



THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 2 ISSUE 24

DECEMBER 2015

EDITORIAL

As the days get shorter and colder and the year draws inexorably to a close, it has been difficult to find any positives to highlight 2015. There has been the odd flurry of sporting success, mixed with the inevitable failures, but other than that I suspect that many of you will not look back on the year with much fondness.

The recent tragic events in Egypt, Beirut and Paris will have focused everyone on the catastrophe that is the Middle-East. Let us hope that this does not result in our politicians repeating their previous mistakes, although history does not give cause for optimism.

It was interesting to observe that there has recently been a drive in order to recruit more officers to our ever dwindling Army. I may be missing something, but with the total numbers in the Army due to drop to 84,000 by 2020, it seems odd that there will still be a scarcity of officers. I can only conclude that the MOD has been extremely careless in ensuring the retention of those already serving. Perhaps this should be no surprise, as the MOD and their political leaders appear to have great difficulty in maintaining their side of the military covenant.

The Chairman's Column will make you aware that the CRA is still struggling to find a secretary and treasurer to replace Eddie Pickering. The likely loss of the HQ element of the CRA may not make a difference to many, other than perhaps the loss of this newsletter in hard copy. If there is a demand, there may still be the possibility of an on-line version. In the meantime we must all be very grateful to Eddie for agreeing to carry on until the AGM next February.

Have a good Christmas and let us hope that the New Year brings good cheer.

The deadline for the next issue will be 10th March 2016. 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@btconnect.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>

SNIPPETS

The snippets in this edition are mostly extracted from:

'The Wit of Cricket' Compiled by Barry Johnston

On how to play Shane Warne – My tactic would be to take a quick single and observe him from the other end.

Geoffrey Boycott

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

News, firstly, from the Mercian Regiment Association (MRA) front to keep members informed of what the Colonel of the Regiment (CoR) envisages of the antecedent Regimental Associations.

It is rather assumed that in the fullness of time (10 years!) the MRA will have absorbed all other association branches. The move to this natural conclusion will be gradual with no outside influence being applied. The operating rules of the MRA are being finalised. These do not differ in any fundamental regard from the rules of the CRA. Once accepted by the CoR, two steps towards the "natural conclusion" will be put in place, namely;

1. All new branches of either the Mercian Regiment or the antecedent Regiments will, on formation, become MRA branches.
2. Any antecedent Regiment association branch may at any time, of its own volition, change to become an MRA branch.

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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN (continued)

3. To assist with the identity of the MRA, a new Standard has been designed (accepted by the CRAMC on your behalf at our July meeting) and will become available, if requested, in the spring of 2016. Cost to branches not more than £500. This new Standard would be in addition to the CRA branch standard, not in place of.

[Comment: At the CRAMC and Branch Officials' meetings in October, the uptake of any of these proposals was minimal. Early days.]

Let me now turn to CRA matters, which are of more immediate concern. We have still failed to find a suitable replacement for our Secretary and Treasurer (Eddie). Statement of the obvious but without them we cannot 'trade.' Therefore discussions are now taking place as to dissolving the charitable status of the CRA. There are, obviously, a number of issues being considered:-

1. Continued support from the Mercian Regiment in specific areas.
2. Independence of current CRA branches.
3. Continued financial support and/or dispersal of present funds.
[Note: The motion to dissolve the charity cannot be heard without convening an Extraordinary General Meeting.]

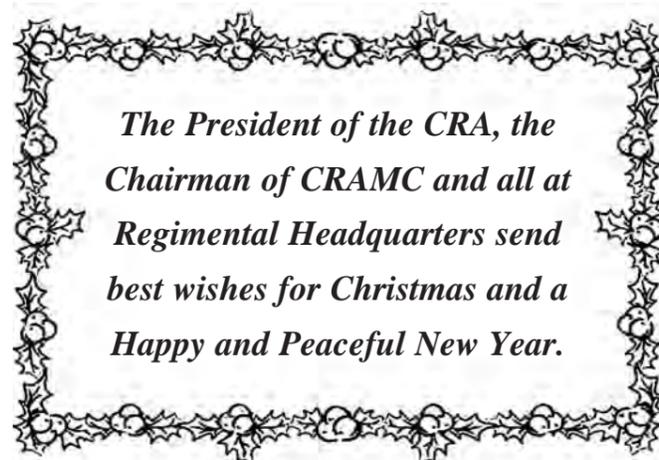
A possible timeline might be;

- 20 January 2016: CRAMC meeting for further discussion.
20 February 2016: AGM where the proposal could be heard and a date set, if necessary, for the EGM.

A lot to take in but with falling numbers at branch level and at Mons Day and without a replacement for the Treasurer, the Secretary and myself as Chairman in February, perhaps the time has arrived to close down the HQ element of the CRA. It is emphasised that branches would remain CRA unless they chose otherwise. As Eddie says, the only big difference is that we would probably lose the Newsletter.

On that rather sombre note may I, on behalf of all members of CRAMC, wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year

David Oak
Chairman



MEETING OF BRANCH OFFICIALS 28.10.2015

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BRANCH OFFICIALS HELD AT RHQ ON WEDNESDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2015

Present: Lt Col D M Oak, MBE (Chairman), K Mort, *Stockport Branch*, P L Jackson and J G Ball, *Birkenhead Branch*, D J Sadler, L Sutton, *Walsall Branch*, J Donaldson, V Morris, *Halton Branch*, S Pugh, *Winsford Branch*, J Fairbanks, *Chester Branch*. Maj T E Pickering MBE (Secretary).

In Attendance: P Lomas, *Stockport Branch*.

Apologies were presented by G Szwejkowski, *Southern Region*.

The Chairman invited Mr Paul Lomas to address the meeting. Mr Lomas reported that he had met some former Cheshire Regiment soldiers at a recent Veteran's Breakfast event and he was concerned about some of the remarks they made during conversations. They were "Riders" and felt that they were being excluded from CRA activity because they wished to attend in their riding clothes. He reminded members that the Royal British Legion Riders has attended all of the funerals of Mercian Regiment soldiers killed on Active Service, wearing their leathers and regimental berets. Subjects such as eligibility for aid from Help for Heroes and the Northern Ireland medal (i.e. 1 medal for multiple tours) were also brought up.

He requested that Branches and the Association take note and consider taking their feelings into account with regard to activities.

The Chairman opened the meeting and thanked members for attending.

1. The Minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. There were no matters arising. Mr Fairbanks proposed and Mr Morris seconded the proposal that they be accepted as a true record. **Carried.**
2. The Chairman reported that since the last meeting he has had a meeting with Lt Col Wilde, CO of 2 MERCIAN and felt that the CRA would benefit greatly from the co-operative relationship we already enjoy with the Battalion mentioning specifically the continued support for a Regimental Tent at Chester Races.
3. The Secretary presented an up to date financial statement for the CRA and the Club, and was pleased to report that it was likely that the Club would end the Financial Year in profit.
4. The Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting of the Mercian Regiment Association at RHQ Lichfield. He has produced a summary of the proceedings and circulated copies for information.

MEETING OF BRANCH OFFICIALS 28.10.2015 (continued)

5. The Chairman spoke about the future of the Regimental Association and the difficulties faced in governance, being unable to find persons with the experience to fill the posts of Secretary/Treasurer. Maj Pickering has agreed to remain in post until the AGM.
6. The Chairman updated on progress with the Spring Reunion on behalf of Mr Joe Murphy who is organising the event, reporting that arrangements were well in hand and that a deposit has been paid. Details will be sent out with the next Newsletter and published on Facebook. Places are limited to 160 and will be allocated on a "first come, first served" basis.
7. Reports from the Branches:
 - a. **Stockport.** 130 tickets have been sold for the East Cheshire Reunion. Their AGM will be held on 4th December. They have between 30 and 40 attendees at the monthly meetings.
 - b. **Birkenhead.** Although they are losing numbers, they try to be represented at events in the area and take part in CRA activity. They are holding a Christmas Dinner on 6th December. Following prompting from the Chairman, Mr Jackson reported that they had won their Bowls match against Stockport Branch.
 - c. **Walsall.** The Branch is 20 strong and 13 members hope to attend the East Cheshire Reunion. The Branch will hold a Christmas Dinner. Arrangements are in hand for the 2016 Malaya and Singapore reunion in a new venue in Willenhall. The Reunion is open to all CRA members irrespective of age.
 - d. **Halton.** They have 33 members, of whom 15 are regular participants in meetings. Locally they had the largest representation at recent VE/VJ Day events and have been asked to take a leading part in the organisation of the Halton RBL Veteran's Rally on 6th November. They are looking forward to parading their new Branch Standard at the Rally and on Remembrance Sunday.
 - e. **Winsford.** Due to the continued ill-health of the Chairman, difficulties are being experienced in keeping up numbers. They have 7 regular attendees to meetings.

