

The Cheshire Regiment Association

Newsletter

Volume 2 Issue No 37



EDITORIAL

We live in extraordinary times! These words have been used many times over the years, perhaps since time immemorial. Nevertheless they are particularly valid today. Without doubt the Covid 19 virus has been a major part of this extraordinary time, but I am sure that eventually it will be overcome. What will not be so easily overcome are the lunatics who are threatening to take over the asylum. It seems to me that our political leaders, assisted by our mainstream media, are happy to hand them the keys.

It is good to see that Army recruitment is up, although I do wonder about the calibre of these new recruits. It will be this generation that was influenced by the recruiting drive of 2019 when snowflakes, selfie addicts and phone zombies were targeted. Call me a cynic, but using young peoples insecurities as a recruiting tool will not give the Army the right sort of soldier that will keep us safe from the vagaries of the modern world.

I am sounding like a broken record, but the failure to protect veterans from vexatious prosecutions and the number of veteran suicides remains a national scandal, yet receives little attention from our woke media. Time for our political leaders and the MOD to get a grip?

If you have anything for the next issue of the newsletter, then please let me have it by 15th November 2020. You can e-mail me at:

george.szwejkowski@gmail.com,

or send by post to:

86 Edward Road, London, SE20 7JS.

My telephone number is: 07721 660471.

I hope to have the newsletter onto the website of the Cheshire Military Museum by the end of November 2020.

The website is: www.cheshiremilitarymuseum.co.uk You can also follow the CRA on Facebook - "The Cheshire Regiment Association" for updates on events."

Keep safe.

George Szwejkowski

The views and 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 the CRA.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

By the time that members read this newsletter it will have been almost 4 months since the country went into lockdown and life as we knew it changed, seemingly for ever.

Despite the very difficult times we have been going through with the pandemic one thing that has been good to see has been the way that branches, and other groups within in the CRA, have conducted themselves. I know of lots of branch Skype/Messenger/Zoom/Go To meetings, telephone contact with members, shopping for those less able, socially distancing attendance at funerals with standards and many more cases of the CRA keeping in touch with each other. The association should be proud of the way the whole organisation has performed during this pandemic.

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Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic means that quite a few of our planned events have either been cancelled or are still in doubt. The latest notification of cancellation was the Droppin Well Memorial, although some members are intending to still travel and show their respect at the memorial garden. The East Cheshire Reunion is still going ahead, on current planning anyway, but we will publish updates on the CRA Facebook page and inform all branches as soon as it is confirmed.

A special mention must go to The 22nd Riders Group who have been raising funds to purchase specially designed plaques at the National Memorial Arboretum, these 9 named plaques and a regimental plaque will be placed adjacent to the trees planted in honour of those who lost their lives in

the Droppin Well Bombing. Their fundraising has been successful, and they handed over a cheque for £6,000.00 to the NMA on the 5th July. Well done to the Riders and to everybody who donated to make this possible.

Finally, and again covered in more detail in the newsletter elsewhere, the Memorial Fund is going strong and has so far collected about 75% of it's target of £20,000 so if you can donate or help to raise funds please contact the organisers through their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/cheshirememorial/>. Joe Murphy is currently organising an E Raffle so if you haven't bought a ticket yet then there is still time before the draw on 1st August.

Peter Gresty

VIEW FROM THE CASTLE



As probably every contributor to this edition of the Newsletter has found, it is difficult to produce an article when nothing seems to have happened in the CRA since lockdown brought our social activities to a sudden halt. I hope that everyone has managed to cope with the challenges of the new normal, especially those of us who received letters telling us to shield to avoid catching the dreaded Covid 19 and risk being more seriously affected as a result of underlying conditions.

Many of us will have been disappointed that we could not go and pay our respects at funerals of departed comrades, although mercifully, there has not been too many of those. Halton Branch were able to attend the funeral of 102 year old veteran, Thomas Hitchen, recently.

