



# THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 2 ISSUE 25

MARCH 2016

## EDITORIAL

Those of you who have kept your ears to the ground will be aware that this is the penultimate issue of the newsletter, at least in its current format. As you will read in the Chairman's Column, there will soon be insufficient funds and no longer a secretary or treasurer to carry out the tasks necessary to comply with Charity Commission Rules.

With the inevitable loss of the HQ element of the CRA, it is more important than ever that members of the CRA rally together and support the branches in their activities. This is particularly the case where we sustain and commemorate the name of the Cheshire Regiment in remembrance of Meeanee, Mons, Ballykelly and so many other events in our regiment's ever glorious history.

Although I remain a die-hard member of the Cheshire Regiment Association, I was somewhat heartened to hear the words of firstly Lt Colonel Ben Wilde and then WO1 (RSM) Jason Rollins from 2 MERCIAN at the Annual General Meeting. Whatever the future holds for the CRA it is clear that we must look to the Mercian Regiment for support, as they wish to do with us. Perhaps more importantly, when we are gone it will only be they that will retain our history and heritage. As General Keith Skempton said in his address at the AGM, we need each other.

It seems only yesterday that we were commemorating the outbreak of the Great War and the Cheshire Regiment's feat of arms at Mons, yet here we are now looking back on the anniversary of the third year of the war to end all wars. The early optimism for a quick end to the war was by now a distant memory and Europe was witnessing war on a scale unseen before. Major events included The Battle of Jutland – a great loss of human life with no clear winner. In an attempt to "bleed France white," the Germans lay siege to Verdun and almost bled itself white in the process. The Battle of the Somme was soon to follow and the casualties would rise again to unprecedented levels. To quote Lyndon B Johnson - "War is always the same. It is young men dying in the fullness of their promise. It is trying to kill a man that you do not even know well enough to hate. Therefore, to know war is to know that there is still madness in the world." Although these words were written much later, they sum up quite succinctly the madness of the Great War, and the Somme in particular.

The deadline for the next issue will be 15th July 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](mailto: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>

## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

The Chairman's Column for this edition deals solely with the immediate future of the CRA.

### SITREP

For the past 20 years the CRA has been governed according to the rules and regulations of the Charity Commission. However, we have now come to the point where the situation has changed significantly and the present committee feel the charitable status should be dissolved.

*[Note: It is the charitable status to be dissolved, NOT the CRA.]*

The aspects that forced CRAMC into this decision and on which you may wish to ponder, are as follows:-

**Secretary/Treasurer.** Without this post, or posts, being occupied we simply cannot function legally. The present incumbent (Eddie) has undertaken both roles on a voluntary basis for the last two years and despite a lengthy recruiting campaign, nobody has stepped forward to accept these responsibilities. The newly appointed Assistant Secretary (Cheshire) is not bound, nor wishes, to carry out CRA business.

**Finance.** Our present financial position will not allow us to trade in compliance with the Charity Commission rules for a further 12 months from February 2017. It should be noted that our legacy money ceases in 2017.

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## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN (continued)

**Active membership.** Active membership of the Association continues to reduce year on year. We have now reached a point where a formal committee aligned to the Charity Commission is superfluous.

**DISSOLUTION.** To dissolve our charitable status and whilst acting in accordance with the CRA rules (Revision 5 dated September 2014), an EGM must be called.

See now the EGM Calling Notice and the resolution which is tabled after my column.

### ACTIONS POST-EGM

There will be a combined CRAMC and Branch Officers' meeting on Saturday 9 April 2016, as previously agreed. At this meeting initial discussion will take place on actions to be carried out after the EGM assuming, of course, that the proposition is carried.

Possible timeline:

- The present CRAMC committee has agreed to remain in post through to February 2017. This being to see through the Charity Commission final annual report and to prepare for the CRA AGM on 18 February 2017.
- At the CRAMC and Branch Officers' meeting scheduled for January 2017 it is anticipated that an 'Affiliation' of CRA branches will be formed under the direction of a volunteer Chairman.
- At this meeting, Associate membership of the Mercian Regiment Association to be decided.

In completion of this rather lengthy Chairman's Column, it should be emphasised yet again that membership of the CRA and its branches will remain exactly as it is at present. The only aspect which is being removed are the obligations imposed on us by the Charity Commission.

*David Oak, Chairman*

## CALLING NOTICE

An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of the Cheshire Regimental Association (CRA) will be held at 11.00hrs on Saturday 18 June 2016 at the Regimental HQ in Chester. The meeting will hear and vote on the following proposition:-

**It is the considered opinion of the Cheshire Regiment Association Management Committee (CRAMC) that the charity which has provided governance of the Cheshire Regiment Association (CRA) be dissolved with effect 31 October 2016.**

## EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE CRAMC 20.2.2016

### MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE CRAMC HELD ON SATURDAY 20th FEBRUARY 2016

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

In attendance: Maj Gen K Skempton, CBE DL (Vice President)

1. The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and welcomed Gen Skempton.
2. The following proposition was presented by the Chairman:

***"It is the considered opinion of the Cheshire Regiment Association Management Committee (CRAMC) that the charity which has provided governance of the Cheshire Regiment Association (CRA), be dissolved with effect 31 October 2016."***

During discussion, points were raised by members included:

- a. The Newsletter will not be produced after October 2016.

- b. What will be the future of the club?
- c. Representation at the MRA?
- d. Branch contact with either Regimental Headquarters at Chester, or the Mercian Regiment.
- e. Control of cascading information, in particular for funerals.

By unanimous agreement it was decided to call an Extraordinary General Meeting of the CRA on Saturday 18th June 2016 to put forward a proposition to dissolve the CRA Charity. The required 28 days notice in writing to be given when the Newsletter is next distributed.

3. The Chairman reminded members of the date of the next meeting (9 April) and closed the meeting.

### SNIPPETS

The snippets in this issue are further extracts taken from IN CONFIDENCE – The British Armed Forces Guide to Personnel & Fitness Reporting – compiled by Rick Jolly.

*This officer remains very optimistic about his career prospects, but in this matter he stands alone.*

*When asked what she thought about Red China this potential officer said that it was acceptable as long as it did not clash with the tablecloth.*

## MINUTES OF THE CRA AGM 20.2.2016

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION HELD IN THE CHESHIRE REGIMENTAL CLUB ON SATURDAY 20th FEBRUARY 2016

Prior to the meeting, the Chairman announced that Mr Ken Thiis had been awarded the Legion d'Honneur by the government of France. He explained that the medal had been awarded to all soldiers of the Allied armies who had landed in Normandy on D Day. Major General Keith Skempton CBE DL presented Mr Thiis with his medal.

General Skempton then spoke about current Defence matters and how they affect the Army and the Mercian Regiment. He went on to speak about the future of the Cheshire Regiment Association.

The Chairman introduced Lt Col Ben Wilde MBE, Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment who spoke about life in the Mercian Regiment today. He outlined future plans for both of the regular battalions and listed their respective sporting achievements over the past year.

