

THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

Quarterly Newsletter Q3 2022

1 MERCIAN Commanding Officer's Foreword

Lt Col Dean Canham OBE

This newsletter is the first published since the formation of the new 1st Battalion, post-amalgamation with the 2nd Battalion. The Formation Day of the Battalion, on the 15th anniversary of the formation of the Regiment, marked the start of another new era, and was fittingly recognised with a parade in Bulford and a Regimental dinner night. The hard work undertaken by both Battalions to ensure that the amalgamation was as positive an experience as possible seems to have paid off. Whilst the physical aspects of moving soldiers and officers around is largely complete, we know that there is still much to be done to cement emerging teams and fledgling careers in the new Battalion going forward.

The briefest of pauses to mark Formation Day would be easy to miss among the plethora of operational activity the Battalion has been conducting over the last three months. The late Queen's funeral stands prominent amongst them; the Battalion's support – lining part of the route for the cortège – was a poignant moment for all involved. Further ceremony was to follow, though with a quite different tone, as the Battalion exercised the Regiment's Freedoms of Chester, Tamworth, and Nottingham. Great turnouts made each a special occasion which reaffirmed support for the Battalion in some of its traditional 'home' counties.

The training of Ukrainian Armed Forces in the UK has concurrently kept a significant element of the Battalion busy; at the time of publication the commitment will just be drawing to a close. The stories of the direct, positive impact that our soldiers' efforts have had on the conflict are filtering back, particularly through the friendships that have been made. Whilst Ukrainian troops are leaving the training package with a significantly enhanced understanding of the basic skills and drills required of an infantry soldier, our troops are gaining notable experience in adapting low-level tactics and training to suit their audience too. It is an audience that has little time, a laser-focus on the task in hand, and some useful 'realities' to offer back to their instructors in order to maximise the relevance and impact of their time training in the UK.

Other high-profile events have also featured recently. The Battalion led the Armoured Warfighting demonstration at the 'Army Expo', a series of events in Copehill Down Village which showcased to a very wide range of visitors and stakeholders the Army's current and future capabilities, particularly demonstrating how a blend of soldiers and emerging technology will boost our fighting power in the future. A small contingent from the Battalion also deployed to support the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, offering support to security and marshalling tasks whilst also getting an opportunity to soak up the atmosphere and some of the events.

It is clear that the pace of life in 1 MERCIAN is as fast as ever, and that the demands on our soldiers and officers remains extremely varied. As the Battalion becomes the Lead Armoured Battlegroup though, our core purpose – to deliver excellent armoured warfighting capability – is firmly to the fore.

Support to Her Majesty the Queen's Funeral, London

2Lt James Sendall, OC 9 Platoon Kohima Company

Thursday the 8th of September 2022 will forever be remembered as the day our beloved HM Queen Elizabeth II passed away aged 96. That evening the Officers' Mess gathered to toast Her Majesty and her heir, our Colonel-in-Chief. The Mess was busy with talk of how the Battalion could be involved in the mourning and funeral of Her Majesty. The following evening Kohima Company were tasked to generate a sub-unit from across the Battalion. Excitement amongst all ranks was growing at the possibility of the honour to serve The Queen one last time.

As the week passed 2Lt Clydesdale and Cpl Bray had the privilege of representing the Regiment as they paid their respects to The Queen as she Lay in State. Later that week the Company moved to a forward mounting base in Feltham. On the Sunday evening we learnt we would have the honour of guarding the Queen on her final journey from Westminster Abbey to St George's Chapel in Windsor. The Company was tasked to guard the route along Cromwell Road in Kensington.

In total, 6,000 military personnel and 9,500 police supported the day, ensuring that Her Majesty's final public act befitted her reign. On arrival at Kensington Police Station the command group attended an o-group with Superintendent Matt Cox, the Area Commander. His team reflected police forces from across the entire country, ranging from Jersey to Greater Manchester; the troops took great satisfaction in working side-by-side with those forces from the West Midlands and Chester Police. Junior soldiers worked alongside their PC counterparts, learning lessons in liaison and command and control.

After a slow start, crowds started to build, as did the apprehension and pride in the duty we had the honour to perform. As the Queen passed at 1330 hrs the team stood proud, facing the crowd as they cheered, grieved, and threw flowers for Her Majesty's coffin. Soon after, the King's cavalcade drove past. Again, the 1 MERCIAN contingent stood proud and were honoured to support the Colonel-in-Chief and King as he mourned the passing of his mother.

It was an honour and a privilege to be part of such a significant and historical event. One that I and the team will remember for a lifetime. God Save the King.

Mercian Formation Day

Maj Philip Anderson, OC C (Kohima) Company

For most of us it was a week of firsts. The new 1st Battalion formed up for the first time on Monday 29 Aug 22, and Tuesday morning was the first time most of the soldiers had ever been ordered to slow march. Shared hardship and experiences help build new teams and the first week of the new 1st Battalion proved it. The Battalion spent two days rehearsing, transforming itself from a group of strangers into a formed and disciplined body of soldiers.

Personally, mild panic was my state of being during the rehearsals. I furiously tried to persuade my body to slow march, keep time, and give the words of command. At my best I achieved two out of the three, much to the enjoyment of the men and women of No. 2 Guard. Nonetheless, after time, practice, and some helpful shouting by the NCOs, my performance improved.