- f. **Chester.** Chester Branch will hold a Christmas Lunch on 6th December and the annual Christmas Draw on 18th December. Mr Fairbanks pointed out that Chester Branch has a social meet every Friday and all members of the CRA are welcome.
 - g. **Southern Region.** The Secretary read a report from Southern Region in which Mr Szwejkowski reported on the recent ceremony to commemorate the death of Nurse Edith Cavell in London. He said that the Grandson of Lt Col Dudley Boger, one of the first to be helped to escape by Nurse Cavell, had attended and that Col Bob Stewart DSO MP, who was going to lay a Regimental wreath, insisted that he lay the wreath on behalf of his Grandfather. He went on to say that Southern Region has 24 tickets for a CRA contingent to march at the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph, but only 13 have been taken up. Anyone wishing to take part should contact Mr Szwejkowski. He also stated that he had access to cheap accommodation, should anyone wish to travel to London for future events.
8. The forecast of events was discussed. The Chairman drew attention to the Commemorations of the Battle of the Somme. It is understood that there will be a Service in Chester Cathedral on 26th June and the Mercian Regiment will hold a service at Crich on 3rd July to remember the sacrifices of the 5 Antecedent Regiments during the course of the battle. He asked for maximum possible support for all of the events in the Calendar:
- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 31 Oct 15 | East Cheshire Reunion |
| 8 Nov 15 | Remembrance Sunday |
| 6 Dec 15 | Droppin' Well Memorial |
| 20 Feb 16 | CRA AGM |
| 19 Mar 16 | Spring Reunion, Chester |
| 6 May 16 | Chester Races |
| 26 Jun 16 | (tbc) Somme Centenary, Chester Cathedral |
| 3 Jul 16 | Mercian Regiment Somme Memorial, Crich. |
| 11 Sep 16 | Mons Reunion, Chester Cathedral, Chester Castle |
9. The date of the next meeting (possibly Mar/Apr) will be announced later.

50 YEARS AGO (from Ever Glorious)

During Christmas 1965 and New Year 1966 the Battalion was more or less on long block leave, after a prolonged period in Germany of farewell parties. When the leave period began, to quote the Regimental Journal, "He tried to slip away without being seen and when most people were on leave, but he will not manage to escape from these columns. We are talking about Colonel Dauncey. For two and a half eventful years he has commanded the Battalion. He took over from Brigadier (in 1965) Martin when the Battalion was in the very best of form and riding on the crest of a wave of many successes. There can be no doubt that under Colonel Dauncey the Battalion has not only maintained its reputation but enhanced it further. Coolly and calmly but very firmly he has directed all things and he has not spared himself. There is not a soldier in the Battalion who does not know him well and respect him."

Mike Dauncey left to an appointment as G1 co-ordination at the Joint Services Staff College. One cannot imagine a greater change of job and outlook.

The command of the 1st Battalion was assumed by Lt Col J R (John) Baker, MC, who came from the Green Jackets.

SNIPPETS

On suffering from diarrhoea on tour in India – I just want to get into the middle and get the right sort of runs.

Robin Smith

Cricket is the only game that you can actually put on weight when playing.

Tommy Docherty

A very small crowd here today. I can count the people on one hand. Can't be more than 30

Michael Abrahamson

**THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT RHQ
ON WEDNESDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2015**

Present: Lt Col D M Oak MBE (Chairman), D J Clark, T Finlay BEM, P L Jackson, A Kennedy, D J Murphy, D Sykes, G Szejewski, Maj T E Pickering MBE (Secretary).

In attendance: A J Manktelow (Mercian Regt Assistant Regimental Secretary, Chester)

Apologies were received from Maj J Salisbury and D Waring and were entered on behalf of D Mapley who is ill.

Prior to the formal opening of the meeting, the Assistant Regimental Secretary updated the committee on matters relating to the Mercian Regiment and also the Cheshire Military Museum.

The Chairman opened the meeting and thanked members for attending.

1. The Minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Mr Szejewski asked if the reasons for the change in format of the Mons Parade and Service could be made known. The Secretary explained that the City had requested over 15 months ago that we hold the parade on 6th September, the Cathedral was unavailable on that date for a special service and in any case, low attendance numbers did not make such a service viable any longer. The Dean offered the option to revert to the CRA attending Matins which would be tailored to include a commemoration (it is understood that this was the case until approximately 20 years ago), but as Matins on 6th September was a Sung service, it was felt that it would not be appropriate on this occasion, hence the outdoor Service in the Memorial Garden. The Dean has extended an invitation for the CRA to join in Matins on 11th September 2016 and on the 2nd Sunday of September thereafter.

There were no further matters arising, Mr Szejewski proposed and Mr Kennedy seconded the proposal that they be accepted as a true record. **Carried.**

2. The Chairman reported that since the last meeting he has had a meeting with Lt Col Wilde, CO of 2 MERCIAN and felt that the CRA would benefit greatly from the co-operative relationship we already enjoy with the Battalion mentioning specifically the continued support for a Regimental Tent at Chester Races.

3. The Secretary presented an up to date financial statement for the CRA and the Club, stating that the Club would end the Financial Year in profit.

Mr Clark proposed and Mr Szejewski seconded the proposal that financial assistance be allocated to the following events:
East Cheshire Reunion - £500
Droppin' Well Anniversary Service - £300
Meeanee - £150
Mons - £250
Malaya and Singapore Reunion - £250
Carried.

4. The Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting of the Mercian Regiment Association at RHQ Lichfield. He circulated a summary of the proceedings.

5. The Chairman invited the Committee to think about the future of the Regimental Association and encouraged members to air their views. A lively discussion ensued with many differing points of view being expressed.

6. Mr Murphy updated on progress with the Spring Reunion, reporting that arrangements were well in hand and that a deposit has been paid. Details will be sent out with the next Newsletter and published on Facebook. Places are limited to 160 and will be allocated on a "first come, first served" basis.

7. The forecast of events was discussed - the Chairman drew attention to the Commemorations of the Battle of the Somme. It is understood that there will be a Service in Chester Cathedral on 26th June and the Mercian Regiment will hold a service at Crich on 3rd July to remember the sacrifices of the 5 Antecedent Regiments during the course of the battle. He asked for maximum possible support for all of the events in the Calendar:

- 31 Oct 15 East Cheshire Reunion
- 8 Nov 15 Remembrance Sunday
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- 20 Feb 16 CRA AGM
- 19 Mar 16 Spring Reunion, Chester
- 6 May 16 Chester Races
- 26 Jun 16 (tbc) Somme Centenary, Chester Cathedral
- 3 Jul 16 Mercian Regiment Somme Memorial, Crich.
- 11 Sep 16 Mons Reunion, Chester Cathedral, Chester Castle.

Mr Sadler, speaking on behalf of Walsall Branch said that his members preferred that the AGM took place in the evening. The Secretary stated that the decision to hold them in the afternoon was taken and agreed at a previous AGM because many members no longer wish to drive in the dark hours.

8. Other Business.

Mr Szejewski reported on the recent ceremony to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Nurse Edith Cavell in London. He said that the Grandson of Lt Col Dudley Boger, one of the first to be helped to escape by Nurse Cavell, had attended and that Col Bob Stewart DSO MP, who was going to lay a Regimental wreath, insisted that he lay the wreath on behalf of his Grandfather. He went on to say that he has 24 tickets for a CRA contingent to march at the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph, but only 13 have been taken up. Anyone wishing to take part should contact him. He also stated that he had access to cheap accommodation, should anyone wish to travel to London for future events.

The Secretary said that he had received a message on behalf of B Coy 4 MERCIAN who are holding an Open Day at their Centre in Widnes on 21st November and would be pleased to see members of the CRA both at that and a function in the evening. He will press for more details and circulate them.

9. Date of the next meeting: 20 January 2016.

SNIPPETS

Cricket needs brightening up a bit. My solution is to let the players drink at the beginning of the game, not after. It always works in our picnic matches.

Paul Hogan

BIRKENHEAD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Members from the Branch attended this year's Mons Reunion which coincided with the birthday of our President and oldest member, Ken, who was treated to a rendition of Happy Birthday before marching to the Cathedral behind the Band of The Mercian Regiment and the Guard and Colour Party of the 2nd Battalion. The service was held at the Regimental Garden of Remembrance, which is quite appropriate as long as the weather is kind. The marking of Mons Day would appear to be safe as long as the Mercian Regiment is stationed in Chester which, in turn, improves the chance of obtaining a band. What is not so certain is support from CRA members. This occasion commemorates a significant event in the 22nd's history, taking place in its spiritual home. It deserves better support from all of us.

The 2015 East Cheshire Reunion enjoyed wide support from the CRA. Three of us from Birkenhead made the journey to Stockport. Once again we were grateful for a convivial and well-organised evening. At the heart of the event is the Commemoration and always the solemn moment when names of the Members who have passed on during the year are read. What began in remembrance of the 7th Battalion has become Regimental event and it was encouraging to see that of Mercian Reserve units past and present attend.