On a happier note, donations to the appeal for a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum are still coming in and the fund is steadily mounting up. Congratulations to the 22nd Riders on the successful completion of their project to place memorial plaques to the soldiers who lost their lives in the Ballykelly bombing.

Congratulations too, to CRA Standard Bearer and Stockport Branch member Derek Sykes on being awarded the Lord Lieutenant's Certificate of Commendation for Veterans in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the welfare and wellbeing of veterans over the years, especially those of the 22nd.

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

The 18th March seems a long time ago now. We had started the preparations for the Race Day Reunion and the launch of the exhibition for the 75th anniversary of VE-Day when we got the news we were to close until further notice. We are still waiting for that further notice and will be remaining closed until we receive said further notice. Financially, this has no doubt hit the coffers during what is normally our money making summer season. Admission fees are down 100%, shop sales are down 100% and our online line shop down 94%. So as that big supermarket says, “every little helps”.

Some work has been going on though, mainly online, research and the occasional orders being dispatched out to customers. Routine security checks have been carried out and apart from the eerie and quiet surroundings “Arms are checked and secured, Sir”.

The only acquisition we have to talk about is the bronzed bust of 11000 Pte TA Jones VC, DCM. We went over the water to Liverpool to meet the very talented artist and sculptor Philip Garrett. Philip was one of the sculptors who was in the running for the Todger Jones VC, DCM statue commission but unfortunately he missed out to another sculptor. He is now clearing his studio to allow him to go travelling to France and Italy to increase his knowledge and skills.

When Philip was going through his stock he came across a bust of Todger Jones and immediately thought of our Museum to donate it to. We accepted his generous offer and to add to its appearance had the bust bronzed which was generously paid for by Tom Sherman, a veteran of the Cheshire Regiment and a great supporter of the Museum. To our surprise when we arrived, Philip had also found a maquette of another Todger Jones piece. Todger Jones standing proud with his shovel to hand. This he also donated to the Museum. Both are stunning pieces of work and will be displayed with honour in the Museum.

Once we get back into the Museum, there will no doubt be a period of cleaning etc but we will let you know when we can reopen as soon as we know. Stay safe everyone and keep smiling through.

Joe Murphy
Museum Attendant



CRA MEMORIAL PROJECT FUNDRAISING

As you already know, Thursday the 7th of May should have been our annual pilgrimage to the Castle for our Race Day gathering but as with everything else, it was cancelled. I had planned to do a raffle on the day but alas that didn't happen. So, knowing that many of you feel the same way as I do about having a Memorial to be proud of, I asked for donations on Facebook.... Wow, what a response! I was thinking £500 would be a great result but to raise just short of £2800 was truly amazing. For that, I thank you all for your generosity.

Some may know of the next endeavour? It's one I haven't tried before but it seems to be working very well. The E-Raffle has some great prizes and one in particular that you do not see very often, if indeed, at all.

Standing 40cm high, the Meeanee Statuette is a stunning piece of work. It is the first one seen and sold on the open market and would look good in any location. You could own this by simply buying a ticket for the raffle. Tickets will be available up until 31st July and the draw will take place on 1st August 2020.

Other prizes include a framed embroidery Colours picture, Regimental plaque, 22 flag and a couple of canvas framed pictures.

Information on how to buy tickets is included in this newsletter.

Joe Murphy



The Meeanee Statuette

CRA MONUMENT APPEAL E-RAFFLE

In an attempt to raise more funds for the Monument Appeal, I have gathered a few prizes together for a new endeavour, an E-Raffle. It's your chance to win a great prize and also help us to achieve our aim of having a substantial memorial at the NMA.

The main prize is one that everyone would love to own, the Meeanee Statuette. A stunning piece of silverware that was bought on an online auction site and it is the first one I've ever seen being offered for sale and beautiful. These statuettes are not for general sale and if they were would cost over £600.