On the morning of 1st September, the Battalion was formed up in four guards and a Colour Party, and was ready to march on to the square. The Battalion passed in review order, in both slow and quick time; ably accompanied by the Band of the Scots Guards and led by LCpl Derby, the Regimental Mascot. The triumphant finale of advancing in review order to the spine-tingling British Grenadier's March capped off the parade.

Cheered and clapped on by friends, family, and guests the soldiers did themselves and their forbears proud. Taking the salute was Lieutenant General Ian Cave, the Mercian Regimental Colonel and Commander Home Command, who in his speech assured the Battalion that, notwithstanding its illustrious history, its best days were still ahead. A joint Officers' and Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess Dinner rounded off an exceptional day which was entirely fitting of the new 1st Battalion – acknowledging and celebrating our history and striking out toward our future.

Operation INTERFLEX – Training Ukrainian forces in their fight against Russia; two Company Command perspectives

Maj Tom Onion, OC B (Malta) Company

In mid-June, the Prime Minister announced a plan to train thousands of Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel in the UK. With only days of notice, B (Malta) Company deployed to the exotic training facilities available on England's south east coast. Within a matter of days, alongside Dragon Coy and the great team from 1 SCOTS GUARDS, we helped create a three week programme – which Capt Adam Keenan, WO2 (CSM) Coates and Lt Matt Camp had no small part in shaping.

Whilst the rest of the UK enjoyed a heat wave, B (Malta) Company welcomed 200 Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel, who had been in uniform only days. The stoic Mercian grit with which the junior soldiers, NCOs and subalterns took to this task was phenomenal. The pace of the training plan we created was relentless – we were, after all, trying to cram 44 weeks of ITC training into a 3 week package. The programme consisted of skill at arms, rural and urban soldiering skills, battlefield casualty drills, counter-explosive ordnance drills, and marksmanship with AK47s recently gifted from some European partners.

Hosting General Patrick Sanders, the Chief of the General Staff, we were able to demonstrate the urban tactics our NCOs had taught in only a few days. And whilst LCpl Clarke, Cpl McKeown and Cpl Shepherd almost gassed CGS with the amount of smoke they threw (or at the very least achieved a 'BLIND' effect), it was incredible to see the standard of soldiering they had engendered in their Ukrainian trainees in only a matter of days.

Maj Steve Broadhurst, OC D (Dragon) Company, describes delivering the training at ground level:

“Members of Dragon Coy 1 MERCIAN have spent the last few months training Ukrainian forces in Kent and will continue to do so during September and October. This is an incredibly worthwhile and rewarding task which has genuine Operational and Strategic impact on a very current global event. Dragon Coy have trained almost 400 Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) personnel in dismounted infantry skills over a several rotations.”

“The training is arduous for both students and instructors. Days are long and require instructors to be both tactically proficient and flexible with their approach. Dragon Coy instructors have learnt as much from Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) students as they have imparted, both professionally and culturally. Senior and Junior NCOs frequently have to

reimagine their explanations of tactics, techniques and procedures or drills to ensure interpreters are able to translate them and achieve the best results”.

As is often the case, it was really the JNCOs who drove the whole operation. It is their efforts that will leave hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers more survivable and lethal on the battlefield. Slava Ukraini!

Strengthening Operational Readiness and Resilience through Adventurous Training

Capt Jasper Clarke, 1 MERCIAN Intelligence Officer and Unit Adventurous Training Officer

1 MERCIAN's operational outputs have been constant and far-reaching throughout 2021/22. The operational deployment to Estonia in 2021, lasting 10 months when overseas pre-deployment was factored in, then led into the operational readiness assurance pathway required to assume the role of Lead Armoured Battlegroup. It was achieved through the Exercise IRON STORM series of deployments in Germany, Wales, and on Salisbury Plain, with a significant proportion of the Bn being held at readiness against the UK Standby Battalion commitment in support of UK authorities concurrently. Perhaps most importantly, 1 Mercian also contributed troops to train Ukrainian Forces in their fight against Russia. With the host of other routine commitments as well, the pace has been relentless.

As the Unit Adventurous Training Offr, and against this context, it has been a pleasure to organise a Battalion-wide 2-week adventurous training (AT) package to support 'Mercian Month'; a Regimental activity month to integrate 2 Mercian personnel into the newly formed 1st Battalion. The aim of the package was twofold; to provide challenging adventurous training to enable the newly formed teams to get out and operate together, and to build cohesion and fighting spirit; investing back into the soldiers that had delivered throughout a demanding period. The package was designed to have the flexibility to fit around the other Regimental activity planned for this month, and was delivered at minimal cost; thus supporting future plans for an overseas skiing exped that is due to finish out the year in Dec 22.

With two months to plan and deliver the package, nestled within several major readiness assurance exercises, it was no small feat for the assembled team and myself to hit all planning milestones and returns – many of which were conducted from the back of a Bulldog armoured vehicle on Salisbury Plain during brief administration periods, at weekends or remotely while on courses. While I produced the instructions, directions, med plans, trawled for instructors and managed the regional AT desk officer to ensure the plan was authorised, the team - Maj Jon Coutts (Rock climbing lead), WO2 David Buckley (Mountain biking lead) and Sgt Rai (Kayaking lead) - recce'd over 15 AT locations all within 1.5 hrs of camp, and went on to execute the plan seamlessly and without incident.