WO1 (RSM) Jason Rollins of the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment was then invited to speak. He spoke about how his young soldiers were encouraged to embrace the heritage built up over the centuries by the antecedent regiments and also the recent past in Iraq and Afghanistan, where all three battalions and many Reservists had served and fought with bravery and distinction. He asked branches to consider inviting soldiers to functions and hoped that he will be able to welcome members of the CRA to events in the battalion.

The Assistant Regimental Secretary (Cheshire), Andy Manktelow, introduced himself and addressed the meeting on RHQ and Cheshire Military Museum matters. He reminded the meeting that the 2nd Battalion would be sponsoring Race Day and that the Mercian Regiment will be commemorating the Centenary of the Battle of The Somme at Crich on 2nd July.

The Chairman then opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

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

There were 63 members from 11 branches present.

Apologies were received from Maj Gen Cave, Brig Dauncey, Brig Prosser, Brig Percival, Maj Gen Sharpe, Mr Alan Jennings, Lt Col Angel, Maj Tarbuck and 12 other members.

## NOTES FROM GENERAL KEITH SKEMPTON'S ADDRESS AT THE AGM

There was a buzz of anticipation from the 62 attendees at the AGM on 20 Feb, and also a memorable surprise. At short notice I was asked to present a Legion d'honneur medal to Ken Thiis, who added to the positive atmosphere by starting to tell us all about his exploits as a 21 year-old from the D Day Landings in June 1944 and his exploits in Normandy. Both David Oak and I persuaded Ken to continue the dialogue at the bar after the meeting if we were not to keep everyone well into the afternoon!! It was a pleasure and a privilege to make the presentation and it was good to see Ken on cracking form!

I then gave my short talk, which was about recent changes – but change was ever thus! When I joined, HMS RESOLUTION was on her first patrol carrying the new POLARIS nuclear deterrent. This year, Parliament will decide on the SUCCESSOR

1. The minutes of the AGM held on 21 February 2015 were reviewed, there were no matters arising. Mr Harold Riley proposed and Mr Nigel Hunt seconded the proposal that they be accepted as a true record. **Carried.**

2. The Chairman presented the Trustees Report, copies of which had been circulated, the Secretary outlined the Accounts and presented a detailed statement of the CRA account and the Club account as at the date of the report.

Mr Peter Gresty raised a question about legacy funding being considerably lower than the previous year. The Secretary explained that the Colonel of the Regiment had declined to sign off the payment, but it was hoped that this year's funding would fall into the guidelines set by the Mercian Regiment.

Mr John Fairbanks proposed and Mr Roy Porter seconded the proposal that the Report and Accounts be accepted. **Carried.**

The Chairman then invited Mr Peter Gresty to update the meeting on benevolence which is carried out on behalf of the CRA by the Mercian Regiment Benevolence Charity.

3. Mr Denis Rochell proposed and Mr Dave Beech seconded the proposal that McLintock and Partners be appointed as Independent Reviewers for the 2015/16 Accounts. **Carried.**
4. Date of the next AGM was set at the Saturday closest to Meeanee Day, Saturday 18th February 2017.

Following the meeting, Major General Peter Martin Awards were presented to Mr Tony Beckett of Sandbach Branch and Mr Roy Porter of Stockport Branch in recognition of their outstanding service to their respective branches.

The Chairman then spoke about the future of the CRA; he mentioned declining numbers at Branches, difficulties in finding suitably qualified members to assist in governance and the decline in available funds. He said that CRAMC has recommended that the CRA Charity be dissolved and read out the draft resolution to this effect. He said that in accordance with the CRA rules, written notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting to discuss and vote on the resolution will be sent with the next edition of the CRA Newsletter. The meeting is scheduled to take place on Saturday 18th June 2016.

to the VANGUARD submarines and the latest TRIDENT missile deterrent. At the same time, HMS ARK ROYAL, that's the Birkenhead built carrier, was our key capital ship, with Buccaneer and later Phantom jets. Now HMS Queen Elizabeth 2 and the Prince of Wales are preparing for commissioning next year with LIGHTNING II (VSTOL) fighter-bombers and Merlin helicopters. Typhoon and LIGHTNING II are to be the mainstay of RAF Fighter/Bomber capability with the current gap bridged by TORNADOS (as we have seen with the raids in the Middle East).

In Bahrain and Weeton, accommodation was the archetypal long barrack room with NCO's bunk at the end. Steel beds, bedside locker and wardrobe...that's it! I remember an early 'discussion' with PTE Hinks over the merits of an ashtray rather

than the butt end on the floor and reliance on who's on room jobs! In return, he taught me how to tailor my hairy KF shirts to sharpen my appearance! It was a far cry from today's 'Gucci' kit and 'Z Scale' single rooms with en-suite facilities! Wilf Marsh was my first Platoon Sergeant. I remember my first Sergeants Mess Christmas Draw. I won a frozen chicken! Mrs Marsh was delighted! By comparison, more recent draws have boasted such delights as Home Cinemas as raffle prizes!

In the 1980s, BAOR conducted a number of large-scale deployment exercises, CRUSADER, SPEARPOINT and LIONHEART, the latter mobilizing some 40,000 troops from UK to join the 50,000+ already in Germany. This was a very modern Army compared with WW2 or WW1 of our grandfathers...but we were good and proud of ourselves and The Regiment.

So it is today: After restructuring and the plan to withdraw our troops from Germany in the review of 2010 and the creation of Future Force 2020, we are now re-configuring further, following last November's review, with Future Force 2025. We now have a total of 82,000 regulars reinforced by some 30,000 reservists

The restructuring enables the Army to produce an armoured infantry brigade and a new strike brigade ready to fight all the time which, with appropriate notice, can fight as a division (as in the first Gulf War) although in the modern day scenario they are likely to be organised in multi-national formations. The two armoured infantry brigades will have an extended- life, upgraded CHALLENGER 2 tank and an upgraded WARRIOR AFV with new turret, sporting a powerful 40mm cannon and coaxial MG. The two new "STRIKE" Brigades will provide a rapidly deployable, protected force with the new armoured vehicle platform to replace the SCIMITAR size vehicles, although the recce vehicle 'AJAX' weighs in at 38 tonnes (compared to c25). These will be joined by 'ARES' support, 'ATHENA' command, APCs, Repair and Recovery vehicles. 16 Air Assault Bde and 3 Cdo Bde provide the 'LIGHT' rapid deployment forces and additionally there will be 6 infantry battalions geared for UK counter terrorist, security and stability enhancing operations, as well as engaging in training and mentoring partners around the world. Our soldiers carry a range of modern versions of rifles, LSW, LMG, GPMG, 'Sharp Shooter' and a Long Range Sniper Rifle as well as the modern versions of 84 anti tank weapon and a new Glock pistol to replace the Browning. However, I'm not sure the 81mm mortar has changed! (no need!!)