There are 5 other prizes too, including the first Regt Plaque made by Tony Butterworth, a double sided Regt Flag (36" x 22"), a Spode Tercentenary Plate, the famous Paint Factory Scene on Canvas (60cm x 30cm) and the Red Poppy Scene on Canvas (60cm x 40cm).

To have a chance of winning one of these prizes, you need to buy an e-ticket at the cost of £10 each. This can be done by either Paypal or Bank Transfer to a nominated account or by personal cheque. Whichever way you choose to buy your ticket, you must ensure that the reference to payment is your NAME....

If you wish to buy tickets by PayPal the account is:

dannyjoemurphy@sky.com

If you buy tickets by bank transfer the account details are:

DJ Murphy	Halifax
Sort Code	11 01 77
Acct No	00772178

If you want to buy by Cheque:

Make the cheque payable to DJ Murphy and post it to me. PM me for the address.

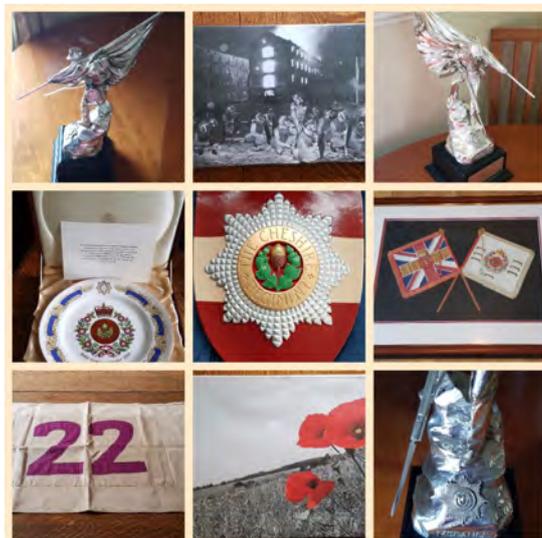
Every Friday, I will publish a spread sheet with the details of ticket numbers and names right up until the actual draw. The draw will be live on Saturday, the 1st August 2020.

At the end of the draw, once my expenses (£680) have been deducted, all remaining monies will be transferred into the Monument Fund.

All prizes must be collected from the Museum once the draw has taken place.

Here's hoping we can raise more towards the ultimate aim of the memorial and many thanks in advance. Remember, gotta be in it, to win it....

Joe Murphy.



NW RFCA Lord Lieutenant's Veterans Award Citation Derek Sykes

Below is the citation for Derek Sykes' Meritorious Service Award. Congratulations Derek:

Mr Derek Sykes has given exceptional support to serving service personnel, veterans and their families, both personally and in a representational capacity, for over 25 years. He served in The Cheshire Regiment as a National Serviceman reaching the rank of Corporal. This included operations with 1st Battalion in Malaya. His 'service' then continued in his civilian career with the Police Force. However, it is principally in retirement that Mr Sykes has devoted his time to the welfare of personnel, as a lay preacher and as a member of the Cheshire Regiment Association, and more recently the Mercian Regiment Association.

He is the first to volunteer to be "on parade", proudly carrying the Association banner with pride in celebration, commemoration and remembrance. Such duties reached a peak of 30 - 40 in a year, including many funerals, notably during a period when the newly formed Mercian Regiment were in Afghanistan and suffered a dozen fatalities in a single tour. Year on year, he has frequently helped veterans' families organise and occasionally officiate at funerals for those with little religious experience or background.

Mr Sykes quietly carries out regular visits to those in poor health or terminally ill, giving support to them and their families. He has been a pro-active member of the Regimental Association, acting as a welfare officer, officially and unofficially for many years. On all occasions his conduct is exemplary. He epitomises the pride within the Regiment and its family. Smart and discreet, his warm and compassionate manner is much appreciated and respected, particularly at times of grief, stress and sadness.

It is his extraordinary dedication to duty, pride in the military family, and the selfless programme of support he gives to veterans and their families, which makes Mr Derek Sykes stand out for Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant's Certificate of Meritorious Service award.