The package – and Mercian Month – were a success, with over 170 soldiers conducting an activity. The raft of impressive footage, imagery, spirited accounts and by and large engaged and motivated soldiers were all testament to the fact that, having deployed out of camp to conduct something challenging and novel, fighting power, the product of the physical, conceptual and moral, was as strong as ever.

A (Grenadier) Company Support to the Army EXPO 2022

Capt Daniel Rhodes, 2IC A Coy

September saw 3 Platoon, A (Grenadier) Company, act as demonstration troops on the Warfighting stand for the Army Expo – a high profile event over five days with a huge spread of visitors from across all three services, foreign armed forces and civilians representing a wide range of industries.

A light-role platoon, supported by Challenger 2, Trojan, Remote Weapon Systems (RWS) and drone strikes, as well as a section-level attachment of US Army troops, were tasked with clearing Shrewton Street in Copehill Down Village.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles gave the Platoon HQ eyes into the village prior to H-hour, and with simulated indirect fires provided by MLRS from the Royal Artillery, the demonstration perfectly showcased the combined Arms and Integrated Action British tactics strive to achieve.

To further aid the Platoon on the clearance, Android Team Awareness Kit (ATAK), a mobile phone application as part of wider communications revamp being trialled (Dismounted Situational Awareness (DSA)) allowed real time mapping and a live feed to the Ops Room.

Lt Dan Arnold, from Worksop, said:

“ATAK improved the all-round situational awareness from Ops Room to point man; there is definitely a place for DSA in all future operations”.

Operation UNITY – Support to the Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony

Capt Daniel Rhodes, A Coy 2IC

Towards the end of July, A Coy were activated in their role as UK Standby Battalion (UKSB) and were deployed to Birmingham city centre. Despite the numerous canals in Birmingham (who boast to have more than Venice), this UKSB activation was not in response to flash flooding, much like historical examples.

This activation saw members of the Battalion aid the private security company tasked to cover personnel and bag search at the Alexander Stadium, hosting the Commonwealth Games. With the opening ceremony taking place just a day after activation, the Platoon-sized group were rapidly trained on the baggage and personnel scanners before being on task for the event.

Once the crowd (which included Clare Balding CBE, Denise Lewis OBE, and Ellie Simmons OBE) were deemed safe to go in by the troops, they were allowed to sit in on the ceremony and listen to the dulcet tones of an aging Duran Duran, as well as pitifully laugh at Lenny Henry's jokes.

Redeployment to Bulford took place the next day; a true smash and grab – and 'personnel and baggage search' added to our competencies, should Heathrow ever come calling.

The 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment

As of September 1st 2022, The 2nd Battalion has merged together with The 1st Battalion.

On our online edition you can find images highlighting some of the Bn's activities over the past few years.

You can read our online version here:

<https://express.adobe.com/page/VwYu76J2adoZp/#the-2nd-battalion-the-mercian-regiment>

Alternatively you can visit <https://www.mercianregiment.co.uk> and select "Current Newsletter" under the Newsletter dropdown at the top.

4 MERCIAN - B (Malta) Coy

Capt 'Trapper' Travis PSAO B Coy

The last quarter has been a busy one for B (MALTA) Company. We have seen newly promoted LCpls Neil Kirby and Patrick Stafford deploy on Op UNITY in support of the Commonwealth Games with both returning having had a fantastic experience.

The company has also conducted its first independent Adventurous Training package in over four years. This took place at Llandegla Forest in North Wales at the One Planet Adventure Mountain Bike Trails. 20 soldiers from the company had a challenging but enjoyable weekend with one in particular who literally could not ride a bike beforehand, making some great progress. On the Saturday evening, Cpl Mark Simpson, who continues to grow into his 'Gordan Ramsey' role, served up a fantastic BBQ to us all and we plan to repeat this activity in the near future.

B Company is now preparing soldiers for the possibility of mobilisation on UK Standby Battalion (UKSB) resilience task. This Pilot sees for the first time Army Reservists held at a higher readiness to react to UK resilience tasks such as flooding. Four of our reservists have also deployed on Ex SAVA STAR, an overseas training exercise in Croatia acting as the "Infantry Glue" for 156 Regiment RLC as they conduct the predominantly Infantry based exercise.

We look forward to the rest of the year and a bright future as we see more recruits joining the training pipeline and our main focus in coming months will be to mentor and nurture them through the long process of becoming a trained soldier.

4 MERCIAN - C (Kohima)

Coy

Maj Deepe Rawji, OC

Throughout this period, C Coy has been busy preparing troops for the UKSB Resilience Pilot, Ex IRON SWORD, Ex SAVA STAR, Cambrian Patrol and AT in addition to welcoming back our mobilised troops from Op UNITY, MOD's support to The Commonwealth Games.

The last three months have flown by with individuals completing many courses. Pte Khan from Nottingham has fully qualified as a Combat Medical Technician Class 1 (CMT 1), Pte's Ward and Foreman who both hail from Mansfield, have passed their Assault Pioneers courses. Pte Draper has passed a PJNCO cadre and finally, LCpl Tweneboa from London, achieved a top student finish on the Regimental Signals Detachment Course. He is now not only a better qualified coy asset, but also a Bn one!