Our regular County battalions are both on high readiness this year and it was heart-warming to welcome Lt Col Ben Wilde and WO1 (RSM) Jason Rollins from 2 MERCIAN at the Dale – and their words spoke volumes as to the value of heritage and our support. Colonel Ben's presence and clear update on what the battalions were doing, reminding us of his father Philip, epitomised the value of our regimental family in its modern form!

It's all about change and yet keeping the traditions...The CRA is running out of a formal structure (and specifically charity status and independent funds) which can support the Association as it was accustomed in the past. To endure, we need to come under the umbrella of the Mercian Regiment Association. I have spoken with the Colonel of the Regiment and indeed consulted with past colonels of the 22nd. He asked me to pass on to you 3 key points:

1) The Mercian Association is established with a skeleton structure for governance. Dougie Bridges has done a lot more although he has been hampered by the lack of a Regimental Secretary in Lichfield. This has been resolved bar the civil service process of appointment. He will be in place long before the newsletter is produced.

2) The Mercians recognise the value of the antecedent associations – they need our support (and the footprint in the County) just as we (the CRA) need their support. However, he recognises that the associations are literally dying, and agreed that at some (undefined) point in time, they will cease to exist and the mantle will be borne by the MRA.

3) Finally, at the last Mercian Regiment Council, it was agreed that members of the antecedent associations should be offered "associate membership" of the MRA to help ease the transition. (I am sure this will be welcomed).

RHQ is now working on the legal and financial issues to enable a successful transition. The Colonel of the Regiment is also aware that we need to satisfy the inevitable labelling argument about what the branches are to be called. There will be a call for them to remain CRA, but this will not attract the young Mercian soldier who is vital for the survival of the Associations. We should be prepared to accommodate a compromise on this over the next few months?

My talk was about 'Change', just as the British Army has had to accommodate over centuries. I would like our heritage to continue...2 anecdotes to finish:

Field Marshall The Lord 'Dwin Bramall discussed the amalgamation with me and he was succinct in his view – "Keith, you'll have to get over it... I still attend the Kings African Rifles dinners but I will also support the Rifles' events." The Rifles are well supported by RGJ, LI et al.

The funeral of Cpl Alan "Alfie" Foster ("Foz") was held last month. Well done 2 Mercian for providing the uniformed pall bearers and support from both the Battalion and the CRA! Isn't that what the Association is all about? MRA and CRA: We need each other!

### SNIPPETS

*His contribution is minimal. Even on his good days, he only makes up the numbers.*

*The only way this officer will make any career progress is if major hostilities break out, with a high attrition rate.*

*I could not warm to this man – even if we were cremated together.*

*Probably the only thing that this man has achieved on his own is his dandruff.*

*A suitable finishing touch to this officer's report would be a swan vestas match.*

*He is as spineless as a length of wet spaghetti.*

*Even though he comes from a long and distinguished line, I would not breed from this officer.*

*He would be out of his depth in a car park puddle.*

*This man is depriving a village somewhere of a village idiot.*

### BIRKENHEAD & DISTRICT BRANCH

Our Branch year was rounded off on 6th December by our Christmas Lunch, once again at the Bridge Inn. Our Treasurer's insistence on a simplified menu meant that our meal was briskly served as most of us were able to recall what we'd ordered. Alas, we were fewer than in 2014 but it was a companionable and enjoyable occasion. After lunch we enjoyed the usual raffle, Ron Green's tippie was tippled and we played his Irish bingo. A two-woman ukulele duo then enabled us to sing along to some of the old familiar tunes.

Our first meeting of the year, the 2016 Branch AGM was a solemn occasion as our Vice Chairman Tom Radford had died on 17th December after a prolonged stay in hospital. During Tom's illness Ray Brennan had volunteered to chair our monthly meetings. Members unanimously expressed their thanks to Ray and he was duly elected as our Chairman. Messrs Ball, Kennedy & Jackson are to continue as Treasurer, Standard Bearer & Secretary respectively.

Tom Radford was a veteran of the Suez conflict of the early Fifties when the 1st Battalion was rapidly deployed from Cyprus to Egypt. As with participants in the Battalion's other deployments, these men many of them conscripts, formed a group with a special bond of comradeship within the CRA. We at Birkenhead must thank those members of other Branches who attended Tom's funeral on 14th January. The CRA presence was much appreciated by his family.

Good news in this period was that some of the members of the former Tranmere Branch, Joe and Val Cotgrave and Ray and Wendy Stocker, joined us for our last two meetings. We were very happy to welcome them. Likewise we assure any former Tranmere members and indeed any CRA members in our vicinity that a warm welcome awaits them at our Branch meetings or our monthly raids on Wirral's pubs. (contact Secretary: 0151 630 2179)

To continue on a lighter note, our AGM was the occasion to see and pass around the magnificent *Legion D'Honneur* medal, awarded by the French government to our President, Ken Thiis, who is a Normandy Veteran. At the CRA AGM in February, Ken's medal was 're-awarded' by Major-General Skempton amid sincere applause. After the routine business of the AGM, the proposition to wind up the central CRA charity was announced. It was emphasised that this was not the dissolution of the Association but the cessation of a charity which will become insolvent. The widespread consensus is that the CRA Branches will continue to function as long as we are able keep going. The task for the weeks ahead is to see how we can contribute to any future inter-Branch organisation and to foster links with the Mercian Regiment.

*Peter Jackson*

### CHESTER BRANCH

The Christmas season was celebrated in our usual style. On 6th December 38 happy members enjoyed one of Dawn's traditional and very tasty Xmas Sunday lunches. The meal was followed by a session of acutely politically incorrect Bingo. The non addicted whiled away the time with dice which is why later, in some households, the housekeeping money was in deficit. On the 18th December 65 members and guests attended the Xmas Draw. The mulled wine and mince pies got the evening off to a good start and the buffet was enjoyed by all, and such was the quantity of food supplied, there were a lot of happy dogs in

several households across Chester. The high spot of the evening was the number of times John Murphy's tickets came out of the drum. At one time it seemed that no one else had bought any tickets. But as the saying goes 'you get what you pay for' so John, having purchased a large amount of tickets, won a fifth of the prizes. Then he generously donated everything that he won to the Branch on the understanding that it be raffled to raise money for a Charity of our choice.

The New Year came in with, not a bang, but with a soggy squelch. The awful weather seemed to affect attendances and it was the end of January before Friday night started to show an improved attendance. Talking of which I would like someone, somewhere, who reads to answer this question. At Chester castle we have at our disposal facilities that clubs and other organization would give their eye teeth for. Why then is the sight of men or women who served in the Regiment visiting the Club such a rarity? Send your answers to me on the back of a ten pound note!

For the past thirty years we have enjoyed the company of an Honorary member Mr Reg Lancelotte who went ashore in Normandy on D Day. As the years have passed by fellow WW2 veterans have passed on until Reg was the only one left on our books. His determination to top everything by living long enough to receive his 100th birthday greeting from HM The Queen was admired by all. Sadly on 17th February we received word that Reg too had faded away. He was 99years and 355 days old. He missed his heart's desire by two weeks.