Good too, to know that the historic Armoury building's future has been secured by its Trust. Years of defence cuts mean that, even where such buildings still stand, few remain in military use. 4 MERCIAN's B Coy Mortar Platoon are at the Armoury but principal occupant now is 207 Field Hospital RAMC, whose CO and PSAO were guests. The ECR is a chance to meet friends we don't often see, with a simple and affordable meal accompanied by our Regimental Music - long may it continue.

When it comes to Remembrance Sunday we are certainly not the only Branch facing the problem of a dwindling and ageing membership and consequently an ever smaller number able to march. We felt it appropriate at least to represent the CRA at as many locations as possible. Our President, Ken Thiis, laid a wreath at the Birkenhead Cenotaph. This is the official Wirral Council-organised occasion. This year the military presence included a detachment from 1 MERCIAN together with the local RE and RLC Reserve units.

Pat and Peter Jackson joined a wet, windswept service at the Wallasey War Memorial on the promenade near Vale Park and laid a wreath. The New Brighton RNLI crew always attend and the firing of a maroon marks the start and end of the Silence. Until a few years ago, the maroon was the signal to call out the lifeboat crew.

We had a sufficient number of members attending to provide an escort for our Standard Bearer, David Kennedy at Port Sunlight War Memorial, where Harry Goodenough was Parade Marshal. Ruth Kennedy laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch. This is a reminder of how much the Branches depend on the loyal support of our wives, widows and other associates in sustaining the CRA's activities. Led by Port Sunlight Lyceum Band, the parade was followed by the service in Christ Church. In spite of the weather, the public turned out at all three locations in larger numbers than ever.

Next in the calendar is our Branch Christmas Lunch which will be held on Sunday 6th December at The Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight. The Branch AGM follows on Tuesday 5th January 2016. We wish all CRA members a Happy Christmas and an enjoyable New Year.

Peter Jackson

SUNDAY PUB LUNCHES

Enjoying yet another Sunday lunch, our little group from the Birkenhead and District Branch. We try somewhere different once a month and we all look forward to it.



It's good food and very good company. A time to relax and chat and put the world to rights and to enjoy a break in what can be a long day for those of us who are on our own. So here's to many more.

Anyone from the CRA is welcome to join us. (Contact Branch Secretary for details: 0151 630 2179)

Maureen Hunt

CHESTER BRANCH

Yet another year is drawing to a close. There have been, as always, many high points and, unfortunately, some lows. But we are resolved to go out on a high, starting in the Regimental Club on Sunday 6th December, which is when we will be sitting down to our Branch Christmas Lunch. This will be a traditional two-course turkey meal with a glass of wine and all the trimmings. The meal will be followed by either (1) a session of post prandial sleeping or (2) an orgy of unprecedented decadence. With this in mind I must point out that Bingo addicts will only be catered for if our resident callers remain capable of speech following the feasting. For would be paupers the poker dice will be circulating under strict Marquis of Queensbury rules. For guests not interested in gambling the aforementioned sleeping session could be of interest. I must inform any interested parties that there are a few £12 tickets available on a first come first served basis.

On December 18th we will hold our Christmas draw for which a few tickets costing £6 are available. The evening will include a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie, a substantial buffet, and the chance to win a large proportion of the approximately sixty prizes which will be up for grabs on the night.

As this is the last edition of the Newsletter this year I will take this opportunity to thank all our supporters, ex comrades, friends and families for their much appreciated support, which I hope will continue for many years to come. And from all of us at Chester Branch we wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and safe New Year.

John Fairbanks

SNIPPETS

The bowler's Holding, the batsman's Willey.

Brian Johnston, BBC

ELLESMERE PORT BRANCH

Greetings from Ellesmere Port. As we approach Christmas, a very quiet period. In September around thirty members, friends and supporters attended a very enjoyable social evening at the Labour Club. With the usual “party games,” as usual, Frank Grieves proved himself as a proficient bingo caller. Mike Dempsey once again became the quiz-master. Under Shirley’s leadership, the ladies organized the raffle. On a request from a member, I “updated” my music playlist. At the appropriate time, we all got “stuck in” and enjoyed the splendid buffet. The raffle, with prizes donated by members, raised £67, which practically defrayed the cost of the event.

At our October meeting we were very pleased to welcome in five new members, very encouraging. We can now muster twenty five members at meetings. I have to report that Tiny Davies’s wife May is not very well at the moment, to May, Tiny and family, - our thoughts are with you always,

On Sunday 8th November I paraded our Branch Standard at two parades in Ellesmere Port, many thanks are due to Tom Simkins for donating our two Branch Poppy wreaths.

As December approaches, we look forward to our traditional Xmas lunch and gathering. To close - Seasons Greetings to all and a prosperous 2016.

Gordon Kippis

HALTON BRANCH

It’s been a busy few months for Halton Branch. On August 14/15 Halton Royal British Legion held a VJ Celebration evening and day where Halton Branch was asked to help out with the running and setting up. The Friday evening was a night starting with standards marched on and 3 Surviving Burma Star veterans being helped to the stage with a short memorial service held to remember fallen comrades. Then on Saturday at 11-00hrs we held a parade outside Halton Royal British Legion again with the Standards being marched on in front of the Mayor of Halton and other dignitaries and a short service to mark the end of hostilities with Japan. Then 70 balloons were released by children of Halton with their names attached and the one that got the furthest will get a prize, the closing date being 11-11-2015.

On 6th September 5 Members attended the Mons Day Parade with members of the CRA in Chester to Chester Cathedral, after a short service we marched back to the castle and had a hotpot lunch at RHQ. It was a thrill when the band from 2 Mercian played our Regimental Tune as we entered the Castle grounds, everyone grew 2 inches taller.



David Oak presents Halton Branch with their Standard

On the 28th October, before the Branch Officials meeting, Halton Branch was presented with our new branch standard by Lt Col David Oak and Major Eddie Pickering. On behalf of Halton Branch, I would like to thank David and Eddie for their sterling work and all the effort they have put into helping our Branch. Thank you Gentlemen.

On Friday 6th November Halton Royal British Legion Rally Section held their annual veterans’ rally night and again Halton Branch was heavily involved with preparations. The evening was a great success with the Branch Standard being paraded on the night along with other organisations, also as chairman I presented Halton Royal British Legion with a regimental plaque crafted by one of our members, Tony Butterworth.



Halton Branch standard paraded through Runcorn

On Sunday 8th November the Branch attended two Remembrance Parades, the first at Halton Village Runcorn at 11 00am where members paraded through the village laying a wreath at the Village War Memorial, the second at Greenway Road in Runcorn, again members attended, paraded through Runcorn, laying a wreath at the War Memorial. After the parade our members attended Todger Jones VC DCM statue to pay our respects.

John Donaldson

KIRKHAM BRANCH

On 24th July I attended the funeral of my friend and comrade, Roy Turner at Astbury Parish Church. The large church was full, with the county and branch standards both present – a fitting tribute to a fine person. RIP Roy and our sincere condolences go to his family on their sad loss.

On 31st October Kirkham Branch members attended the East Cheshire Reunion at Stockport and a good night was had by all. Branch members will be in Belgium for Remembrance Sunday at the Menin Gate. I will be on parade at the Thornton Cleveleys Cenotaph.

I close by wishing everyone in the CRA and Mercian Regiment a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

John Gibson

SNIPPETS

October is a funny kind of month for the keen cricket fan. It’s when you realise your wife left you in May.

Denis Norden

MACCLESFIELD BRANCH

It has been a very sad time for the branch over the past few months. The Turner family have had a tragic time – Bill and John had their brother Roy, suffering in hospital, Roy had been ill with pneumonia over a long period, leading to complications. Whilst he was in hospital, Bill’s wife died suddenly. During the arrangements for Bill’s wife’s funeral, Roy passed away, leaving the family to cope with two funerals in as many weeks. We also had the sad loss of Colonel Edward Scott, who the branch had not seen for many months. All three funerals were very well attended by our own branch members and thankfully by other CRA branch members, particularly Stockport and Sandbach. Both these branches helped us out recently with the WW1 centenary service and wreath laying ceremony at the parish church and cenotaph. On behalf of the branch, I would like to pass on our thanks and appreciation for their help.

The East Cheshire Reunion was only last week, as I write, and as usual it was great to see so many there and I think that we all enjoyed the evening. I was drinking with Gordon Worthington so, although I don’t remember much, I woke up skint on Sunday, which would indicate a good night! Well, Remembrance Sunday tomorrow, shoes polished, beret brushed and wreath at the front door, lest we forget. Then Christmas will be upon us and as there will not be another newsletter by then, I wish you all peace, goodwill, wine, whisky and happiness on behalf of the branch.

Andy Wood

NANTWICH AND DISTRICT BRANCH

Members continue to give reasonably good support to our branch meetings, held in the Crosville Social Club, in Chester Street, Crewe on the last Tuesday evening of each month. There will not, however be a meeting in December and the next one will be the AGM in January 2016.

Many of our members continue to be unwell and “Thinking of you” cards have been sent. Prior to each meeting we continue to hold a minute’s silence for fallen comrades, followed by the CRA Prayer.