We have had to say our farewells to Lt Emile Mackney from Derby and Lt Magnus Khan from London. Emile has taken the step to go regular and Magnus is moving closer to home after a good innings at C Coy. We welcome 2Lt Matt Pattle from Buckinghamshire, a former Royal Marine Commando turned Doctor! He will now be taking over Magnus's platoon. 2Lt James Payne has also joined us from EMUOTC and will be the next Assault Pioneers Platoon Commander. That's when he is not representing the Army at Enduro Cycling!

Our other Platoon Commander, Lt Jack Poade has been busy planning Bn participation in a marathon in Greece, as well as being selected to lead as patrol commander for our Cambrian Patrol team. He has deployed on Ex SAVA STAR taking place in Croatia, supporting 156 RLC with an infantry contingent.

Our recruiting and mentoring team continue to work hard ensuring we nurture the best talent into the coy. We currently have 38 individuals in the recruiting pipeline and are waiting to conduct a further 23 initial interviews.

Op UNITY

Op UNITY saw 12 personnel from across the battalion deploy in support of The Commonwealth Games with an aim to provide military assistance to civilian authorities and private security contractors. Initial expectations suggested that the military would only cover 30% of manning, however as no plan survives first contact, this quickly changed and over 50% manning was required due to a shortfall by the private security contractors. This sent 4 MERCIAN personnel into the QRF of Task Group Centre, working alongside A Coy 7 SCOTS held at a constant 4hr NTM overnight and 30min NTM during the day.

We mainly operated in the NEC as a venue assistance force, providing security through bag searches, X-Ray operators and working up to 17hr days when no relief was available.

As the weeks progressed, UK Standby Battalions were mobilised, allowing us short stand-down periods where we were free to watch the Games at different venues, making it an overall more enjoyable mobilisation.

Adventurous Training – Kayaking / Climbing

This year, C Coy's AT event took place in Anglesey and consisting of kayaking, coasteering, rock climbing and abseiling, a plethora of activities on one of the hottest days of the year. The WBGT was in place and the fun was managed with robust mitigation measures!

Ensuring sun cream was plastered over everyone, the coy departed from Capel Curig Training Camp and met with the Anglesey Adventure Company civilian instructors who took us around the day's activities. The days training concluded with a CSM's BBQ and a plunder of the local town.

Ex IRON SWORD

Ex IRON SWORD took place over a weekend on the flat plains of Swynnerton. With the Bn preparing for higher readiness on the UKSB resilience Pilot, this exercise focussed on a sweep up of Pre-Deployment Training and Individual Training Records (ITR – the new MATTs). C Coy personnel led on delivering the exercise and a round robin of ITR activities took place.

CBRN skill fade was brushed off as WO2 Woodward demonstrated his recently acquired instructional qualification to the fullest. Cpl Leatherland and Sgt Reah tested the troops on person search and CIED stands. Pte Khan, fresh from qualifying as a CMT 1, and delivering her first lesson to a Bn training audience, confidently delivered an imaginative and interactive lesson, thoroughly impressing the watching CO who awarded her with his coveted CO's Coin.

As the evening approached, Sgt Taylor MC prepared to test the troop's night navigation skills and even had some tomato soup and bread at the finish line for them! The exercise concluded on the Sunday morning with a Soldier's Conditioning Review before dispersal.

4 MERCIAN - D (Dragon) Coy

Maj Will Rose, OC

Adventure Training and preparing for the UK Standby Battalion Resilience role has been the theme throughout this period. The coy and the Cambrian Patrol team visited the Brecon Beacons and ascended Pen Y Fan with many thanks to Capt Rich Peacock and WO2 (CSM) Paul Spilsbury (both from Stoke on Trent) for organising this enjoyable event. Sgt James Tristram, from Swadlincote, led on Mountain Biking and we also squeezed in a day on Quad Bikes topped off with a BBQ at Burton.

Our congratulations go to 2Lt Tom Hulme, from Cheadle, who commissioned at RMAS and has now assumed command of the Rifle PI at Stoke. We also welcome 2Lt Harry Connor from BUOTC who joins our Machine Gun PI at Burton. UK Standby Battalion resilience Pre-Deployment Training has been completed and we now have eight Reservists ready to assume the High Readiness Reserve role.

LCpl Ross Dawson, from Newcastle Under Lyme, supported the Farnborough International Air Show and Pte Andrew Bradley, from Stevenage, provided catering support to the Army EXPO, both did outstanding jobs and received very complimentary letters of thanks. Sgt James Holmes, from Haslington, and Cpl Josh Grant, from Crewe, enjoyed a trip to Croatia on Ex SAVA STAR, teaching infantry skills to 159 Tpt Regt RLC whilst Sgt Ash McGraw, from Stoke of Trent, handed over the Stoke PSI reins to Sgt Conor Ball who hails from Crewe.

Recruit training continues with Pte Samuel Breen, from Sutton Coldfield, passing MOD 3 and Ptes Gell, Nullis and Walsh passing MOD 2.