*John Fairbanks*

### ELLESMERE PORT BRANCH

Greetings from Ellesmere Port. Nothing much to report this time. In mid December we held our traditional Xmas lunch and gathering. Around twenty four members, families, friends and loyal supporters enjoyed an evening at a local club with the usual "party games" to follow. The usual raffle, with prizes donated by members raised approx £67.

January 2016 saw our AGM, The officers are the same as last year with one exception - Chairman John "Tiny" Davies has had to stand down for personal family reasons, so Frank Grieves has stepped into the "breach." To Tiny – this message - "you are sorely missed at meetings, BUT don't forget, we are still here for you and think of you constantly." And your family. At AGM subs were collected from twenty members, so we are still fairly strong, What saddens me somewhat is the fact that some "paper" members seem reluctant to attend meetings. To quote a bit from CRA Collect - have they "fallen away in times of temptation?"

Finally, and on the brighter side, when you have a "few miles on the clock" (and grey hair) people seem to think you are the fount of all knowledge, eg:

Q "Dear Gordon, my dog chases everyone on a bike, what can I do?"

A "Take the blasted bike off him!"

Q "Dear Gordon, just back from Blackpool, my son kept climbing the tower, what can I do?"

A "Next year go to Bournemouth!"

Q "Dear Gordon, the doctor's diet is useless, how can I lose 28lbs of ugly fat?"

A "Cut your head off!!!"

*Gordon Kipps*

## WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

### NANTWICH AND DISTRICT BRANCH

Firstly may I say, on behalf of the Branch, a very happy, peaceful, prosperous and healthy 2016 to all within the CRA. The Branch continues with a fairly good membership and attendance at our once-monthly meetings. As always, there is much lively discussion and, of course, good humour and comradeship.

Branch members held their pre-Christmas Dinner at the Royal Oak in Worleston, near Nantwich, organised under the direction of Chairman Tony O'Connor. A most enjoyable evening was had by all.

Some of our members continue to be unwell and 'thinking of you' cards have been sent on behalf of the Branch.

The Branch A.G.M. was held in January, when reports were given by our President, Chairman and Treasurer. The yearly accounts were presented and approved. Branch Officers elected for the current year are:-

President and PRO: Ray Stafford MBE

Chairman: Tony O'Connor

Secretary: Chris Sharpe (Chris is a former Lance Corporal with 3 Cheshire and was accepted as a Member of the Nantwich & District Branch of the CRA and appointed as Secretary at the February monthly meeting).

Treasurer: Dave Waring

Almoner: Peter Hoffman

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, Battle of the Somme Centenary Commemorations at Chester Cathedral, Malaya Reunion, Mons Reunion at Chester and East Cheshire Reunion.

The Branch was represented at the CRA AGM in Chester in February and included Dave Waring, Jim Salisbury and Brian Sims. The Branch continues to meet in the Crosville Social Club in Chester Street, Crewe, on the last Tuesday of each month from 7.30pm. New members are always welcome. Do come and join us. The next meetings are on Tuesday 29th March and Tuesday 26th April – See you there!

*Chris Sharpe*

### SANDBACH BRANCH

We are now well into the new year and we hope you all had a nice Christmas. Percy Cooke had a nice surprise over the Christmas period. Thanks to Peter Walsh and Andy McIntosh, he was delivered a nice supply of shopping to tide him over Christmas. Thanks once again gents.

Albert Gregory remains in hospital. He has been in and out over the last twelve months and we wish him well.

Our branch continues to get stronger, averaging 16 to 18 at meetings and we would like to thank Simon and Jayne for the food and their hospitality at the Swan n Chequers. We would also like to thank Julie Shannon for her fund-raising by selling books from her market stall in Sandbach Market. She also has a vast array of militia badges and pins and the like.

Now onto the A.G.M. at Chester on the 20th February. A good meeting but we are going to lose the C.R.A. as it is now, but that's progress. After all the formalities there were two presentations of the Major General Martin award, one to Roy Porter from Stockport well deserved and the other to Tony Beckett. He was absolutely gob smacked – this award is for services at branch level; they were both overwhelmed with their awards.



*Tony Beckett receives his award from General Keith Skempton CBE DL*

This year we are holding a dance to commemorate the 100 years since the battle of The Somme – 1st July 1916 – at Sandbach Cricket Club, at a cost of £12 per head to be held on 1st July 2016 (Friday). If anyone requires a ticket my contact details 01270 767922. All the very best to all and God Bless from Sandbach.

*Dave Beech*

### SOUTHERN REGION

I begin these words by reporting the loss of Doug Hawkins on 13th February. Doug served as a machine gunner in Italy during the Second World War, was captured in May 1944 and ended up in Lamsdorf Prisoner of War Camp. As the Russians advanced Doug had to endure the Long March, before finally being repatriated to Britain. His funeral was attended by George Szwejkowski, Lynne Szwejkowski and Capt John Ferns. Doug had his story told in a book entitled Lambeth to Lamsdorf, only published a few months before his death.

Our Meeanee Ladies Dinner was held on 5th March in Browns of Covent Garden. We are grateful to all those who attended, particularly John Elms who travelled from Yorkshire and Mark and Ellie Banks who travelled from Wolverhampton. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Edith Cavell and to show our appreciation for the assistance that she gave to the Cheshire Regiment after the Battle of Mons, we invited two nurses from The Royal London Hospital to attend our dinner. It was a very agreeable evening and we must thank Trevor Taylor for pulling all the strings together.

We now look forward to the annual Army v Royal Navy rugby match at Twickenham and the Inter Services T20 Cricket competition at Lords in May. Our next meeting will take place at 7pm on Thursday 28th April. Unfortunately the location has not been decided as this report goes to press. In closing, we wish forthcoming happy birthdays to Brigadier Mike Dauncey DSO who will shortly be 96, and to Les Stelfox – he will be 103 on 9th May.

*George Szwejkowski*

## WORD FROM THE BRANCHES (continued)

### STOCKPORT BRANCH

Sunday 16 August 2015 saw members attend the commemoration service to mark the centenary of the Gallipoli landings by the 7th Battalion at Sulva Bay. Ten standards were paraded, these being our Union Standard, Branch Standards from Stockport, Sandbach, Nantwich, Winsford plus the Royal British Legion and Army and Navy Cadet detachments. Dignitaries from Macclesfield, Crewe, Congleton, Wilmslow, Middlewich, Wilmslow and Bollington attended with the Mayor of Macclesfield leading the parade. The first lesson was read by Derek Sykes and Brigadier A.G.Ross (Scots Guards/ABF) reading the second.