Recent branch activities have included attendance at the East Cheshire Reunion in Stockport – a most enjoyable event as ever. Other occasions were the Armistice Day Service in Crewe and Nantwich and the service at the airman’s grave situated to the rear of Shrewbridge Road in Nantwich. The bugler played Last Post and Reveille at all venues.

Future events include the annual Branch Christmas Dinner, again at the Royal Oak, on the evening of Tuesday 8th December. The branch AGM takes place in the Crosville Social Club in Chester Street, Crewe on Tuesday 26th January 2016. 7.30pm for an 8pm start. Members will also be at the CRA AGM in Chester.

As always, new members are always welcome and encouraged to come and join us. Finally, on behalf of the branch, best wishes to everyone in the CRA. A merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year to one and all.

Ray Stafford

SOUTHERN REGION

As another year comes to an end I can report that the Southern Region is in good order. The autumn has seen the usual flurry of events. Some of us made the journey up to Stockport in order to support the East Cheshire Reunion. It was so sad that,

due to health reasons, John Ferns was unable to take his place as Presiding Officer. Let us hope that he will be able to do so next year. On Thursday 5th November we attended the Field of Remembrance in the grounds of Westminster Abbey. Brigadier Keith Prosser presented the regimental plot to HRH the Duke of Edinburgh and his apprentice, HRH Prince Henry. It would appear that neither of the aforementioned HRHs found anything untoward with our plot.



Prince Henry (Harry) and Brigadier Keith Prosser discussing their respective Christmas holiday plans.

Saturday 7th November found us at the Tower of London, enjoying a guided tour of the grounds and watching the Ceremony of the Keys. Members also enjoyed the warm embrace of the Yeoman Warders’ Mess. Thank you Dickie Dover once again.



The Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London

Remembrance Sunday saw us parading on Horse Guards then onto Whitehall, before marching past the Cenotaph. As always, we all enjoyed a great lunch in the Chandos Public House afterwards. We were a little down on numbers this year but it was lovely to welcome Karen Jones, who marched in memory of her dad, Thomas who passed away earlier in the year. We do hope that we can get more to support us next year. Let’s hope that the offer of cheap accommodation might tempt a few more to travel down to take part in the weekend’s activities.

Best wishes to all members of the CRA as we reach the festive season.

George Szwejkowski

STOCKPORT BRANCH

What a pleasant change it is to open our latest notes on a happy note. Our annual Armed Forces Day Dinner and Dance was a resounding success with a four course dinner, wine and port. The Union Standard, Association Branch Standard and the Mercian Volunteers were paraded with two pipers leading. The entertainment was Linda Dee, with a good old sing-a-long and disco to follow. Some 140 ex service and friends enjoyed themselves with the usual good humour and banter and some of us even managed some sort of dancing. Many thanks must go to the organisers, Paul and Hazel Lomas, for putting together yet another first class evening.

On to our annual Pilgrimage to the Mercian Regiment Memorial at Crich. The weather played its usual tricks with monsoon-type rains, high winds, then sunshine all in one day. It's a pity that the day was tainted somewhat by the indifference and cold shoulder received from some of the 'Woofer' veterans. The 'them and us' is still in evidence sadly but, true to the Cheshire style, a bar invasion at the local Ex Services Club did the trick as far as we were concerned.

We were saddened to hear of the death of ex Cheshire (Malaya) veteran from the Macclesfield Branch, Roy Turner. A small party from Stockport attended.

Next in our itinerary was our visit to the Ashton Old Comrades for a fund raising event on behalf of the Army Benevolent Fund. Strangely enough, Alan Kennedy failed with flying colours in not winning any of the raffle prizes.

Next our annual St Julian's Day Church Parade which gave us the chance later to catch up with old comrades in the TA Centre bar, with the customary beer and buffet refreshments. The congregation were enlightened about the Battle of St Julian and how big a part those Stockport and other local men played in such a horrendous event. Many thanks to those standard bearers and guests who attended and shared 'our day.'

Our 2017 St Julian's Commemoration took steps nearer with more names added to the 'would like to go' list. Though there may be two years to go interest is growing rapidly.

Next came the service of thanksgiving for the late Lt Col David Owen at Bickerton Parish Church. It was a very enlightening experience to say the least. It was an occasion where a good sense of humour was needed. To collect our Standards from the altar we 'slow marched' to a rendition of "What's New Pussycat" by Tom Jones. I kid you not! It also gave us a chance to catch up with officers and senior NCOs we served with. No need for protocol on that day.

The second leg of our annual bowls match v Birkenhead CRA did not go as planned. Unfortunately we lost by 23 points. A good effort with no result. Young Alexander Wilkinson was the winner of the best young player trophy – well done lad.

The latest Newsletter contained some interesting points to note and one in particular stood out. The point was the amalgamation of the MRA and the CRA. On two occasions now we have sent notes to the Mercian Regiment Family Newsletter explaining what we ex service associations do and our desire to bond with any retiring Mercian soldier. Not one note ever appeared, to my dismay... it takes two to tango!!!

Both the local VJ Victory celebrations in Stalybridge and the Gallipoli Commemorations in Macclesfield were well attended with our Standards proudly paraded.

Next came the Mons Day Parade in Chester where numbers of Old an' Bold were down, yet still managed to show the local

populace we were not to be forgotten. The service being held in the Memorial Garden made a pleasant change and thankfully the weather was kind. It always makes one proud to march through Chester to our Regimental March; it cannot help but put a swagger in one's step. The hot dinner was well worth the effort with more than one helping being offered and enjoyed.

Next came our invitation to attend the annual Passchendaele Dinner with the Duke of Lancaster's Regimental Association (Ashton Old Comrades). A thoroughly enjoyable evening with a four course meal with wine on the table, entertainment and dancing.

On to our East Cheshire Reunion, and once again a chance to catch up with old, and some not-so-old comrades. Great food, port for the Loyal Toast all made for a convivial evening. Many thanks to those who travelled a fair distance to attend.

Sunday 16 August and members of the Stockport Branch attended the Service of Commemoration to mark the centenary of the landing of the 7th Battalion Cheshire Regiment at Sulva Bay, Gallipoli in August 1915. Ten Standards were paraded with Paul Lomas carrying the Union Standard and Branch Standards were paraded by Stockport, Sandbach, Nantwich, Winsford, the Royal British Legion plus Army and Navy Cadet Forces. The Service was held at St Michael & All Saints Church Macclesfield. The Standards led into the church, followed by the Mayor of Macclesfield, Cllr Liz Durham, plus civic dignitaries from Sandbach, Congleton, Wilmslow, Crewe, Middlewich, Winsford and Bollington. The service was conducted by the Rev David Wightman. Derek Sykes read the first lesson and Brig AG Ross (Scots Guards)/Army Benevolent Fund the second lesson.

Now, in closing, may I on behalf of the Stockport Branch C.R.A wish everyone in the Association and those serving at home or overseas a very Happy Christmas and New Year. Stay safe.

Gordon H Smith

WALSALL BRANCH

We have had a rather a quite few months and any events from HQ we will hear about at our monthly meeting on Thursday evening at our venue - The Victoria Inn, Bloxwich. Unfortunately I had to miss the East Cheshire Reunion due to ill health but we still managed to have a good turnout of 11 members, who had a good evening. At our Malaya/Singapore Reunion we usually have a visit from the MT who were attached to the Cheshires in Malaya and as seems to be the norm with the armed forces after 55 years still remain in touch. Len Hurcombe had the unfortunate duty of attending one of his buddy's funerals - Roy Turner. He and his mates always managed to come down and meet Len on occasions. It was well attended by old comrades. Our condolences go to his family.

Reg Smith

SNIPPETS

Quote from 'Dickie' Bird: Cedric Rhodes used to be the Chairman of Lancashire County Cricket Club and one day he asked Farokh Engineer, in view of the continued hostilities between India and Pakistan, if there was any likelihood that he would be going home to fight for his country.

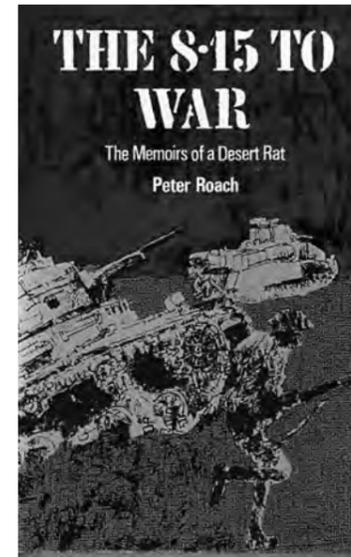
"Only if the fighting reaches my village," said Farokh. "Then, of course, I will have to go to protect my wife and children."

Rhodes enquired, "Which village is that?" And Farokh replied, "Altrincham!"

THE 8.15 TO WAR: MEMOIRS OF A DESERT RAT:

by Peter Roach

Published: Leo Cooper 1982



This narrative begins with the Munich crisis when Roach was a merchant seaman, then the 'Phoney War' and the shock of the fall of France. The appeal of the book lies in the author's matter-of-fact descriptions of events such as the dive-bombing of his convoy. Stoically, he tells of the realisation that, added to the hazards of the sea now were bombs, shells, torpedoes. After enduring the rigours of several Atlantic convoys, Roach's outlook changed - "As I was going to be a target, I might as well have the opportunity of doing my share of the shooting."