4 MERCIAN HQ (Eagle) Coy

Maj Brian Johnston MBE, OC

This period has seen HQ Company continue to support the Battalion in all aspects of training and training delivery across several exercises, including UKSB Resilience Pre-Deployment Training as the Bn assumes a High Readiness role prepared to assist local authorities with flooding should it occur in the West Midlands and North West regions. The aim of our exercises has been to provide an opportunity for individuals to achieve the individual start standards for this UKSB Pilot.

During this period, we have seen some key appointments change. We have bid farewell to the Quartermaster, Maj Pete Lewis, who leaves Regular service for pastures new in the FTRS world taking up a PSAO role with 2 R IRISH. He is replaced by Maj Tony Mason, who joins us from 2 MERCIAN having overseen the G4 elements of the amalgamation. Maj Joe Lee joins us as the new QM (V) and WO2 'Cas' Castledine joins us as our new CIS SPSI, which has been gapped, and now oversees all things HQ Coy training and CIS related. We also welcome back CSgt Chris Williams who returns to Kidderminster ARC as the PSI for our Anti-Tank Platoon after a stint as CQMS in his regular Bn.

Recruiting

The challenges of recruitment and retention remain with our team working hard in our three ARC locations attracting, nurturing and supporting candidates and recruits throughout the recruitment and training process. Our numbers continue to grow and our fully trained soldier strength is increasing steadily since the start of this training year.

The introduction of our Pre-CIC personal development program and recruit pre-training weekends each month are providing the best preparation for our Recruits as they meet the requirements of modern-day soldiering.

NHS Training in Partnership with 4 MERCIAN Army Reserves

Prior to the pandemic, 4 MERCIAN was running one dedicated training weekend each month in partnership with Field Hospital units to ensure CMT skills Regimental Aid Post capabilities were maintained. Following an elongated period of suspension this has now been re-introduced and a robust training approach not only addresses our military role but now building on the links we have established with the NHS.

In discussion with Col Allen, an Army Reservist and Senior Nurse working in The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust at New Cross Hospital, it was decided to run a joint training day for members of the RAP and NHS clinicians at Wolverhampton ARC. To maximise this opportunity the focus was on Transit Care.

In Transit care is an important aspect of patient care within a RAP which is often undertaken to improve the existing management of patients. It may involve transfer of the patient over a short distance for a diagnostic procedure or a transfer to another facility much further away

with more advanced care capability. The main aim in all such transfers is to maintain the continuity of medical care. As the transfer of sick patient may adversely affect the prognosis of the patient, it needs to be done correct and efficiently. The key training aims were to ensure the safe transfer of patients involving decision to transfer and communication, pre-transfer stabilisation and preparation, choosing the appropriate mode of transfer, personnel accompanying the patient, equipment and monitoring required during the transfer, and finally the documentation and handover of the patient at the receiving facility. These key elements needed to be fully understood and followed to prevent any adverse events which might severely affect the patient prognosis.

The NHS personnel agreed to lead on this and accreditation from The Royal College of Anaesthetists permitted the award of a CPD qualification.

The training was attended by 23 clinicians from the NHS which included Consultants, A&E Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics and five military personal. Training included a combination of theory and practical aspects with focus on the new lessons learnt during the pandemic. It also provided a great opportunity for our military personal to see new equipment available as well as training with very high-tech mannequins and patient simulators. It also allowed them to see some of the top consultants and medical personal involved with trauma care carrying out their drills and procedures so adding a greater understanding to the role within a RAP.

The day was a great success for both parties and further joint training events were arranged for November. The NHS Trust will also provide training support and placements to the RAP to help develop their skills and share best practice.

Op NEWCOMBE - Sgt Shotton

MINUSMA is the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation mission in Mali. Established in 2013, the mission was asked to support transitional authorities of Mali in the stabilisation of the country. Operation NEWCOMBE is the UK commitment to that mission and the units currently deployed are The 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment (1 R IRISH) and The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (RSDG).

Sgt Faye Shotton has been an Army Reservist for 15 years and is currently employed with 4 MERCIAN as the Medical Sergeant. During her time as a Reservist, the operationally experienced SNCO has deployed on operations in Iraq (Op TELIC), Afghanistan (Op HERRICK) and previously under the UN banner in Cyprus (Op TOSCA) as well as on Short Term Training Team deployments in Uganda.

Sgt Shotton is currently deployed on Op NEWCOMBE as part of The Long Range Reconnaissance Group where her vast medical experience, gained as an Army Medic and through her civilian employment as a Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) Paramedic with West Midland Ambulance Service, is providing the Battlegroup with a key capability.

During her time in Mali, Sgt Shotton has deployed on many patrols conducting reconnaissance and intelligence gathering as well as providing reassurance for the local population. In her role as part of the medical team, she provides primary healthcare to those deployed and her role also means she remains on standby to deliver lifesaving advanced trauma care to either UN or civilian personnel.

The consummate professional, Sgt Shotton was awarded a Commander's Coin by Commander 16 Air Assault Brigade during his recent visit to the Battlegroup. We are proud to have Sgt Shotton in the 4 MERCIAN family and don't mind too much that we have lent her to 1 R IRISH for a short time on operations, they are lucky to have her!

Band of the Mercian Regiment

Sgt Wood

This summer for The Band of The Mercian Regiment has been full of massed bands taskings, working with others and maintaining our international music friendships.

