one who has served our country should battle blindness alone. The charity offers free lifelong support to help veterans and their families overcome the challenges of sight loss and live life to the full.

It doesn't matter how a veteran lost their sight - it could be due to old age, illness or an incident whilst in Service - or how long ago they served, if they are now battling severe sight loss, Blind Veterans UK can help.

Through three service centres in Brighton, Sheffield and Llandudno, North Wales, and a network of welfare officers, Blind Veterans UK provides specialist rehabilitation, training, equipment and emotional support, as well as sports and social activities, so that veterans receive the help they need in order to adjust to life with sight loss and live independently.

Blind Veterans UK estimates that there are over 68,000 blind and vision impaired veterans in the UK who could be eligible for the organisation's free, lifelong support, but don't currently realise it. If you, or someone you know, served in the Armed Forces or did National Service and is now experiencing severe sight loss, call freephone 0800 389 7979 or visit www.noonealone.org.uk.



SSAFA VACANCIES

SSAFA Cheshire is looking to recruit volunteer caseworkers to join our team. Caseworkers are our front line volunteers visiting clients, assessing their needs, making recommendations and in the majority of cases sourcing funding. This is a highly rewarding job helping your fellow veterans in need of assistance.

Opportunities also exist to support the work of SSAFA Cheshire by assisting with fundraising events throughout the year. The average work load is 4 hours a week and we offer training courses either locally or at SSAFA Central Office in London. All out of pocket expenses are paid including a motor mileage allowance. You can work from home or at one of our offices in The Dale, Peninsula Barracks Warrington or Crewe Drill Hall. Please contact Andrew Swindale email: swins46@btinternet.com or Telephone: 01630 657268

CHANGE STEP

On behalf of Change Step, Linzi Jones, Fundraising Manager, would like to say a huge thank you to all the ladies and gents who donated and bought pin badges at the Meeanee Reunion in Blackpool on Valentine's Day. Your kindness raised £134 in just half an hour. For those of you who are wondering who Change Step are, please read on...

What is Change Step?

Change Step is a CAIS led and DACW managed peer mentoring and advice service. This service is for military veterans and others with post-traumatic stress disorder and a range of psychosocial problems who want to make positive changes to their lives.

The service is delivered by veterans for veterans and aims to support those seeking help for problems encountered as a result of military or operational duty. The programme offers peer support, training opportunities and signposting to relevant health and welfare services.

Change Step works collaboratively with statutory bodies and other relevant organisations to ensure an accessible and comprehensive framework by which to guide individuals towards the most appropriate service.

What can Change Step offer?

- Contact point for veterans, family members and carers
- Community-based peer mentoring scheme delivered by veterans for veterans
- Bespoke training opportunities
- Signposting to detoxification and rehabilitation programmes
- Signposting to mental health, wellbeing and other appropriate services

Who is Change Step for?

- Military veterans
- Former members of the emergency services
- Trauma survivors
- Their family members

Where is Change Step located?

We have drop in centres across Wales. The drop-ins are a friendly place to meet with other veterans and a Change Step Peer Mentor. To find out more about any of the following drop-ins, please call the Change Step office on 0300 777 2259

- Flint
- HOLYWELL
- Wrexham
- Cardiff
- Baglan
- Colwyn Bay
- Ceredigion
- Haverfordwest

SNIPPETS

Politicians are wonderful people as long as they stay away from things they don't understand, such as working for a living.

P J O'Rourke

An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile – hoping it will eat him last.

Winston Churchill

I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.

Will Rogers

In politics, absurdity is not a handicap. Napoleon Bonaparte

Just because you do not have an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.

Pericles

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

14 Jan	CRAMC meeting
15,16,17 Apr	Regimental Golf The Forgotten Trophy
17 Apr	Officers Association Lunch, Wellington College, Crowthorne
8 May	Regimental Race Day, Chester
15 May	Regimental Golf Day Malkin Bank
13 Jun	Malaya Reunion, Walsall
19 Jun	Regimental Golf Day The Oaks, Mollington
20 Jun	Veterans' Day, South Wirral
7 Jun	Armed Forces Day
17 Jul	Regimental Golf Day Aldersey Green
26 Jul	St Julien Memorial Service, Stockport
14 Aug	Regimental Golf Day Eastham Lodge
4 Sep	Regimental Golf Day Pryors Hayes
5 Sep	Officers Association Ladies Dinner, Chester
6 Sep	Mons Day Parade and Lunch, Chester
31 Oct	East Cheshire Reunion, Stockport
8 Nov	Remembrance Sunday Services
Dec	Drop-pin Well Memorial Service

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

22 CLUB WINNERS

December

£100	Mr S McDonald, Stockport
£50	Mr D J Waring, Tarporley
£25	Mr G T Kipps, Chester

January

£100	Mr S Lamon, Wilmslow
£50	Mr D S Baddeley, Hough
£25	Mr C J Carress, South Norwood

February – MEEANEE GRAND DRAW

£100	Col J D Reynolds, Rushwick
£100	Mr J R James, Wirral
£50	Mr W D Fisher, Bexhill-on-Sea
£50	Mr A J Ridgway, Chester
£25	Mr M K Evans, Torquay
£25	Mr M Carmon, Chester

March

£100	Mr A A Joseph, Droitwich
£50	Mr T J Bock, Banbury
£25	Mr J G Daintry, Richmond

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.

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:

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

For all Club enquiries, contact Mike Smith on 07906 753699

MEEANEE DRAW WINNERS – BLACKPOOL

£200	Ms M T Hologate, Crewe
£150	Mr S McDonald, Stockport
£100	Mr D R Ratcliffe, Wrexham
£75	Mr P L Jackson, New Brighton
£50	Mr W Scully, Stockport
£50	Mr W Jones, Middleton
£25	Mrs P Jackson, New Brighton
£25	Mr B Gibbons, Chester
£25	Mr W Roscoe, Cheadle
£25	Mr J Walker, Walsall
£10	Mr R Winterton, Burton upon Trent
£10	Mr B Sims, Crewe

LAST POST

Harold Ashton died 5 March 2015 served 1950s Suez

Maj Sidney Burton TD died 10 November 2014, aged 83. Duke of Wellington's Regt and 7th Bn Cheshire Regt.

Tony Cannon died 10 February 2015 aged 72 served 1960-69

Paul Cook died 24 December 2014 aged 38 Ex 1st Bn 1994-98

Trevor Ellis died March 2015 Ex 6th Bn WW2 1942-45 Served in Italy

Bill Hackney died 13 December 2014

Capt George Killip died 29 January 2015 aged 99 enlisted into 1st Bn in India in 1930 aged 15

J McCarthy died 22 November 2014

Maj His Honor Judge David Owen TD died 7 January 2015 Ex 4th Bn

Dennis Saunders died 27 December 2014 aged 82 Served 1951-52

Fred Tooby died 1 January 2015 aged 85 Ex Cpl Cheshire Regt Band

Gerald Walker died 15 December 2014

Ronald Charles Williams, Private, 1st Bn Suez. Died November 2014, aged 79.

JE Williamson died May 2012 1st Bn 1955-57