With some difficulty he obtained his release from the Merchant Navy, so making himself liable for call-up and was duly conscripted into the Royal Armoured Corps and posted to 1st Royal Tank Regiment. His training – driving, radio operating and gunnery he regards as thorough and mostly useful but, like many a serviceman, questions the usefulness of spit and polish in wartime. His description of the minutiae of military life is vivid, both of the tedium of the transit camp and the rigours of the front. "We washed every day with a pint mug part full. First I washed my teeth, spitting the water back into the mug. Then I shaved, washed my face, and dipping a slimy flannel into the sludge washed myself down."

The reader will not learn about the manoeuvres and tactics of the desert war but is given a real sense of the sheer confusion, sometimes horror and sometimes tedium, cannily observed through the eyes of a tank crewman. Peter Roach saw action in El Alamein, Wadi Halfa, and Tunis. As a corporal he served with his unit at Salerno and Garigliano. Throughout he does not flinch from castigating individuals and ideas which he finds inept or incompetent.

Roach's unit returned to the UK and prepared for the invasion of Normandy. Having landed on D+1 he was wounded in July 1944 in the fighting which followed Operation Goodwood. Returning to his regiment in October he was promoted to sergeant and wounded again. This time he was evacuated to the UK. Gradually, through the narrative, Roach's weariness after six years of war becomes increasingly noticeable as he ends it on a note of bitterness and cynicism.

This book may lack the literary polish of other notable worm's eye views of war such as Keith Douglas's *Alamein To*

Zem Zem or George McDonald Fraser's *Quartered Safe Out Here* but is nevertheless much more than a soldier's reminiscence, being a remarkable true account by a true Desert Rat.

About two days after my arrival in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in December 1977, I was asked by a colleague to help to open up two large crates lying in the sand in front of our spartan residential block. These contained Wayfarer dinghies and I was conscripted into the assembly team, not because of my sailing credentials (zero) but because I had brought out a fairly comprehensive toolkit. I was introduced to a slightly-built, wiry sun-tanned man of 60, the Commodore of the company's sailing club. Looking fit for his years, smoking a pipe, this was Peter Roach. Within two years Peter was 'axed' when our taskmaster, the Royal Saudi Air Force, decided that 55 would be retirement age and all those who were 55-plus had to leave. In this short acquaintance I learned something of his sailing exploits as a young man but, at the time, nothing at all about his wartime exploits, although he was working on this book in his spare time.

Peter Jackson

WOJTEK THE BEAR

Readers may recall that in a previous issue there was a review of a book about Wojtek the Bear, who served with Polish forces during WW2. After the war Wojtek spent the remainder of his life in Edinburgh Zoo.

On Saturday 8th November a statue was unveiled in West Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh to pay tribute to Wojtek and to highlight the close association between Polish forces and Scotland. The sculpture is particularly impressive and worth a look if you are passing through Edinburgh.



A MOST PLEASANT EVENING IN SK1 ON THE LAST DAY OF OCTOBER 2015

There was something different about this year's East Cheshire Reunion. When I was collected from WA14 4EF at 16.40 hrs by Lawrence Dunning it was dark. In the years that I was the secretary of this reunion, I took pleasure in writing that all members who attended this reunion would have an extra hour in bed. The clocks unfortunately went back on the morning of the 25th October. Nevertheless travelling in an easterly direction and enjoying conversation, we did not encounter the hold-ups of last year.

On arriving at the Armoury, and requesting the caretaker to open the gates, we found that we were not the first people there. We had been beaten by Slim Hayden and David Baddeley. I lost no time in finding my place at table and dispensed with my walking aids under said table. I was then set for the duration. I would be sandwiched between two very good friends – John Fairbanks and George Szwejkowski. I knew then that I was in the best of company.

The Drill Hall was set out, as usual, to a very high standard and when I counted the tables there were 14. I thought, good we have 140 for supper. The caterers were busying themselves laying out the cutlery; with a smile I might add. There was an air of confidence throughout. Lawrence had told me en route that John Ferns would not be presiding this evening, he is not too good, but Andrew Swindale had stepped in at the last minute. Thank you Andrew.

I was grateful to be able to talk to so many friends who were now arriving at SK1 in a steady stream from North and South and East and West. The Malaya lads from Walsall, members from Kirkham, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Sandbach, Stoke on Trent etc. Colin Jarman had again flown in from Cyprus – via the Isle of Man – and Peter Gresty, not to be outdone, arrived from the Caribbean. David Oak motored down the M6 and Eddie Pickering came the relatively short distance from Chester. Lawrence Dunning organised this reunion from his home in Dorset and motored up on Thursday and Ron Goodwin came up from Torquay. Nearer home it was good to see Sir William Bromley-Davenport, thank you for coming Sir William.

The Mercian Volunteers and Stockport Branch had the majority of tables. We again had ladies with us including the CO, 207 Field Hospital, Lt Col Helen Ball and the PSAO at the Armoury, Captain Lesley Oldham. It was pleasing to see Philip Smith who for many years was, whilst with SAS Daniels, secretary to the Trustees of the Armoury and is now a Trustee. Philip worked in Greek Street all his working life. General Keith Skempton was in good form and he had also travelled a few miles.

We had Bollington Brass Band in attendance again, playing old and familiar pieces. Members were called from the bars, with the "Cookhouse" call resounding around the Drill Hall. Peter Gresty as MC announced the start of the formal procedures with the command March on the Standard. A shrill voice from the back of the hall responded "Sir" and Derek Sykes in his usual exemplary manner took post. Two members of BBB blew "Sunset" and the Regimental Flag was lowered by Roy Porter. Lt Col Andrew Swindale turned a page of the Remembrance Book in respect of soldiers killed in WW1. Percy Cooke turned another page for those killed in WW2 and Captain Martin Burgess 1st Bn the Mercian Regiment turned a further page for those who have died in action since 1945. Following the turning of the pages Peter asked us to remember the 35 colleagues in the CRA who have died since the last reunion. Then the Last Post call resonated throughout the building followed, after a full two minutes silence, by Reveille. We next sang, with good heart and voice, verses 1, 3 and 5 of the hymn, "Abide with Me." As I have written

many times before I find this part of the ceremony the most poignant and again I felt exactly the same as previous years. Grace was said by Derek Sykes and we smiled as he thanked the Lord for our can of Tetley's. We responded "Amen." The Cheshire Hot Pot was then served. The meat content was evident and the plate was full. I consumed mine with relish. The cheese board had a good selection and I thought that the pate added to the spread. Appetites were sated. Conversation was flowing. It was then time for the Toasts and Speeches. Loyal greetings had been sent to Her Majesty and Andrew Swindale read the reply. Considering that he had stood in with less than 24 hours' notice, his report to the members was typical Andrew. Factual, humorous, witty and delivered with panache and a smile.



Andrew Swindale as Presiding Officer gives his report

Andrew gave us a resume of his military history including being a member of the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces. He was very familiar with The Armoury for, following his experience in the Middle East, he took a TAVR appointment as OC A Company, Mercian Volunteers in this place. He was very proud of his time here and mentioned that, at Ken Ward's instigation, they were known as "Shiny A" and distinguished themselves both on and off duty with a special mention in dispatches for Exercise Crusader in BAOR. That will have brought back special memories for many here tonight, especially the mention of Ken Ward.

Andrew gave a brief history of the Armoury, mentioning inter alia that a HOT POT Supper had been held here in 1908. So tonight, he continued, we are celebrating 107 years since the first Hot Pot Supper and long may the tradition continue. He then thanked all the people responsible for this evening's event and proposed the toast "Her Majesty the Queen."

Before proposing the toast, "Our Colonel-in-Chief, Earl of Chester," Captain Martin Burgess, 1st Bn Mercian Regiment, gave us a detailed briefing on the activities of the 1st and 2nd Battalions. Martin continued that the Army remains very busy, despite cessation of combat operations in Afghanistan just over a year ago. The Mercian Regiment is no less busy and life at times has been frantic. Since the Regimental merger last year, the 1st Bn has formed up and built an extremely effective Armoured Battle Group. The battalion performed to an excellent standard during Ex PRAIRIE STORM in BATUS as did the battle group as a whole. The 2nd Bn have completed a tour of Op TOSCA, Cyprus and have since settled into the Dale Barracks in Chester and are currently on Ex ASKARI THUNDER in Kenya. The soldiers are performing admirably. The 4th Bn has continued to support both of the regular battalions whilst providing numerous STTT in Africa and Eastern Europe. Sport is still held in high esteem, with excellent performances. It was good to listen too.