WORD FROM THE BRANCHES

BIRKENHEAD & DISTRICT BRANCH

At the time of our Branch AGM in January it was impossible to foresee the extent to which the routine of our lives would be significantly and quite rapidly altered. Our newly elected Chairman, Dave Kennedy is also our Standard Bearer. Alas, he was destined to have a rather quiet time in both these roles. In February we met and also had our usual pub lunch. We cancelled our March meeting, as by then the virus had ominously become a much closer threat and official restrictions soon followed. By the end of March it became clear what “lockdown” meant. The majority of Branch members fall into the elderly and maybe vulnerable category. At that time the shopping frenzy made it difficult to get essential supplies, even prescribed medication, but everything eventually became calmer and we settled into the stay-at-home routine.

I'm happy to report that, to date, none of our Branch members has fallen victim to the coronavirus. Due to other illness, two of our members are being looked after in care homes. We have kept in touch with one another by various means and with support from our families, friends and neighbours. The effects of the pandemic will be enduring but we can cautiously expect to resume some of our CRA activities soon.

Peter Jackson

SPECIAL COMMUNIQUE FROM STALAG 42, CHESTER

Fellow Internees,

Some of you will already be aware that your parole has been accepted and you will have been released from quarantine as of 1st of June. But for those of you who are, like me, a little long in the tooth, or are in the grip of a variety of ailments the purgatory will continue. So as you leave your place of confinement pale faced and blinking furiously in the sunlight, (looking rather like Regimental cooks appearing on a scale A parade) do not forget your comrades who must continue to serve their sentences.

Future Events

We are planning for our anticipated return to Friday Evening Socials. In attempting a return to what is laughingly referred to as normality, we are trying to imagine how the Bingo sessions will be organised, especially if social distancing remains at 2 metres. We will probably have to set up in the

Castle yard, or hire St Mary's every Friday evening. And don't forget we will only be able to get two customers in the bar at any one time!!.

Special Award

At the moment you may be unaware of the misfortune experienced by Mrs Betty Sparks. She had a fall at home and broke her leg. Betty is recovering very well and it is just not true that she has been given the Order of the Boot.

Sports

The formation of a Branch Synchronised Clapping team is going to plan. We have suggested to the organisers of the NHS National Clapping Championships that the finals should be staged in the aptly named village of CLAPWORTHY which is in North Devon.

AGM

Due to the aforementioned Social Distancing the possibility of a virtual Branch AGM can no longer come into consideration. With our average attendance at past AGM evenings, usually some 35 lost souls, we would need to hire the Chester City football Stadium in order to seat everyone. We would not be able to use the Castle Square because many inconsiderate people insist on continuing to park there.

Finally please enjoy the glorious weather, stay safe, and we will meet again before you know it. With my best wishes I am as always yours very sincerely

Big X

Escape Organiser

Stalag 42 Chester Escape Committee

KIRKHAM BRANCH

Well, it has been a very challenging time for all of us over the past few months. A lot of people have lost loved ones and friends because of the Covid 19 virus. It is a fight we must win in the end for the sake of humanity.

Kirkham Branch members have all been on lockdown. We have been keeping in contact with each other by phone, Facebook and Zoom. Before lockdown I thought Facetime and Zoom were something out of Star Wars! We have been having a quiz one week and Bingo the next - it is a bit of fun and keeps the spirits up.

Apart from that we have all been looking after our gardens - Bill Birkett has the best tomatoes in Kirkham. the secret is that he goes into the greenhouse every morning and sings "Blue Moon" to them. Tommy Davies is out and about, going to the shops on his scooter - we believe that he is going in for next year's TT in the Isle of Man!

We are going to have our next meeting in August if all goes well, so that is all for now.

I am not going to say "Stay Alert", as this is in our DNA, as well as our Army number. But stay safe.