September saw the groundwork put in place for our commemorative pilgrimage to St Julien and the 100th anniversary of the battle of Pilkem Ridge and St Julien. This being the 2nd battle of Passchendaele. We will be in attendance with foreign diplomats and politicians expected to be there also. Ypres will be FULL!!

Next the funeral of Dennis Hosler late 22nd where we had standards from the C.R.A Stockport, NMBVA and MRVA Stockport.

Later the funeral of Edwin Vickers late R.I.F/1st Bn Cheshire. We braved hurricane winds and rain that day to honour our fallen comrades.

Next and our Branch A.G.M where Ken Hampson (R.A) became our associate committee member and myself retiring my post due to personal reasons. However as our 'indisposed' secretary has asked me to continue writing these notes I agreed to his request.

Prior to our Christmas break we entertained a number of members from the local ex services bikers' club in the hope that some may decide to join us.

Then yet another funeral of Thomas Radford late 22nd and member of the Birkenhead Branch C.R.A. Tommy was instrumental in obtaining the Suez Medal and even recruited Tony Blair (the then Prime Minister) to help. When members of his family thanked us for our attendance in honouring Tommy we answered, "It's what we do for one of our comrades."

We were disappointed, to say the least, to learn that the annual Meeanee Service at Capesthorpe Hall had to be cancelled due to declining numbers. This was an event we always looked forward to and thank the Macclesfield Branch and the Bromley-Davenport Family for the hospitality and welcome over the years. (It was heard from one of those who regularly attended that we could still visit the Flower Pot for lunch). Hmmm the jury is out on that one.

Next the Branch dined twenty two of our ladies as per usual with a huge vote of thanks to our president for donating the wine, the waiters and the two DROs grafting away at the kitchen sinks. (Invoice for the Marigolds in the post). A very pleasant evening.

Next to yet another funeral, this one being the late WO2 'Ted' Williams ex 22nd Cheshire. I had the pleasure of serving with Ted when he was i/c B Coy Signals and I was i/c A Coy Signals. Many a happy time with Ted and his lovely wife Silvia. R.I.P Mate. Also learned of the death of Ron 'Mo' Moseley who passed away some seven years ago. On a personal note I served with both of these comrades in the Signals Platoon. I make no apologies for reporting all these funerals as I reckon updates are essential.

On a lighter note the Stockport Branch's proposed visit to St Julien in 2017 is well under way with eight twin rooms left. For more details of approx cost and proposed itinerary contact Paul Lomas on 0161 486 6054.

Yet another Funeral we attended: that of the late John Burgess (MT Platoon) 22nd Cheshire. John served with the 1st Battalion in Singapore, N Ireland and Germany 1958-64.

Meanwhile we await the E.G.M to discuss our future as an association under the Cheshire Regimental Association banner.

*Gordon H Smith*

### WALSALL BRANCH

A belated happy new year to all members and associates of the CRA. Our Christmas dinner/dance went very well on the 11th December with 3 course hot meal, wine and mince pies; also, entertainment of a very high standard provided by Micheal Lewis. 68 people attended and all comments were favourable.

We then had some very sad news on the 15th December with the passing of my and all members' friend Arthur Simms – very sudden and unexpected. 12 members and standard were present at the crematorium on the 11th January. We all send condolences to wife Carol, son Greg and family. Friends from overseas have also sent condolences.

This was followed by more shock news that Gerald Walker's wife Gennie passed away suddenly on the 13th February.

We have some members on sick parade: our secretary Derek Sadler, Alan Cooper and Les Sutton. We wish them get well soon.

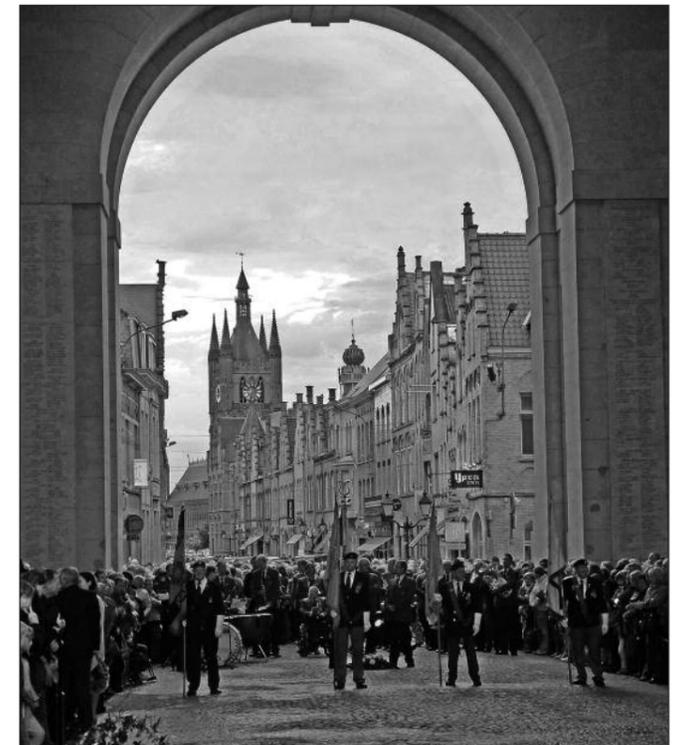
A big thank you to Mac Hartshorn who does his utmost to attend all events with our standard.

*Reg Smith*

### YPRES PILGRIMAGE

If you are interested in taking part in the CRA Ypres Pilgrimage Trip please send your applications and deposits to:

Alan Rowe  
Dingle Farm, 16 Drury Lane  
Drury, Buckley  
CH7 3DU



**WAR IS HELL!!**

It was 1962, and at Thetford in Norfolk the 7th Battalion 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment TA were at annual camp. For the past year, on many a cold wet weekend, countless hours had been spent practicing field craft and tactics and sharpening up on their physical fitness. Now, on the training area, on a warm summer's day, the officers and men were preparing to demonstrate their efficiency by carrying out a Battalion attack. Their objective, a derelict farm house, lay roughly one thousand yards away and was clearly visible. As they assembled on the start line those who had binoculars were able to see a thin, hazy, spiral of smoke rising in the vicinity of their target, a sure sign of the presence of the enemy.

Meanwhile, as the Battalion prepared for action the enemy, a group of PSI's, having readied their defences were awaiting the call to arms. The thin plume of smoke that had been spotted by the TA men came from a small camp fire, upon which a cooking pot simmered. Nearby, CSM Harry McIntyre, known to many as Poacher Mac, was instructing Sgts Evans and Fairbanks in the noble art of rabbit skinning. The unfortunate animal had been snared that morning and was destined to provide lunch for defenders. Sgt Ray Morris, having prepared the potatoes and carrots (borrowed from a local farmer's field) for the anticipated rabbit stew, was reclining on a ground sheet. He was soaking up the sun whilst listening to a transistor radio from which the dulcet tones of Miss Cilla Black singing, 'You're my World' echoed round the battlefield. The duty sentry, CSM Brian (Busty) Perrin was also sitting in the sun, stripped to the waist, and reading the latest James Bond novel. Besides keeping an occasional eye on the activities of the battalion, Busty had a vitally important additional duty. He was charged with ensuring that the supply of tinned beer, which was to be served with lunch, was kept at a reasonable temperature by being immersed in a shallow stream which flowed through their position.