A MOST PLEASANT EVENING IN SK1 ON THE LAST DAY OF OCTOBER 2015

Peter Gresty proposed the final toast "The 22nd" and the formalities of the evening then concluded. It was good to see three nonagenarians here. Ken Thiis, Percy Cooke and Frank Worrall, they all seem in good form. I reckoned that in the assembled gathering were a dozen or so who had served in the 7th Bn. There was a general consensus among those I spoke to that this reunion should continue for a few more years. Lawrence assures me that after this evening our account is in credit to the tune of £8 -2s -6p. We have, therefore, a good solid start for next year.

It would be remiss of me not to thank those members who sent donations with their ticket application. Most grateful also to

the trustees of the Armoury for their grant and to David Oak for his and CRAMC's support which meant that we have met our costs for this year and settled all our bills. I also extend my thanks to Alan Kennedy and members of the Stockport Branch who prepared the hall for our special gathering. I know that you will all join me in wishing John Ferns well and a speedy recovery back to good health.

Tonight was Halloween and we in SK1 had enjoyed a special "treat" this evening.

Alan Jennings

EDITH CAVELL – 100 YEARS ON

12th October 2015 was the 100th anniversary of the execution of Nurse Edith Cavell, shot at dawn in Belgium after being found guilty by the Germans of war treason. Edith Cavell gave assistance to over 200 allied soldiers, stuck behind the German lines in Belgium. The first two soldiers that she helped were Colonel Dudley Boger and Sergeant Fred Meachin of the Cheshire Regiment, both of whom escaped from capture after the Battle of Mons.

In London a memorial service was held at her statue, adjacent to Trafalgar Square. Many individuals and organisations attended and laid wreaths, and of course that included the Cheshire Regiment Association.

What we had not expected was that Robin Wallace, the grandson of Colonel Dudley Boger would be attending, and it was with great generosity of spirit that Colonel Bob Stewart DSO MP insisted that he should lay the regimental wreath on behalf of both his grandfather and the Cheshire Regiment.



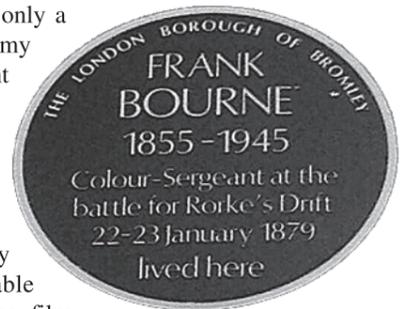
Colonel Dudley Boger's grandson flanked by members of the CRA



Nurses lay their wreath in memory of Edith Cavell

BLUE PLAQUE

It was quite by chance that I decided to take a different route to my local gym. As I perambulated along Kings Hall Road, only a few minutes' walk from my humble dwelling, I caught sight of a blue plaque on the wall of number 16 and with some surprise noted that it proclaimed that Colour Sergeant Frank Bourne, arguably the most memorable character featuring in the film "Zulu," resided at the aforementioned address.



The way in which Colour Sergeant Bourne was depicted in the film probably set the standard for the quintessential British Senior Non-Commissioned Officer.

Colour Sergeant Bourne was played by Nigel Green in the film 'Zulu' and we had the impression that he was a cross between an unflappable sergeant-major and a father figure to his men. Although in later life he perhaps could fit such a description, at the time he was in fact a 23 year old and very nervous of his responsibilities. Bourne described himself as being 5'6" tall and painfully thin. He was promoted Colour-Sergeant in April 1878 and known to his men as 'the kid.' There is no doubt that despite his nervous disposition and underwhelming physical presence, he did indeed perform his duties as the senior NCO at Rorke's Drift and perhaps was deserving of a Victoria Cross instead of the Distinguished Conduct Medal that he received.

He later rose through the ranks to become a lieutenant-colonel and served during the Great War. In 1934 he attended the Northern Command Tattoo with 4 other survivors of Rorke's Drift. The following year he recorded an account of the battle for the BBC in a series entitled 'I Was There.' There was a transcript of the talk published in The Listener but the recording itself was destroyed in the 1960s because it was considered no longer of any interest (typical BBC!). He was later awarded the OBE.

He was the last surviving veteran of the garrison, living to the age of 91 and died on VE Day in May 1945. He is buried in Beckenham Cemetery, along with one of the cricketing greats, Dr W G Grace.

George Szwejkowski

SNIPPETS

I don't like defensive shots, you can only get threes.

W G Grace

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN OCTOGENARIAN – MONDAY 6TH JULY 2015

“D” Day today. “H” Hour 11am. Up by 06.00 hrs. All ablutions and bathroom contortions completed by 06.30 am. Medications prepared for two days in two separate boxes. The hair on the face was treated to an application of finest Sheffield steel. New toothbrush, ultra-soft, taken from store in the bedroom. Small tube of Oral Blue toothpaste in bag as well as nail clippers and hair brush and two combs.

Might be windy from car drop to building. Slippers with heel, sleeping apparel, socks and underwear, meticulously folded, and dressing gown pushed into canvas bag. Daily Telegraph, all sections, packed and coin of the realm carried in purse. Mobile phone, fully charged, and two white handkerchiefs monogrammed with the letter A, ironed into quarter squares and placed on table to be inserted into trouser pocket seconds before departure. I think that I am as prepared as the D Day planners, and to cap it all the sun is shining.

Breakfast consumed before the deadline of 08.00hrs. Luke will be here in good time I was assured yesterday. Luke duly arrived, we then set off and arrived at Wythenshawe Hospital at 10.55 hrs. Arrived on the ward, F2, at 11.05. I am to have my pacemaker upgraded. There were four people already waiting. Some people had been told to report at 8am and they were scheduled to see the inside of the operating theatre this morning. We, the 11am intake, would be dealt with post meridian. The NIL by MOUTH instruction remained in operation. First indications that we are all day patients confirmed.

I was called to the Ward, from the waiting area, just after noon and sat in a chair, quite comfortable, then required to don the one size fits all gown, tied at the rear with staff assistance. Around 1pm the surgeon called to see me and finalised all details, confirming that I would be a day case and could go home four hours after returning from theatre. Personal time calculations readjusted every 15 minutes – would I go home in daylight? It did not matter really. It was countdown to action.

Departed the ward in a wheel chair around 4pm. Arrived at theatre which is part of F2 in a couple of minutes and with the command “Sit - Stay” I waited in said chair. Very pleasant staff, but with all their pleasantness they could not get the cannula into my hand. Action - called for the sister from another theatre, and in the meantime I was engaged in conversation with the sister who could not insert the cannula into my hand, about one of my great memories i.e. interviewing Dr Christian Barnard, the South African doctor, who pioneered the first heart transplant, whilst I was employed at Manchester Airport.

Cannula inserted into my left hand and then wheeled into theatre. Further rigmarole, double-check all my details, there must have been 7 people on the team - introduced to them all, and then finally it was all systems go. I was conscious throughout and felt no pain. At the conclusion I was wheeled out into recovery. I had been in theatre for the best part of an hour. Arrived back on the ward as the little finger on the clock was on five and the big finger was on six. My release time was confirmed for 21.30 hrs but it would be from Ward F5. Ward F2 closes at 9 pm.

Phoned Lynn; Luke would not be able to collect me; Lynn then delegated the task to Mike. Lying for four hours in bed is not as comfortable as one would imagine as I was still wired up and still in the gown. The one size fits all bi-sexual “underhosen” was by now biting deeply into my flesh. The nurse (who had instructed me to wear these pants and had all the authority, looks and smile of Helga the Gestapo female in “Allo Allo”) assured me that they would be rent asunder on the operating table as the surgeon would be inserting a wire through my R groin. False information.

On returning to the ward there was great personal joy. Food was available and drinks too. I asked for and was given a cheese and “something” sandwich and a cup of tea, supplied in a beaker so that I could drink the tea without spilling while still being connected to the medical machines. Blood Sugar was later taken; 11.4, oh my word! Time to insert 12 units of insulin. Another assistant came round with more food, or was it the same trolley on a second tour? I was asked, answered and received another cheese sandwich, again very tasty.

Time now 6.30pm. Good Lord!! Another three hours to lie on this medical charpoy. Must be grateful though, in less than four hours I will be back at No 28. At approx 19.55 hrs the decision to move me to Ward F5 was affected. Reminiscent of a Belgian refugee fleeing west in 1940, I was wheeled on the bed with all my accoutrements to a temporary berth on the floor above. Shifts were changing on F5 and I enjoyed watching the organised chaos of “changing the guard” as visiting time was concluding.

At 8.15pm the supper trolley came round and although still attached by all wires to this confounded Blood Pressure machine I ordered a Horlicks with biscuit. Such luxury amid such personal chaos. The night shift nurse, now on duty, introduced herself and then said that she would be back. This same procedure was repeated three times in the next 15 minutes. I detected that there must be some personal formula within such organisational chaos.

To cut through the tedious detail, at 9.15pm I was to be released from my wires and manacles. First, though, I was commanded to sit in a chair, then stand, and then sit again, after which the restraining wires and strappings were finally cut to give me partial freedom. By this time it was my release time, 9.30 pm, but I was informed by the night nurse that only someone with the rank of Sister or above could authorise my release.