John Gibson

SOUTHERN REGION

Like everywhere else, the last few months have been endured with patience and fortitude. The one saving grace has been the remarkably good weather that has made things more tolerable.

We are very grateful to the late Alan "Boggie" Bratherton, who kindly remembered us in his will. His very generous legacy will be made useful by the branch. Our thanks go to Alan's children, who ensured that his wishes were enacted.

We are still awaiting news on whether the usual events in November will be taking place, in particular the Cenotaph. We will do our best to let everyone know, once the Royal British Legion informs us of the arrangements.

Our congratulations to Derek Sykes on his Lord Lieutenant's Award. Well done Derek.

Finally, we hope that all members of the CRA continue to show the way in the face of adversity. Keep safe and enjoy the summer as best you can.

George Szwejkowski

STOCKPORT CRA MVRA MERCIAN REGIMENT ASSOCIATION.

The annual AGM in the Regimental Club done and dusted for another year. Once Stockport made their presence known with numerous comments and several proposals. It was an opportunity to pay our respects to the late Alan Kennedy and Walter Clayton.

Alan Kennedy's knowledge of all things Regimental will never be equalled. History and procedures dress codes, nothing that man didn't know. With Wally what you saw was what you got. I first met Wally when he joined the Signals Platoon. He was the only man who went into the Guard Room a Corporal and came out a Sergeant.

Paul 'Wilkie' was the surprised recipient of the coveted Major General Peter Martin Award. Welcome to the club Wilkie.

The St Julien Parade no longer being is to be a watered down version of the old one, this being part of the usual Church service. It just so happens that my wife and I visited the Chester Cathedral to lay a cross on both the altar and memorial stone. After a lengthy chat with the Verger it transpires that we may be able to hold a small act of remembrance on Mons Day 2021 subject of course to negotiations. The planned Armistice Day commemoration Dinner sadly fell by the way due to the unavailability of our regular venue. The East Cheshire Reunion will thankfully happen as this one occasion where we old sweats can swing the lights and hurl the customary abuse at each other just like the old days. Unfortunately many of us were unable to become one of Murphy's Marauders at the Meeanee reunion. Maybe next time eh?

In closing I must wish everyone good health during these uncertain times. Also our usual scribe for allowing me to 'Ghost write' these notes whilst he does his Marco Polo impressions.

Peter Gresty



Paying respects whilst social distancing



Screenshot of our Branch Meeting

JOHN FAIRBANKS WRITES

ROAD WORK

My efforts to find work in the Tirol were somewhat hampered by my utter lack of any qualifications and my German was so bad that, with anyone other than my wife, I was forced to converse mainly in sign language. Indeed my only assets were my determination to feed my family and the ability to drive. So when the Riedel Glass factory in the nearby town of Kufstein advertised for an English speaking driver I wasted no time in applying.

To my great delight I was offered the job but my joy did not last long. What the advert had carefully failed to mention was that my knowledge of English would enable me to read the instructions on various sacks of chemicals which, along with vast quantities of sand, I was required to spend several hot and exhausting hours a day shovelling into the ovens.

What made the job just about bearable was that twice a week I was able to escape the sweltering drudgery. On those days I was required to drive lorry loads of export glassware across the border to the German town of Kiefersfelden, from where it was despatched to world wide destinations. Apart from the chance to escape from the hell of the factory floor, the trips across the frontier brought me a new found popularity with my workmates.

At that time, in 1965, tobacco goods and some alcoholic beverages were cheaper in Germany so I was soon persuaded to become a smuggler. I was offered a commission by my customers, which was a welcome addition to my meagre wages and so, for a few weeks, both my bank balance and my reputation grew rapidly. My success was due to the regularity of the trips which enabled me to become well known to the Frontier Police and Customs officials.