Suddenly there was movement to the rear. Having approached completely unseen and unheard the Training Officer, Major Murray-Bligh, was standing on a small hillock surveying the scene. He was accompanied by RSM Alan (Clogger) Wrightson who seemed non too pleased by what he saw before him. But it was the Major who spoke first. "You know RSM," he drawled, "It's true what they say. War is hell!!!"

**GOOD WILL TO ALL MEN**

In 1958 the 1st Battalion, having completed a successful tour of duty in Malaya, were stationed at Selarang Barracks, Singapore. On Christmas Day, the WOs and Sergeants, as usual, had taken part in the serving of the traditional festive lunch in the cook house. As soon as this meal was over the senior ranks hurried back to their Mess to prepare for a visit by the officers, who had been invited for yuletide drinks. But all concerned knew that this was one of the occasions when the Colonel and his men would try, by fair means or foul, to remove the Key to the Khyber from the Sergeant's Mess. And bearing in mind the devious stratagems used in countless previous, but failed, attempts no chances were being taken. Defences were prepared, plans laid, and personnel detailed to repulse any and all threats to the sacred trophy.

The ante room of the Mess was a reasonably large oblong room with a bar in one corner. The room was cooled by large electric fans which were suspended from the roof. The Key was tied securely to one of the fans above the actual blades. The fans were set in motion at fairly high speed and all tall items of

furniture that could conceivably be used to reach the Key were removed from the Mess. Teams of the Mess's toughest characters, and we had a few, were positioned to defend (a) the fan itself and (b), most importantly, the source of power i.e. the on/off switch.

The visitors duly arrived and were supplied with copious amounts of drink. It was not long before the mayhem began. Loud and long the combat raged with numerous casualties on both sides. These unfortunates were removed from the battlefield by the simple expedient of throwing them through the (open) windows. In a very short while practically every stick of furniture in the ante room was reduced to matchwood. But in spite of all the carnage the defenders fought off many spirited attacks and the Key remained securely fastened above the now strangely-shaped fan.

Eventually peace was restored and everyone returned to the original reason for the visit - seasonal drinks. It was then that I saw something that I can only describe as a miracle. Standing beneath a window, through which several of the wounded had previously been thrown, was just about the only intact piece of furniture in the room. It was a little, round occasional table on which, throughout the battle, two pints of beer had stood. With hostilities at an end two battle-stained combatants appeared and coolly finished their drinks as if nothing untoward had happened.



**PTSD RESOLUTION**

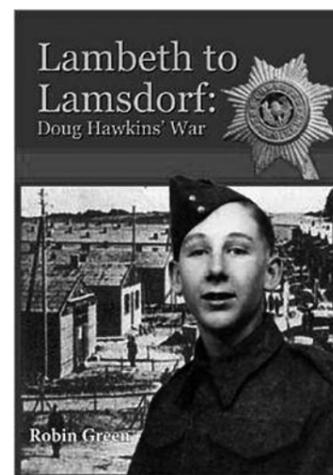
If you know of any ex-service men or women struggling with nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, depression, anger issues, or any of their families being affected by their behaviour, please help them contact the charity PTSD Resolution (charity number 1133188) on telephone number 0845 021 7873. They will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

**SNIPPETS**

*This man has two brain cells, one is lost and the other is out looking for it.*

*This man reminds me of a gyroscope – he spins all over the place but never really goes anywhere.*

**LAMBETH TO LAMSDORF  
DOUG HAWKINS' WAR  
by Robin Green**



It is a sad fact of life that most of us only really reminisce when we are getting old, when it is too late to do anything else about it. This was the case with Doug Hawkins, or almost. It was a chance meeting at the local bowls club that has brought Doug Hawkins' recollections to a wider world. Robin Green and Doug Hawkins played bowls together and a conversation after a game touched on Doug's experiences during the war and the fact that he would like to tell his story. Robin was able to provide the tools in order for Doug to bring his wishes to fruition.

The book traces Doug's early life and experiences in Lambeth and Mitcham before he joins the Home Guard and then the Middlesex Regiment when he became old enough. He describes his training at Saighton Camp, Chester and then his journey to North Africa where he was re-assigned to the Cheshire Regiment and thence to Italy where he took part in the "Break Out" from the Anzio Beachhead. It was here that he lost a close friend and was captured in a German counter-attack. This began his long journey to Lamsdorf in Poland, captivity and finally the Long March to freedom.

It was interesting to read about his experiences in Italy and life in Lamsdorf, but Doug's experiences during the Long March are what sets this book apart and sheds light on an event little known to those who were not there.

The Long March took place during the final few months of the Second World War. Some 30,000 Allied Prisoners of War were force-marched across Poland and Germany in terrible winter conditions, lasting from January to April 1945. It has been called various names including "The Great March West," "The Long March" and "The Long Walk." It was also known as "The Lamsdorf Death March." The months of January and February 1945 were among the coldest winter months of the twentieth century, with blizzards and temperatures as low as -25°C, even until the middle of March temperatures were -18°C. Most of the Prisoners of War were ill-prepared for the evacuation, having suffered years of poor rations and wearing clothing and particularly boots, not suited to the winter conditions.

I read this book from cover to cover, hardly putting it down, although it is not a very long book (just over 100 pages). It certainly left me wanting more and having been brought up on "The Great Escape," I would have been interested to learn more about day-to-day life in Lamsdorf.

I knew Doug Hawkins as he was a fellow member of the Southern Region of the Cheshire Regiment Association, although our conversations usually only touched on our mutual love of cricket. I was aware of the fact that he had taken part in the Long March, but he never spoke to me about it in any great detail. I met Robin Green at Doug's funeral on 2nd March 2016 and I was interested to know how he had managed to coax out of Doug all the information necessary for the book, particularly as Doug's memory began to fade before the book was completed. He told me that he had had a large number of short conversations with Doug, each one to give him an outline of events that covered a particular period or event. Robin would then research further in order to give himself a more holistic view of the events that Doug described. It also allowed Robin to prompt Doug further with "Do you remember this?" thereby triggering Doug's memory once again.

Robin Green's research is carefully, almost seamlessly woven into Doug's story and this enables the reader to follow his story in context. Despite the horrors and privations of being in action, incarcerated as a POW and suffering the inhumanity of the Long March, the book is not without humour and kindness. Doug Hawkins' War was short, in comparison to others, but I have no hesitation in recommending his story to you.

*George Szwejkowski*

**CONGRATULATIONS EDDIE**

"At a recent ceremony in Chester Town Hall, Major Eddie Pickering MBE was installed as an Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Cheshire West and Cheshire.