In July, combined with the Band of The Yorkshire Regiment, we performed as part of the Sonderborg Ringriderfesten, in Denmark. This a huge festival that showcases music, horses and marching bands from all over Europe. The week was packed with marching, pop up concerts and unusual engagements cumulating in a massed bands tattoo featuring many different styles of marching and musical display work.

The Band were closer to home in August as the second part of our continuous training saw us feature as part of The Shrewsbury Flower Show, which took place, rather helpfully, in the middle of the UK's heatwave! We opened the festival with a rather hot march through the town and, as spectators sheltered in the shade, we entertained them from the bandstand with music to please all tastes. It was so hot that the band had to relocate off the band stand and into the shade in front!

During the evenings, the massed bands finales featured lots of favourites, including a massed bands marching display, choirs and plenty to sing along with. This year also included laser shows instead of fireworks due to the drought, heat and increase in fire risk.

Bredbury Detachment, No 3 (Somme) Company, Greater Manchester ACF

SSI Ady Hazelhurst

Growing into Greatness and Inspire to Achieve are two motto's that resonate with Cadet Lance Corporal Faye McCormick, these being the beliefs of the Army Cadet Force and England Boxing.

Cadet McCormick has been training hard to have successfully completed her 1 star training and has recently been selected to represent Greater Manchester ACF at the regional cross country and rugby sporting competitions. For her hard work and commitment Cadet McCormick recently received a very deserved promotion to Lance Corporal.

Apart from training hard with the Army Cadets, Cadet LCpl Faye McCormick has recently represented England Boxing at the National Junior Championships in Sweden and was awarded, Best Female Junior Boxer. Amongst some of her other achievements are:

In 2018 Cadet LCpl McCormick made history by boxing in the first all female amateur boxing show in Manchester. Was the North West Region Junior Champion Boxer. Won ESKER Box Cup Boxing to become the World Champion in 2019. Also in 2019, trained with the GB Olympic Boxing team at the Olympic Village, Sheffield.

Covid arrived in 2020 which halted taking part in the big competitions. In March 2022, Cadet LCpl McCormick attended the National Finals in London and is due to attend the European Boxing Championships later this year. Fantastic Achievements!

As a member of Bredbury Detachment we are all very proud of her achievements and wish her all the very best in her boxing and Army Cadet journey.

Drum Tables

Following the recent merger of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, Regimental Headquarters received the 2nd Battalions set of drums.

RHQ commissioned Men's Shed Lichfield, a local registered charity and community space, to design and create bespoke coffee tables to house the Mercian Regiment's Drums in order to display our heritage for future generations.

Brigadier (Retd) Peter Dennis CBE, Regimental Secretary for The Mercian Regiment, said:

"We are extremely grateful to all the members of 'Men's Shed'; in particular Hugh Sammons, who designed and built the prototype table, and Peter Hollis who helped lead the project through to completion.

"They will make for a remarkable display for our heritage with the added advantage that the drums will remain in a serviceable condition allowing them to be played or used for other things such as drum head services.

"The Colonel of the Regiment will hold one of the tables with 3 being sent to the 1st Battalion to hold a drum each from 1, 2 and 3 MERCIAN."

The Staffordshire Regiment Museum

Private Joseph Bagley's Pay Book

The Staffordshire Regiment Museum has had a very busy Summer with many events and activities, and we thank all our Volunteers, Museum Friends and supporters for all their help.

The Museum also was fortunate to receive an interesting donation of an Army Form B.50, otherwise known as an Army Pay Book, formally belonging to Private Joseph Bagley of the North Staffordshire Regiment.

This fascinating document provides a window into the Army life of a Farm Labourer from Market Drayton, who enlisted in 1883 at 18 years and 10 months, and went on to serve 7 years in the Regiment. His time included many training activities, as well as detachments in the Caribbean and South Africa.

The Museum collections really do shine a light on the activities of soldiers of the past and show that really life was not too much different for our forebears compared to today.

RHQ Nottingham

AMATEUR RADIO DIAMOND JUBILEE CALLSIGN

Every year, the South Normanton, Alfreton and District Amateur Radio Club (www.snadarc.com) set up base at the Crich Memorial. This year they were able to celebrate Her Majesties Platinum Jubilee in June 2022 with a special Callsign 'GB0HRH' to operate in the grounds and were able to use it every weekend throughout June.

H4H EVENT

On 17 September 2022, The Mercian Regiment supported the Malvern Hills Challenge, a charity event run by Worcestershire Help for Heroes. Participants could complete either a 9km or an 18km route and The Regimental Mascot and his handlers along with Sgt Tristram of 4Mercian, were at the finishing line to help give out medals and congratulate all those taking part

ROYAL PROCLAMATIONS

Following the sad news of the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, members of The Mercian Regiment were invited to attend Civic events, throughout our recruiting area, for the Proclamation of His Majesty, King Charles III.

Stockport Branch CRA & MVRA The Mercian Regimental Association

Steven Gregory, Publicity Member

Her Majesty, The Late Queen Elizabeth II

Peter Gresty, our Branch President, and also President of the wider CRA has sent a message to His Majesty King Charles III. The message was one of condolence for his loss, and a reaffirmation of our allegiance to the Crown. Branch members were invited to the reading of the Royal Proclamation of Accession on Sunday, 11th September, and also to a Civic Memorial Service on Sunday, 18th September, both of which were well attended with Standards on parade. Below can be seen our Mercian, Cheshire and Mercian Volunteers Standards at the Civic Memorial Service. Long live the King!