They would, without fail, wave me through the check points without question. The man who ended this ritual, and ruined my thriving contraband business was a new German border guard. He was a tall bull necked man with close cropped hair, a low forehead, and displaying an angry looking duelling scar on his left cheek. And sitting as I was on a couple of thousand illicit cigarettes and a good few bottles of Asbach Uhralt Brandy, the sight of him holding up an imperious hand to indicate I should stop was the last thing I wanted to see. Looking at me as though I was something he had lately wiped of his shoe he snarled "Ausweiss!". Sweating profusely I obeyed. He closely examined my passport with its distinctive blue and gold cover and, looking decidedly puzzled said "Englander?". In my fractured German I confirmed that his amazing deduction was correct. He then wanted to know what I, an Englishman, was doing working for an Austrian glass manufacturer. My reply that I was trying to earn a living appeared to cause him some consternation. He had obviously never before met a working Brit and, after an apparently convoluted thought process, decided that this unusual phenomenon warranted further investigation. "Have you got a driving licence?" he queried.

"Of course I haven't!" was my instant, and as it turned out, inspired reply. He burst out laughing and through tears of mirth waved me on my way saying "No driving licence. Now I know it is true the English ARE all mad!". But as I drove away to the sound of his Homeric laughter I knew that my days as a smuggler were over because my British driving licence was not valid in Germany, or Austria for that matter. My employers were decidedly unsympathetic to my request to be taken off all driving work and shortly afterwards I found myself unemployed once more.

The work experience gained at the glass factory stood me in good stead when a while later I applied for and was offered a winter job, which included some driving, with an Austrian Travel Agency. I jumped at this new chance to earn a crust especially when my new boss assured me that I would be fully insured even though my British licence was invalid.

The vehicle I was given to drive was a mini bus and my first trip was to Worgl railway station to pick up a party of lady skiers from Liverpool. As they boarded my mini bus I sensed an air of apprehension. As we pulled away from the station through the icy snow covered streets an anxious whisper reached my ears, "He's on the wrong side of the road!". In an effort to calm their fears I called out cheerfully "Don't worry ladies, they all do it here. It stops them running into each other!". My agonising wit produced a pregnant silence and a palpable growth in the general anxiety level. Hastily I added "Ladies if it makes you feel a bit happier I used to drive a bus round Birkenhead!". From the ladies the instant adenoidal response was "Bloody hell, now I am worried!".

CONTACT

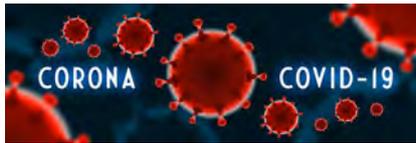
It was in the first grey light of the jungle dawn that the sound of shooting reached my ears. I had been on my way to the water point, in order to complete my ablutions before rousing the camp for stand to. I was naked except for my boots and carried my washing kit and my rifle. The burst of automatic fire came from the direction of the river crossing where, the evening before, we had laid an ambush.

As the sound died away our Johore jungle base became a hive of activity. Standing in the middle of the camp I calmly and professionally took control. Swiftly I ordered one section to reinforce the ambush point, instructing them to send a runner with details of what had happened. I ordered the remainder of the platoon to stand to. When the runner arrived with news of a kill, I made radio contact with RHQ both to report the situation and to ask for a tracker dog.

My message was overheard by the CO who told me to expect him directly. I immediately ordered and supervised a quick tidy up of the camp in order to make as good an impression as possible. When Colonel White arrived I gave him a full account of what had happened and the actions I had taken. Chalky thanked me for my detailed report and concluded by saying "But before you take me to the incident site perhaps you should put some clothes on!".

LOCK DOWN

(with thanks to John Fairbanks)



The medical profession was surveyed on the question of whether the lock down should end.

The Allergists were in favour of scratching it, but

The Dermatologists advised not to make any rash moves.

The Gastroenterologists had a gut feeling about it, but

The Neurologists thought the administration had a lot of nerve.

Meanwhile, Obstetricians felt certain everyone was labouring under a misconception,

While the Ophthalmologists considered the idea short sighted.

Many Pathologists yelled “Over my dead body!”