The honour, which is the highest that a local authority can grant a citizen, is in recognition of Major Pickering's commitment in the Borough in the fields of Ex-Service Welfare, music and assistance to Civic Officials."

In the photograph adjacent, Major Pickering is being congratulated by The Lord Mayor of Chester, Cllr Hugo Deynem the Council Chairman, Cllr Bob Rudd and the Chief Executive Mr Steve Robinson.

*(The copyright of the photo is held by Cheshire West and Chester Council who have granted permission for it to be used in the Newsletter)*



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### 2016

13/14 Apr	Regimental Golf – Stay/Play, Caldersfield Golf Club
14 Apr	Officers' Assn Luncheon, Wellington College
6 May	Chester Races
13 May	Regimental Golf, Malkin Bank
4 Jun	Malaya Reunion
10 Jun	Regimental Golf, The Oaks
26 Jun	Battle of the Somme - Centenary Commemorations, Chester Cathedral
3 Jul	Mercian Regiment Somme Memorial Day, Crich
15 Jul	Regimental Golf, Aldersey Green
31 Jul	St Julien Service, Stockport
12 Aug	Regimental Golf, Eastham Lodge
2 Sep	Regimental Golf, Pryor's Hayes
10 Sep	Officers' Assn Dinner, Chester
11 Sep	Mons Reunion, Chester
21 Oct	Regimental Golf, Hayrose
29 Oct	ECR Stockport – tbc
4 Dec	Droppin' Well Memorial Service

News of major events is published on the CRA page of [www.cheshiremilitarymuseum.co.uk](http://www.cheshiremilitarymuseum.co.uk) and also on the CRA facebook page.

## MALAYA REUNION

The Malaya Reunion will take place as follows:

Date: Saturday 4th June 2016  
Place: New Invention Victory Club  
Lichfield Road  
Willenhall WV12 5BE

## REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY AT THE CENOTAPH HELP! REGIMENTAL REINFORCEMENTS NEEDED

The members of CRA Southern Region consider their primary duty is to provide the Regimental Contingent on Remembrance Sunday. The CRA Southern Region Contingent parades along Whitehall and places our wreath at the Cenotaph alongside those laid by HM the Queen and others in memory of those who have died serving the Cheshire Regiment and their Country.

You will appreciate how vital it is that we continue to honour those who fell serving the Cheshire Regiment over 319 years. We owe it to them. This link is likely to die once the last surviving member of the 22nd passes on but, until that happens, we need as much able bodied assistance as possible to muster on the day to represent **OUR** Regiment.

The Regimental contingent at the Cenotaph has seen fluctuating numbers in recent years and we are now very concerned that the Royal British Legion, who organise the event, having reduced our ticket allocation once before, will take our slot away from us altogether. We must find a way of having more on parade.

Please come and join us. If the spirit of your service with the 22nd is still in your blood, please consider marching with us on Remembrance Sunday. We feel it is an honour and privilege to be on parade and you can share in this. The experience is something that you are unlikely ever to forget.

## 22 CLUB WINNERS

### November

£100	Mr J Bigland, Chester
£50	Mr J A Jennings, Altrincham
£25	Maj D S Baddeley, Hough

### December

£100	Mr P Dudley, Offerton
£50	CRA Southern Region
£25	CRA Stockport Branch

### January

£100	Lt Col (Retd) D M Oak MBE, Preston
£50	Miss P J Wilson, Stockport
£25	Mr J Clarke, Crewe

### February Meeanee Grand Draw

£100	Maj SC Leedham, Runcorn
£100	Maj T E Pickering MBE, Chester
£50	Mr J Bigland, Tattenhall
£50	Mr C J Carress, South Norwood
£25	Mr R McHugh, Preston
£25	Mr J G Ball, Birkenhead

## 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



It is also an enjoyable and memorable experience because, the evening before, we get together at the Tower of London for a private tour, thanks to our Yeoman Warder, Dickie Dover. This is followed by a drink in the Yeoman Warders' Mess and then out to witness the Ceremony of the Keys. Also, after the parade on Remembrance Sunday, we enjoy our gathering in the Chandos for a drink and lunch – marchers are given a free lunch!

If you would like to join us, or would like more details, please contact our Branch Secretary, George Szwejkowski. His e-mail address is: [george.szwejkowski@btconnect.com](mailto:george.szwejkowski@btconnect.com)

## BLIND VETERANS UK



There's a life beyond severe sight loss with support from Blind Veterans UK.

Blind Veterans UK currently supports over 4,000 Armed Forces and National Service veterans from across the UK living with severe sight loss.

Additionally, the charity supports a further 3,000 other beneficiaries, many of whom are carers to Armed Forces veterans. Blind Veterans UK is committed to helping all veterans who are living with severe sight loss, no matter when they served, or what has caused their sight loss.

John Endres, 86 and from Ellesmere Port, spent 23 years serving with the 4/7 Royal Dragoon Guards. Years on, John noticed a problem with the sight in his left eye and was diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration in 2006.



John, a lifelong fisherman, stopped fishing over eight years ago after his sight deteriorated, but thanks to Blind Veterans UK John has now been able to fish once more after attending a Fishing Week.

John said: "Once my sight went, I'd given up fishing because I couldn't see to tie the flies anymore. Being able to fish again with the help of Blind Veterans UK was brilliant.

Blind Veterans UK has renewed my life in a lot of ways. As well as helping me to fish again, they've helped me at home. I couldn't read my newspaper before, so when I visited the centre for the first time I was given a CCTV magnifier which now means that I can put my newspaper underneath and read it again."

If you are a vision-impaired ex-Service man or woman, or care for someone who is, find out more at: [www.noonealone.org.uk](http://www.noonealone.org.uk) or telephone: 0800 389 7979.

## OBITUARIES

### NORMAN ALLEN: 1919 – 2016

Norman Allen died peacefully at Morrison Hospital, Swansea, on February 11th 2016, aged 96.

Norman served in the Army, in the Cheshire Regiment for 7 years 1939 to 1946, at Dunkirk, Northern Ireland, India, Persia, Iraq, Palestine, Italy, France and Germany. He achieved the rank of Colour-Sergeant, and was awarded the MBE.

He was born in Crewe, into a railway family, and attended Technical College there. He was an early recruit into the Territorials in the town, and consequently entered into the Second World War conflict at an early stage – in fact he spent his 21st birthday on the sands of Dunkirk before being safely evacuated. He had a wide ranging tour of duties, but perhaps the most striking in terms of memories and pride was his role at Anzio – a battle he often said seemed to be very much forgotten. After VE Day, he was assigned to duties in central and northern Germany, before finally being posted back to the UK. For 50 years he was the Secretary of the 7th Battalion The Cheshire Regiment, charged with the organisation of an annual reunion of members of that battalion, to preserve the friendships and fellowships that were formed over the years.