July Meeting

On the 1st of July we assembled at St. Julien Barracks, the same location that was used 33 years to the day for 'A' Coy, 3 Cheshire (V), to report for the Cheshire Regiment's Tercentenary Camp where new Colours were presented a week later by HRH The Prince of Wales, aka the Earl of Chester.

It was the first meeting since May, as we had the Platinum Jubilee event in June. The large and wide-ranging agenda covered Crich; a proposed widows' event; property management; the dedication of the Cheshire Regiment Memorial at the NMA; ladies' Christmas dinner; general building admin; the 75th East Cheshire Reunion in October; the next shotgun shoot; Mons Remembrance; Ballykelly; Broughton House and finally next year's Meanee Reunion.

Crich Pilgrimage

The coach left St. Julien barracks at 0900hrs on Sunday 3rd July. Onboard were the twenty-seven 'pilgrims' (plus four free-runners) bound for the Service of Remembrance at Crich Memorial. Our Mercian Regiment and Cheshire Regiment Standards were paraded and the weather held fair for a great day. Thanks again to Crich Comrades Club for their hospitality. Even one of the Blues Brothers made an appearance! On a serious point though, the gents in the bottom left picture have, between them, had the privilege of serving the Colours of the Mercian, Cheshire, Staffordshire and Mercian Volunteers Regiments.

August Meeting

Twenty-six members were present on Friday, 5th August, including Zoom participation from Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Auckland, New Zealand. Another productive meeting covering

Welfare, NMA Dedication (see below), Mons Commemoration, Shotgun Shoot, Ken's Curry Night, and the 40th Anniversary Commemoration of Ballykelly. There was an update on social media initiatives and attempts to reach out to local RBL's and Breakfast Clubs.

Cheshire Memorial NMA

The weather held fair on the 2nd of September for what (at the time) was probably the main event of the year; the dedication of the Cheshire Regiment Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum. Thirty-five members and guests made the journey from Stockport to enjoy the occasion which was well run and well received by all. Below can be seen some of the attendees from the Branch with the memorial as the backdrop.

Walking in the Picos de Europa

In early September, five members took off on a walking holiday to Los Picos de Europa (The Peaks of Europe) in Northern Spain. Based out of Llanes, we enjoyed the fabulous scenery of Asturias and were lucky enough to arrive mid-fiesta. The walks, interspersed occasionally with R&R (and the odd sidra) were generally moderate and the scenery fantastic. The big day out was walking the iconic 'Ruta del Cares', along the gorge of the River Cares from Poncebos to Cain and back, about 15 miles in total.

Mons Commemoration

A small contingent from the Branch, with the main CRA Standard and our Branch CRA Standard paraded at Chester Cathedral on 11th September for a wreath-laying in commemoration of the 1st Bn 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment's actions in the retreat from Mons in August 1914. The standards were draped in black for the loss of our Monarch.

Shotgun Shoot September 18/9/22

On Sunday, 18th September, members and, for the first time, partners enjoyed a fine morning at Doveridge Shooting Ground under the tutelage of Paul, our friendly BASC coach. The usual format of a hearty breakfast was followed by a discernible improvement in the quality of shooting as the very varied 50-bird shoot progressed.

Inauguration and Dedication of 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment Memorial

Peter Gresty

What a glorious day it was on Friday 2nd September 2022, at the National Memorial Arboretum, for The Cheshire Regiment Association with the Inauguration and Dedication of a Memorial to The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment.

There were 11 CRA Branch Standards on display and Mr Derek Sykes, Stockport Branch, carried the main Association Standard making a nice round total of 12.

An ensemble from the Mercian Regiment Band provided the music for the event and the welcome desk was manned by The Ram Major from The Mercian Regiment.

Over 200 members and guests of the CRA assembled at the NMA for the short service, led by Reverend Canon Dr Greg Platten who is the Padre for 4 Mercian (V), which included contributions from Peter Gresty, CRA Chairman, and Maj Gen Andrew Sharpe CBE, last Colonel of the 22nd. The service was kept short and simple and was well received by all those attending.

Following the service those who had registered for the reception were treated to an excellent afternoon tea in the Oak Rooms of The Aspects Centre.

During the Afternoon Tea Peter Gresty, CRA Chairman, presented "Brigadier Mike Dauncey Awards", which are for service to the CRA as a whole, to Stuart Harrison and Ashley Farrall for all their efforts in fundraising and overseeing all aspects of the design, production and installation of the new Memorial.

The weather managed to stay dry until well after the afternoon tea allowing everybody to get around the arboretum for a good look around.

If you were not able to be there on the day please pay a visit and have a look for yourself, you won't be disappointed. Incidentally the trees to the rear of the new memorial are Oak Trees, of course.

Wha Wadna Fecht Fa Charlie.

The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regimental Association

Dudley Branch

Dudley Branch have changed their meeting times to the daytime to accommodate more of their members and have welcome some new ones. In July, they enjoyed their mid year luncheon at the Lodge, Dudley, in July and had a very enjoyable time. Members also attended the Fly the Flag ceremony in the Coronation Gardens. Dudley where the Standard was carried by Alan Smith.