While the Pediatricians said “Oh, grow up!”

Psychiatrists thought the whole idea was madness,

While the Radiologists could see right through it.

Surgeons decided to wash their hands of the whole thing

And the Internists claimed it would be a bitter pill to swallow.

Plastic Surgeons said that this proposal would put “A whole new face on the matter.”

The Podiatrists thought it was a big step forward, but

The Urologists were pissed off with the whole idea!.

Anesthesiologists thought the whole idea was a gas,

and the Cardiologists didn’t have the heart to say no.

The Proctologists won out, leaving the decision to the assholes in the Government .

SNIPPETS

How different military branches use the stars:

The Army sleeps under the stars

The Navy navigates by the stars

And the Air Force choose hotels by the stars

FILM REVIEW - 1917



I have to admit that I didn't watch this film on the big screen, but at home on a DVD. I remember a great deal of regimental interest in this film when it was noticed that an officer was depicted with Cheshire Regiment badges. This brought brief attention, but it soon dissipated when it became known that the story was a work of pure fiction.

The story revolves around two soldiers who must race against time in order to deliver a message to another unit, who are in danger of being caught in a German trap. The film is made "one shot, in other words, real time and Sam Mendes, the director is to be complimented on this fairly unusual genre. The cinematography is also to be admired, but unfortunately I can't say the same for the storyline, which I thought weak. There were also a number of continuity issues which didn't help the realism.

Sam Mendes has a lot of great films to his credit, but on this occasion I couldn't help but be underwhelmed at times. I wouldn't know how a soldier would act and behave under the circumstances depicted, but on occasion it looked a bit more "Cagney and Lacey, than "All Quiet on the Western Front.

I don't regret watching the film, and there is much to be admired. I also have to say that had I watched it on the big screen, I may have come away with a slightly different point of view. Nevertheless give me Spielberg's Saving Private Ryan, or Sam Peckinpah's Cross of Iron, if I want to see a bit of realism.

George Szejkowski

SNIPPETS

If he finds a scorpion in his tent...

In the Army, he kills the scorpion.

In the Navy he reports the presence of the scorpion.

In the Air Force, he calls reception and asks why there's a tent in his room.

VETERANS' SUPPORT

The following are available to support veterans and their families who may be experiencing mental health difficulties;

Forcesline Tel: 0800 731 4880 (between 9am and 5pm Monday-Friday)

Combat Stress (24 hours)

Veterans and their families; Tel: 0800 138 1619

Serving personnel and their families; Tel: 0800 323 4444

Samaritans (24 hours); Tel: 116 123

THE DEFENCE PRIVILEGE CARD

The Defence Privilege Card is the official recognition card that can be used on the high street in order to obtain a discount. It allows those not currently serving in the Armed Forces to obtain discounts and gives them a card to show that they were in the Armed Forces or are currently in the Defence Community, as a spouse/partner of someone currently serving for example. Each Defence Privilege Card is personalised for the member and it costs £4.99 for a 5 year membership.

https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/about_defence_discount_service.php

VETERANS' RAILCARD

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced that the Government will be introducing a new railcard. It is hoped that it will help boost veterans' job prospects and strengthen family bonds through cheaper travel. Over 830,000 veterans will be eligible for a third off their fares, saving them and their families hundreds of pounds a year. This discount forms part of government's new veterans strategy to support former servicemen and women.

Joined by veterans at St Pancras railway station, the Transport Secretary and the Minister for the Cabinet Office underlined the government's commitment to supporting former service personnel and recognised their service to the country.

The Transport Secretary said "Every part of society should honour the debt we owe those who've served our country. I'm proud that the Department for Transport, together with other government colleagues and the rail industry, is doing its bit. This railcard will help open up opportunities to veterans, whether through employment and retraining, or by strengthening links with friends and family. I believe that enabling former service personnel to travel more easily is the least we can do."