At this precise moment Mike arrived with a wheel chair. Things will now move I thought and they did: - 1) now changed into my own clothes, 2) The Sister arrived and went meticulously through my leaving instructions and discharge certificate, a copy of which will be sent to my GP. I gave all the assurances that were appropriate with a smile and for all the possible queries that I may have had at some earlier point in the day I displayed an intelligent silence with a reassuring look. And then - the push (escape) to the exit.

There was a quietness quite opposite to the stir and tread of this hospital at its busiest. Fresh air at the entrance. Pushed by Mike to his car and with the sound of the coin of the realm entering the pay machine, the barrier rose and we exited. Home in 20 minutes to a warm and cordial greeting from BJ, who ensured that all soiled clothes went straight to the washer. Departed for bed fairly swiftly. Good to be back home. A slight feeling of discomfort endured during the hours of darkness but I rested well and slept fitfully. I am grateful to the Good Lord. Once again.

Glossary:

Patient - Alan Jennings

BJ - wife, Beryl

Mike - son

Lynn - daughter

Luke - grandson, son of Lynn

SNIPPETS

Closest sport in America is baseball - but cricket lasts five days. We break every now and then for food. And we spend a lot of time rubbing our balls on our trousers.

Andrew Flintoff (explaining cricket to singer Jennifer Lopez)

REGIMENTAL GOLF SOCIETY

This year the society golf has been well attended, with between 24 and 32 players. I would like to thank everyone for their support and turnout.

The society had their first away day at Calderfields Golf club; this was the home course of the late Paul (Tiny) Lawson. The event was over two days with the mighty John Eedle, who was crowned the champion. This event will be an annual event, it has been suggested that the winner will play with Tiny's golf club for the first day so John Eedle will start the ball rolling. Then winner of the first day will continue with Tiny's clubs.

The society then went to Malkins Bank, which was a new course for us. Steve Copeland was the winner with a score of 36 points. The next event was at The Oaks in Mollington; Alan (Milly) Millward was the overall winner with a good score of 40 points. He has been put on the bandits list.

Aldersey Green was the next port of call; Keith Parsonage was the winner with 38 points another bandit on the list. Keith is a new member to the society so welcome Keith.

Our annual event at Eastham Lodge was cancelled, due to the course being closed for water. 15 of the society went off to the Oaks and played. The winner there was Frank Barham with seasons best of 43 points - yes another bandit. I would like to thank Ray Harrington for the donation of the prize.

We had to change the next event to Frodsham Golf Club, this was won by John Sheridan with 37 points another bandit you would say, Eddie Bates take note: We have all missed his ever

moaning and banter, hope you get well soon and ready for next year.

Pryor's Hayes was the last event of the year. This was an event for the bandits to fight it out for The Bigland Trophy; Keith Parsonage was the winner with 42 points followed by Alan (Milly) Millward on 37 points. This year saw the introduction of the Green Jacket, which Allan will wear next year for all the events. Milly was the overall winner of the season. John Walkman got the wooden spoon.

The society has lost 3 of its members this year - Bill Jones, Paul (Tiny) Lawson and George Greaves. They will all be sadly missed.

On the 11th of December, the society will hold an inaugural Christmas bash at the Oaks.

Next year's events:

Calderfields Golf Club:	13/14 April 2016 away day.
Malkins Bank:	13th May 2016.
The Oaks:	10th June 2016.
Aldersey Green:	15th July 2016.
Eastham Lodge:	12th August 2016.
Pryor's Hayes:	September 2016 date TBC.
Last Match:	Venue and date TBC (Oct)

Frank Barham

JOHN FAIRBANKS WRITES

IT'S WHO YOU KNOW!

Life, as they say, is full of problems. And in a place named Pekan Jabi, Johore, in early 1958 I had a tricky situation on my hands. Newly promoted, I had taken over as Platoon sergeant 4 Plt, B Company and was attempting to make my self known to the four Iban trackers assigned to the platoon.

My predecessor had fought alongside them during a recent successful jungle operation and in doing so had proved his worth as a warrior. Therefore the quartet of small, heavily tattooed natives of Borneo were visibly not impressed by my lack of combat experience. Dressed in army issue PT shorts they were sitting cross-legged on a bed playing cards and the only acknowledgement of my presence was their acceptance of my offer of a cigarette – they kept the tin of fifty. All my other attempts to introduce myself to them were ignored. The atmosphere in the tent was cold and dismissive. I was certainly not the flavour of the month.

Feeling that I had nothing to gain by hanging around in support of a lost cause I turned to leave and in doing so saw something that could possibly work in my favour. At the foot of a bed stood a small tin trunk. The lid was open and attached to it was a very familiar newspaper photograph, taken the previous year on the Roodee, Chester, when HM The Queen had presented new colours to the Regiment. It showed Her Majesty inspecting the old comrades and prominent in the picture was yours truly. I got their attention by saying, in my best pidgin English, ‘You savvy Queen Elizabeth?’ The oldest Iban glanced at the photo and replied ‘Me savvy Queen Lizbet.’ I paused for dramatic effect, then pointed first to the soldier in the snap shot, then at myself and asked, ‘You savvy this fella belonga Queen Lizbet?’ The head-hunter looked at me, did a rapid double take, and then

excitedly called his mates to confirm that he was not dreaming, that he was actually talking to a man who had met the Queen. For the captivated Ibans my credentials were suddenly impeccable, acceptance was complete.

However, there was a minor problem which arose a while later. During jungle operations, when work for the day was finished, I was expected to regale the fascinated head hunters with stories about the Queen. Details of the many meals I had eaten in Buckingham Palace, and the various state functions I had attended as a personal friend of the Monarch. I like to think that to this day, in an Iban longhouse, stories are being told of how their grandfathers had lived and fought alongside a white warrior, who had been sent to them as her personal representative by the Great White Queen Across the Water.



Fella on end belonga Queen Lizbet

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2015	
6 Dec	Droppin Well Memorial Service
31 Dec	New Year's Eve Party, CRA Club
2016	
20 Feb	CRA AGM
19 Mar	Spring Reunion Dinner, Chester
14 Apr	Offrs Assn Luncheon, Wellington College
6 May	Chester Races
26 Jun	Battle of the Somme - Centenary Commemorations, Chester Cathedral
4 Jun	Malaya Reunion
3 Jul	Mercian Regiment Somme Memorial Day, Crich
10 Sep	Offrs Assn Dinner, Chester
11 Sep	Mons Reunion, Chester

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

MALAYA REUNION

The Malaya Reunion will take place as follows:

Date: Saturday 6th June 2016
Place: New Invention Victory Club
Lichfield Road
Willenhall WV12 5BE



"Back off patrol" - Malaya 1957

END TO END OF WINDERMERE

Congratulations to Ian Griffiths who completed a ten-mile end to end swim of Lake Windermere in aid of Hidden Heroes. So far his exploit has raised over £1,500.

Hidden Heroes is a Community Interest Company whose mission is to support the families of service men and women who have lost their lives or been seriously injured in the course of carrying out their duties. Whether they belong to the armed services, police service, fire service, mountain rescue or RNLI, these hidden heroes deserve our thanks, and their families deserve our support.

For those not aware, Ian Griffiths prints and produces our newsletter and does an amazing job keeping the editor of this newsletter on the straight and narrow.

22 CLUB WINNERS

July	
£100	Mr R Evans, Leasowe Estate (winnings kindly donated to the CRA)
£50	CRA Stockport Branch
£25	Mr M Carmon, Chester
August	
£100	Mr P S Wilson, Bramhall
£50	Mr C J Carress, South Norwood
£25	Mr H E J King, Ramsgate
September	
£100	Mr J Daintry, Dubai (winnings kindly donated to the CRA and Museum)
£50	Mrs V M Smart, Crewe
£25	Mr P Adamson, Buxton
October	
£100	Mr E T Smith, Coleford
£50	Mr P A Ellis, Woodchurch
£25	Mr S Lamon, Whitefield

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

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday by prior arrangement.

For all Club enquiries, contact Mike Smith on 07906 753699

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.

For anybody who would like to donate to this worthy cause you can still do so at:

<http://www.hiddenheroes.org.uk/sponsored-swim>



OBITUARIES

COLONEL JOHN REYNOLDS MC

The following is extracted from the Daily Telegraph. Colonel Reynolds stayed in contact with the Cheshire Regiment right up to his death (Ed)

Colonel John Reynolds, who has died aged 95, served with the Commandos and was awarded an MC in Italy in 1943.



At the end of August 1943 Reynolds, serving with No 3 Commando, was in command of a six-man patrol equipped with a wireless set. They landed at Bova Marina, on the toe of Italy, with orders to reconnoitre the enemy defences before the Allied invasion of the mainland.

When the landing craft came to take them off, however, it failed to slow down and ended well up the beach and unable to re-float. Reynolds's group took to the hills. They captured a prisoner but were then attacked by a force of Italians. After climbing to the top of Monte Tifia, they held out until dark.