Nottingham Branch

On 30th August, Maj (Retd) Cotterill presented 2 members of the branch with their Merit awards in recognition for their loyalty and support of the WFRA; both have been active members for over 20 years. Louisa Murry (aged 96) and Joyce Richards (aged 101) have not seen each other since the C-19 Lockdown and were overjoyed to see each other and receive their awards along with a celebratory cake.

JIMMY POW CUP

In 1993, Jimmy Pow 1 WFR was killed in an RTA whilst serving in Cyprus. A silver trophy was dedicated to his memory and presented to members of the Bn for sporting achievements. With the merging of 2 Mercian, it was decided to present the trophy to the family, on long term loan. His sister, Andrea accepted the cup on behalf of their mother, who was delighted to receive it.

Mrs Pow is delighted to have the trophy dedicated to her son's memory

The Mercian Volunteers Regimental Association

Keith Jeavons

The Association's life has begun to get back to normal, whatever 'normal' is! Branches are beginning to meet again. Branches were seen to be involved with the Queen's Jubilee at varying levels. Stockport celebrated with a combined social evening with the three Associations. [CRA, MVRA, and MRA] and Walsall attended the lighting of the Beacon. Members took part in the Commemoration Service for ANZAC day on Cannock Chase. We had a very good day at the Armed Forces Day at Himley Park and we were able to add to the Association's funds. We met members of the Association who had come with their families to support the day. The Celebration of the Armed Forces Day events was supported by Branches whenever possible.

Stockport continues with its walking programme and is preparing for then East Cheshire Reunion once again. One of the oldest, [if not the oldest Reunion in the country] Golf continues to rear its head throughout the year particularly in Worcestershire. Kidderminster once again 'took to the boats' with music on the Stourbridge Canal for their annual cruise. Followed later on in the year with a B-B-Que at the Shrubbery.

Although it may seem all play, members of the Association have endeavoured to help fellow members during 'lock down' and especially during the present number of bereavements in numerous ways. The family spirit is still as strong as ever.

- The lighting of the Jubilee Beacon on Barr Beacon by the Mayor & Mayoress of Walsall supported by a soldier from The Mercian Regiment
- An Oak Tree was planted at 'The Shrubbery' to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. Gordon Maycroft was making sure it was done properly by doing it himself. A second tree has been given to the Association by the Lord Lieutenant to be planted in the Army Reserve Centre grounds.
- Celebrating the Jubilee at the Armoury, Stockport by members of The Cheshire Regiment Assoc, Mercian Volunteers Regimental Assoc and the Mercian Regiment Assoc, gathered for a group photo, which may be viewed on the full article online.

SSAFA - The Armed Forces Charity

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity provides lifelong support for the currently serving, veterans and their families. So if you've ever served, they are here for you and your family when you need help, for life. That's for both Regulars and Reserves in the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the British Army or the Royal Air Force.

How SSAFA Can Help

Their trained volunteer caseworkers can provide practical, emotional and financial support if and when you need it. Their network of local branches means that help and advice is always close at hand. When you contact them for support, SSAFA will put you in touch with one of their experienced advisors in your area. It is often the little things which make the most difference - but they are also experienced at dealing with complicated problems as well. Here are some of the ways that SSAFA can help you.

- Debt advice
- Help with mobility
- Housing advice
- Bereavement support groups to help with the loss of a loved one
- Support for homeless veterans
- Support for veterans in the criminal justice system as well as their families; including during both probation and custodial sentences,
- Accessing specialist support for those with dealing with mental health issues, such as PTSD

More information is available at www.ssafa.org.uk/help-you or call their confidential, free helpline Forcesline on 0800 731 4880 to find out more about getting support from SSAFA . Their advisors are outside the chain of command, they won't judge and they will listen to you. They will be available to answer your call from 9.00 to 17.30 every weekday. At other times please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

BE A FORCE FOR OUR FORCES: SUPPORT THE SERVICE MEN & WOMEN, VETERANS & FAMILIES IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Whatever challenges you are facing, members of the Armed Forces community can rely on SSAFA. Their network of trained volunteers provides practical and emotional support for serving personnel, veterans and military families across the UK and worldwide. SSAFA volunteers carry out most of the essential case work and complete the necessary applications needed to assist our veterans right across our local area, this includes Mercian and our antecedent Regiments.

Do you want to make a difference and support those ex-Forces in need, why don't you volunteer for SSAFA?

Not will you have the opportunity to meet inspiring people and make new friends, but you will also gain new skills and experiences.

You can make a difference in the lives of those who have dedicated themselves - often at great sacrifice - to protect and serve our country. You can be part of the unique organisation, SSAFA, who are ready to help the Armed Forces family, whenever and wherever they need us.

If you can spare some time and wish to help support our local community of veterans and families why not become a SSAFA volunteer? Full training is offered and there are a wide variety of roles available - find out more at www.ssafa.org.uk/volunteer

Mercian Regiment Tartan

The Mercian Regiment has an official Tartan!

Ties, bow ties, scarves and wraps in Regimental colours; a British made product from a company that supports UK Armed Forces Charities.

The products can be ordered from www.theministryoftartan.co.uk.