The money-saving announcement, delivering on a manifesto commitment, forms part of the government's veterans strategy. This action plan, outlines what the government

is doing to deliver more for our veterans and sets out holistic support for those who served, in areas including community and relationships, employment and skills, health and well being, finance and debt, housing, and contact with the law. The strategy will be coordinated by the recently-established [Office for Veterans Affairs](#).

Cabinet Office Minister Oliver Dowden, who represents the Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) in Cabinet said "The Office for Veterans' Affairs was set up to get things done for our veterans. I am pleased to see that the OVA is already able to show it is achieving just this, working with the Department for Transport to deliver this railcard. Our new action plan will help to make the UK the best place in the world for veterans. The Office for Veterans' Affairs will drive the plan from the heart of government, working to help veterans on jobs, housing and health, through better data and a more joined up approach."

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said Discounted train travel is a fantastic way to recognise those who have served this country, and the speed at which plans have been worked up shows how seriously we are taking our commitments to make the UK the best country in the world to be a veteran. The railcard is only the start though, and I'm clear we need to do more to look after the people who so selflessly put their lives on the line to look after us. Now the action plan has been published, I look forward to continuing to drive forward this issue across government and the services we offer."

The government is also releasing its response for the consultation into the veterans strategy, which includes an action plan on how the Office for Veterans' Affairs will coordinate departments to help veterans over the next 2 years. Public responses to the consultation underlined the need for a more coordinated approach to veterans support. Other key findings include a call to promote a positive perception of veterans and a need to increase awareness of the support already offered from across central and local government.

Rail media enquiries Media enquiries: 020 7944 3021
Out of hours media enquiries 020 7944 4292
Switchboard 0300 330 3000

BENEVOLENCE

The attention of all members is directed towards the new veterans gateway that was launched on 20th June 2017.

This is the single point of reference for any veteran who requires assistance.

<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk>

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 0300 302 0551. 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.

You can see more at: www.ptsdresolution.org

RESETTLEMENT



Anybody who served in the Armed Forces and is in need of free help and support in finding a job, training opportunities or further resettlement assistance may wish to contact the Military Resettlement Headquarters (MRHQ).

Despite its title, the organisation is not run by the military, although its staff are from a military background.

The website can be found at: www.mrhq.co.uk
Telephone: 0330 0432505

LOOKING FOR MAC PHILPOTT

My name is Steven Flett (Ex WO2 2RRF). We are trying to contact Mac Philpott to invite him to a JIB Folkestone 30th anniversary reunion. I have tried all the usual social media sites to no avail. Would it be possible for you to pass on my regards and my email please. It is:

6774stevenflett@gmail.com

Regards

S Flett

DIARY DATES

24th October 2020 East Cheshire Reunion

5th November 2020 Field of Remembrance

8th November 2020 Remembrance Sunday

20th February 2021 CRA AGM

20th February 2021 Spring Reunion

LAST POST



Mr A L Bateman - 30 March 2020

Mr Bill Bleasdale, ex-CSgt, 1st Bn - 1st May 2020

Mr J Boswell - 10th April 2020

Major John Cheshire - 23 February 2020
Served 1957-1959

Mr Don Cornes - 10th June 2020

John Dodd - 27 Jun 2020 aged 61

Major F J Goddard MBE - 21 March 2020
Serv no: 433115

Mr Derrick John Green - (date of passing not known)
Serv no: 22477341
Served 1951-1953

Mr Thomas Hitchen aged 102

Mr J Howard - 8th April 2020

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Mr Ray Ironmonger, ex-RSM 1st Bn - 2nd April 2020

Mr M Kenny - 24th April 2020

Mr John Joseph Molloy - 11th June 2020 Aged 89
years Served HQ Coy, 1 st Bn – Suez Canal Zone 1953

Mr K M Owen - 1st March 2020
Serv no: 23450553

Mr Brian Payne - 10th April 2020

Mr W G Price, Stockport Branch - 1st June 2020