For the next week, Reynolds's party was on the run but managed to remain undetected. They had little to eat except stale bread and dried figs but succeeded in transmitting vital information about the strength and disposition of the Axis forces. The citation for the award to him of an MC paid tribute to his courage and leadership.

John Deane Reynolds was born on August 23 1920 at Bromley, Kent, and was educated at King's School, Worcester, and Hertford College, Oxford. In 1940, after joining the Army and completing his basic training with the Worcestershire Regiment, he volunteered for the Special Service Brigade.

In October, he was posted to No 3 Commando at Largs, Ayrshire. He served initially as a batman, but after taking part in the raid on the Lofoten islands he was promoted to lance-corporal and put in charge of a demolition squad. In the raid on Vaagso, Norway, in December 1941, they were part of the force that destroyed the large herring oil factory at Mortenes.

In early 1942, he was commissioned and posted to 11th Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment but he returned to No 3 Commando later that year and served with them in Gibraltar, the North Africa campaign and the invasion of Sicily.

Reynolds was wounded in action near Termoli on the Adriatic coast and, following treatment in a military hospital in Algiers, he was evacuated to England. After a spell as an instructor at the Commando Training Centre, Wrexham, he re-joined No 3 Commando at Arromanches, Normandy, and led his troop in the forced crossing of the Rhine and the push eastwards to the River Elbe before finishing the war in Schleswig-Holstein.

When the Commandos were disbanded, he returned to the Worcesters and served in BAOR before moving to Pola on the Italian border with Yugoslavia. Having been granted a regular commission, in 1948 he was in Berlin when the Soviets blockaded the city and supplies had to be flown in by air.

After a number of regimental and staff appointments, in 1954 he was posted to HQ Canadian Army, Ottawa. He commanded a company of 1st Worcesters in Jamaica and, in 1959, was made DAQMG of the Aden Protectorate Levies.

He assumed command of 4th Battalion The Cheshire Regiment (TA) in 1962 and, in 1965, moved to HQ British Forces Hong Kong as AAG. After a last posting as AAQMG with the Kuwait Army, in 1970 he retired from the Regular Army.

He got a civilian job as administration officer of Shenstone Teacher Training College in Bromsgrove. In 1972 he was appointed Commandant of the Worcestershire Army Cadet Force, and later of the Hereford and Worcester Army Cadet Force. He was Honorary Colonel from 1985 to 1990.

He worked as secretary of the Worcestershire Regimental Association president and then vice president of the Commando Association.

John Reynolds married, in 1953, Alison Cole, who survives him with their son and daughter. Another daughter predeceased him.

Colonel John Reynolds, born August 23 1920, died November 7 2015.

CAPTAIN MICK GITTOS

I was very saddened to learn of the death of Mick Gittos, but perhaps just as saddened that nobody has seen fit to write about his life and service. Although I only had limited contact with him, I could not allow his passing to be marked only with a few simple words in Last Post.

Mick was not everyone's cup of tea, but the fact that he rose through the ranks and retired as a captain was by no accident. I remember him particularly as CSM of L Company in Minden, when company muster parade was arguably the best entertainment around and well worth getting out of bed for. His double-act with Major Tony Astle was straight out of Sergeant Bilko, in fact I always thought Mick had a passing resemblance to Bilko.

I also remember Mick Gittos as the Families Officer, particularly in Ballykelly and I know that anecdotes about his escapades could fill this newsletter. Later he will be well remembered for his superb racing tips, distributed to all and sundry on Race Day in Chester -they were always informative and amusing.

Mick Gittos had a sharp wit and a larger than life personality, but he also had great sensitivity, compassion and generosity of spirit, although he took great pains to hide this. I will never forget the time that he took the trouble to obtain my telephone number in order to congratulate me on an article that I had written for this newsletter. This was before I became the editor and as I was no particular friend of his, it demonstrated his kindness and consideration for others. I will certainly miss him.

George Szwejkowski

OBITUARIES (continued)

LT COLONEL DAVID OWEN

David Owen was commissioned in December 1948, joining the 1st Battalion at Lichfield. The battalion moved to Cyprus in 1951 where an exercise in Egypt led to an unscheduled three-year unaccompanied tour in the Canal Zone. Those young officers from the early RMAS Intakes found themselves among soldiers and officers who had served in part or throughout the Second War and perceived a need to be assertive in making their mark. David became Adjutant in early 1954 serving two energetic and fairly 'combustible' commanding officers whose characteristics he adopted throughout his own Army career and later.

Before becoming CO of the 1st Battalion in 1968, David's extra-regimental appointments included ADC/PA to GOC Rhine District; Brigade Major, 126 Brigade in Chester; and Chief Instructor, Old College, RMAS.

David took command of the 1st Battalion in Weeton, Lancashire. As an athlete in his youth, he was determined that the battalion should excel in all sports. A nine-month unaccompanied tour in Bahrain partly thwarted this ambition. However, as in the Canal Zone twenty years before where operational duties were limited and boredom a possibility, he ensured that everyone was very fit and involved in a myriad of training and sporting activities. As sometimes elsewhere, his relationship with his immediate superiors was not easy for them. After a short interval at Weeton, David took the battalion to Londonderry at a time when the IRA was becoming increasingly active. David said afterwards that this was the most rewarding and 'enjoyable' period of his time in command. Before leaving the Army in late 1973, his final appointment was as Chief Instructor at the NBC School – a job he did not entirely enjoy.

After retiring, David occupied himself in a number of enterprises (some more successful than others), ranging from starting his own estate agency, being a farmer, a developer, antique dealer, planning consultant, to charity worker, naming only a few. Throughout his career he maintained an ardent interest in the fortunes of the Regiment. He was not prepared to hold back on his opinions and on occasions his somewhat abrasive manner towards those who were trying to retain the Regiment's name did not endear him to them.

David enjoyed life to the full, could be disarmingly charming, and was invariably generous and kind to those in need or trouble. While serving and in retirement, his unswerving loyalty to the 22nd was total.

JDK/CEL

CAPTAIN F St J DWIGHT

I was saddened to read in the August Newsletter of Captain Dwight's death.

I served the whole of my National Service, May 1953-May 1955, at The Dale, the last 17 months as barman in the Officers' Mess, as a result getting to know a number of The Regiment's Officers and coming to like and respect many of them.

My memories are many and mainly happy ones and I was and still feel privileged to have been "a Cheshire" – indeed, I married the Mess Corporal's sister, (Cpl Kelly D C) - so I have much for which to thank the 22nd.

For some time Captain Dwight was Adjutant, having recovered sufficiently from injuries suffered in a dreadful accident whilst serving in Egypt, to carry out those duties.

He had been, prior to this accident, an athlete - runner – of no mean ability and occasionally found time to take part in the Saturday morning cross-country race, compulsory for all trainees and those Permanent Staff who were unable to dream up an excuse for absence!

On one such I was leading the race, from Captain Dwight, the pair of us comfortably ahead of the third placed runner when with perhaps a mile to go his shoe came off, in the mud of a ploughed field.

"Ralls" he shouted, "wait" – I took no notice, save to accelerate as much as I could – and, again he shouted," Ralls, wait, that's an order" – "sorry, Sir," I called over my shoulder – "can't hear you" – and ran on, to win the race comfortably – Mr Dwight came in a distant second and did his best to look annoyed!

He was a fine officer and a gentleman, considerate towards Mess staff and I liked him very much.

I regret that our paths crossed but briefly – via a short correspondence - only a few years ago when he was trying to make contact with his driver from the accident, concerned, I know, for his welfare.

He and people like him – so many – are the reason why I remain so proud to have served The Regiment, albeit but briefly.

My condolences to his family and friends.

22880660 Ex Pte Ralls A P

PHILIP SYDNEY WILSON

DOB 12.07.1917 DECEASED 6.08.15

My father Philip Sydney Wilson aged 98 years died on 6 August 2015. My Dad was a member of the Cheshire Regiment (6th Battalion) 1938-46 and Eighth Army serving in Italy (Salerno and Anzio) and North Africa (El Alamein) during the Second World War. He returned with me to El Alamein for the 50th Anniversary. He was a member of the Cheshire Regiment Association and always looked forward to receiving the newsletter. He was a member of the Woodford and Bramhall Royal British Legion who provided a Standard Bearer and small guard of honour as we came into church for his funeral. Dad was very proud of his service in the Army and his experience never left him.

P.J. Wilson (Miss)

LAST POST

Stanley Ball died 8 September 2015 Ex 1st Bn served Suez

Robert Doherty died 2 Sep 2015

Peter Fuller died 10 Nov 2015 Ex A Coy 1st Bn

Mike Gittos died 27 July 2015 Ex 1st Bn

George Greaves died 16 Sep 2015

Frank Jones died Nov 2015 Ex 1st Bn Malaya

Stan Robinson died 18 Oct 2015 Ex WO2

Robert Storey died 17 July 2015

Roy Turner died 9 July 2015 Ex 1st Bn served 1957-59 Malaya

E M Vickers died 15 Nov 15

Philip Wilson died 6 August 2015 Ex 6th Bn