His work lay firstly in local government, then in the building and civil engineering industry with the Electricity Board, British Rail, and finally Simon Engineering, at Stockport in Cheshire. He was a quantity surveyor, and his work varied between individual housing projects through to large scale nuclear engineering work. Norman was always interested in transport – he was after all born in Crewe! – and loved to go on transport society trips on trains, buses and trams. He was also a lifelong supporter of Crewe Alexandra Football Club and regularly watched Match of the Day – although Crewe Alex never got much of a mention.

Norman lived most of his married life in Hazel Grove, Cheshire, with his wife Nan, where they both made many friends. Both Nan and Norman had a strong connection with

Norbury, the Parish Church at Hazel Grove and their faith was an important part of their lives. Nan was often in poor health, and Norman cared for her over many years of illness. He was a constant source of comfort and support until her death in 2001.

In 2011 Norman moved down to Pontlliw near Swansea to live with his son Michael, daughter-in-law Joy and their two daughters. Despite his failing health he enjoyed going on trips to the Botanic Gardens, country pubs for lunch and just sitting in the car at the coast watching the world go by. Whilst living at Swansea family and friends from his home made the long journey to visit him and chat, bringing him up to date with life at Hazel Grove. Norman particularly enjoyed the regular contact from his friends at Norbury Church, reading the parish magazine from cover to cover. Norman enjoyed being with his loving family, seeing the two daughters get married – and especially seeing his great grandson, growing into a proper toddler.

In Swansea he appreciated the time to reflect on his long life; he was where he wanted to be - with three generations of his family during his last few years. He regularly prayed with and received home communion from his parish priest, both of which gave him spiritual nourishment in his final years.

### ERROL ELLIS GREGSON

1st Battalion, The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment. He was born in Altrincham, Cheshire on the 8th January 1946 and died in Macclesfield, Cheshire on the 6th March 2016 aged 70. A son of a Royal Artillery gunner, a father, brother and uncle to soldiers who served in the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment. He was a friend to many who served with him in the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment during his service years and his time in the Cheshire Regiment Association.

*I know that when I stand with a pint in my hand, that you will be looking over my shoulder and I will raise that glass to the memories of the times we spent together.*

*Alan Gregson (Jnr)*

## OBITUARIES (continued)

### ALAN FAIRBANKS

Thomas Alan Fairbanks was born in West Kirby, Wirral in August 1930. He was the second son of William Henry (Harry) Fairbanks and his wife Annie. Harry Fairbanks, who served in 1914/18 war in the Cheshire Regiment, was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

From the moment he realized that his father was a war hero young Alan had only one wish, to be a soldier, and to try and emulate his father. He passed his eleven plus and was awarded a scholarship to Caldys Grange Grammar School, West Kirby. He proved an unwilling pupil whose only ambition was to join the Army and help the war effort. His academic record is best summed up by his English master who wrote on a school report, "I am unable to comment on this pupil because he was not present often enough for me to form an opinion."

At the age of 16 Alan left school and promptly ran away from home. He was found many days later at a young soldiers' training establishment in Elgin, Scotland, trying to enlist. His mother Annie had to make the long train journey to Elgin to collect him. She was not happy with the whole episode, especially when she discovered that for the journey home he was issued with a travel warrant but she had to buy her own ticket. Alan always said that she clipped his ear every mile back to West Kirby.

Alan then worked as a porter at the Royal Liverpool Golf Club, Hoylake, until he was able to legally enlist, and after initial recruit training was posted to the Worcestershire Regiment. He then spent three years in Malaya during the outbreak of the Emergency. When they returned to the UK he transferred to the Cheshire Regiment and was posted as PSI to the 4th Battalion in Birkenhead and following this detachment he rejoined the 1st Battalion in Berlin in 1955.

It was in Berlin he married Miss Pauline Denington with whom he eventually had four children: Janet, Douglas Paul and Jane. His second child, Douglas, was born in Singapore in 1958 during the 1st Battalion's three year tour in Malaya. After this second tour in the Far East Alan saw further service in Germany, Northern Ireland and the UK and progressed through the ranks finishing as a WO2.

He retired from the army in the early seventies and lived in Hoylake. However, being unable to settle, the family emigrated to Australia where Alan enlisted in the Aussie army. He was welcomed with open arms and, no doubt due to his experience of two tours in Malaya, was instantly posted to Vietnam. When he had completed his service with the army he settled in Sydney, became an Australian citizen and worked for the Inland Revenue. Alan and Pauline finally retired to Perth, Western Australia, and lived happily there until Alan died on 2nd February 2016 aged 85.

Alan Fairbanks was a highly-respected, honest, hard-working professional soldier who always maintained the highest possible standards. He liked a drink and a laugh. That he had a keen sense of humour can be illustrated by one event. All his life, when revealing to numerous people that his name was Fairbanks, he would always be asked if he was in any way related to Douglas Fairbanks (the film star). Which is why, when his first son was born, he insisted that the boy be named Douglas. So that he could answer such inane questions by gleefully stating, "Yes I'm his father!"

*John Fairbanks*

### TOM RADFORD

It was sad news that we received on the 17th of December 2015 to tell us that our Vice-Chairman (Birkenhead Branch) Tom Radford had passed away after a long illness. He was a valued member of the Birkenhead Branch and if it hadn't been for constant effort and hard work, the award of the General Service Medal with Canal Zone Clasp 1951-1954 might never have happened. He was a personal friend and will be sadly missed.

*Maureen Hunt*



*Tom Radford (centre) in Suez*

## LAST POST

### Last Post – Correction

Due to an administrative error, Mr Robert Storey was listed in Last Post in the November issue of the Newsletter. Robert has contacted RHQ to confirm that he is very much alive and well. The staff at RHQ apologise for the error and for any distress caused.

**Mr Norman Allen** died 11 Feb 2016

**Mr P C Beckinsale** died 5 Oct 2015

**Mr Edward Spencer Drinkall** died 16 Nov 2015 Bandsman served 1960s

**Mr Joseph Edward Evans** passed away 14 Jan 2016 1st Bn Malaya, Berlin

**Mr T A Fairbanks** died 2 Mar 2016 WO2 served Malaya

**Mr John L Gittins** died 30 Nov 2015

**Mr Errol Gregson** died 6 Mar 2016 served NI & Berlin

**Mr L D Hawkins** died 13 Feb 2016 7th Bn WW2

**Mr Dennis Hosler** died 15 Nov 2015

**Mr F E Jones** died Nov 2015

**Mr S W Knott**

**Mr G Large** died 20 Sep 2015

**Mr B S Morton** died 21 Oct 2015

**Mr W E Moulton** died in 2014

**Mr John D Patterson** died 29 Jul 2015

**Col J D Reynolds MC** died 7 Nov 2015

**Mr Tom R Radford** died 18 Dec 2015 1st Bn Drums Suez

**Mr A Simms** died 16 Dec 2015

**Mrs Jeanne Trevor** died ??? Widow of Brig Ken Trevor & Maj Alexander

**Mr Ted Williams** ex WO2 died 28 Jan 2016 1st Bn 1960-82