

# THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

Quarterly Newsletter Q4 2022

Print Edition

# 1 MERCIAN CO FOREWORD

*Lt Col Dean Canham OBE*

With the amalgamation assignments and movement of Mercian soldiers and officers complete by the end of 2022, this first newsletter of 2023 sees the 1st Battalion looking forward to another year full of opportunities and rewarding challenges. We remain as the Lead Armoured Battle Group and have several high-profile tasks and exercises in the programme.

Gaining and maintaining warfighting knowledge, skills and experience remains the priority; it is our reason for existing. It includes the full range of infantry skills; mounted, dismounted, specialist, support, and other Arms. As a unit held at readiness to deploy, we are relatively blessed with chances to learn, train, and operate across this full range of skills and we will continue to do so through 2023.

However, we regularly have operational demands on us well below the threshold of warfighting and our commitment to supporting the Home Office to manage immigration in Dover over Christmas, and driving ambulances through strike action, are just two examples of them, both done extremely well.

In response to the Army's 'Future Soldier' plans, 1 MERCIAN now sits in the Queen's Division of infantry, alongside 1 PWRR, 1RRF, 1 and 2 R ANGLIAN, 1 LANCS, 3 RANGER, The Royal Gibraltar Regiment, and Reserve units 4 MERCIAN, 3 and 4 PWRR, 5 RRF and 3 R ANGLIAN. This new, much bigger Division, opens up wider opportunities for our officers and soldiers to serve elsewhere in the Infantry, and across every possible line infantry capability type.

The demands on our soldiers and officers remain extremely high and varied. As the Battalion stands ready as the Lead Armoured Battlegroup though, our core purpose – to deliver excellent armoured infantry warfighting capability – is firmly to the fore. In what will be my final 1 MERCIAN newsletter foreword as Commanding Officer, I would like to highlight the distinct privilege it has been to command the officers and soldiers of the 1st Battalion over the past two and a half years and thank all of them for working hard to support me, the Battalion, and the Regiment.

# 1 MERCIAN A (GRENADIER) COMPANY – BATTLECRAFT SYLLABUS

In November, A 'Grenadier' Company deployed on Ex KAVALA GRENADIER, the culmination of an urban training package the soldiers started in camp but would finish in Tregantle Fort, a Napoleonic Fort on the Cornish coast. Here the myriad of complex tunnels and corridors provided the soldiers a testing environment to hone their close quarter fighting skills.

The week started with section level training; the Grenadiers were given the opportunity to hone the skills at the lowest level before moving on to the far more complex platoon level actions. Following two days of relentless training and rehearsals the Grenadiers were now clearing buildings like a hot knife through butter and were poised for a greater challenge; a clear indication of the benefits of being given the time, space and resource to train. As recompense for their efforts, Officer Commanding A Company, thought it necessary to reward the hard work of the soldiers with an impromptu visit to a nearby public house, so they could reflect on the week so far and that which lay ahead.

As the culmination point of an excellent week's training, the Grenadiers conducted 'force on force' fighting, using simulated rounds firing paint. The final serials were platoon level actions, and testament to the Grenadiers discipline, the individuals' skills and drills were exceptionally high during the fierce fire fights that ensued in the tunnels and darkness of the Fort.

The Grenadiers finished an excellent week of training with high spirits, looked forward to Battalion Christmas Week, and the opportunity to relax on leave. 2023 will undoubtedly hold many more challenge and adventures, and Grenadier Company stand ready to face them all.

# 1 MERCIAN B (MALTA) COMPANY – TRAINING FOR READINESS

With our ranks swollen with newly arrived ex-2 MERCIAN soldiers, B (Malta) Company set about the work of getting current and competent with our vehicles. All of our new arrivals would have to complete 3 weeks of signals courses before attending Warrior driver or gunners courses. This laborious work was planned in detail by our Warrior Sergeant Major, WO2 Kolodynski – who's departure for the MT Platoon has left a gaping hole in the Company, and ginormous shoes which WO2 (WSM) Goodwin will have to fill!

As I type, the Company has trained all the drivers and gunners it requires, reflecting both the commitment of our soldiers and those planning training; any Armoured Infanteers reading will well understand how difficult it can be to train crews. We have also conducted virtual training to understand how vehicles will work together at the platoon level, maintained our compulsory annual tests (such as marksmanship, fieldcraft, navigation), and adopted a great new PT programme produced by SSgt Brand, ably enacted by LCpl Wilson and Cpl Cox.

All of this leaves us ready to hold our place in the Lead Armoured Battle Group ORBAT and, if called upon, ready to deploy on Ex IRON STORM in early 2023 where we may be asked to provide a trained and testing enemy for the RTR BG. This is a great achievement for the men of B Company noting that the Company has not operated under armour since Op CABRIT 8 in Estonia in 2021!

That in amongst this, under the expert coaching of Cpl Shepherd, the Company managed to win the Battalion boxing competition – training in the side lines of courses and a busy Company training programme – is representative of how hard the soldiers have worked since the Company 're-formed' with the rest of the new 1st Battalion on 1 Sep 22.

Now the real work begins as we integrate these individually well-trained soldiers with and under armour.

# 1 MERCIAN C (KOHIMA) COMPANY

C (Kohima) Company closed out 2022 in Dover supporting the Home Office's efforts to manage the 'small boats' crossing the English Channel, in which migrants were regularly chancing the dangerous crossing. With temperatures routinely dropping below zero, it was a race to keep some of them alive once they were spotted and into the UK system which C Company became an integral part of. A range between 3-month-old children to elderly people were being rescued by the Royal Navy, Coast Guard, and RNLI. Mercian soldiers were required to assist with their processing and did a sterling job conducting such a high-profile and emotive task over Christmas.

We celebrated Christmas Day in Dover with Gunfire, Christmas dinner, and a visit from C Company's very own Father Christmas (though CSM Townsend was mysteriously absent at the time). Cpl Sherpa also laid on a fantastic badminton competition, providing the opportunity for the troops to relax and unwind.

Following the festive period C Company returned to training with gusto. CSgt Ritchie and his team ran a fantastic 14-day FIBUA and marksmanship package, delivering skills which will prepare us ready for our next deployment and the other rigours of 2023.

# 4 MERCIAN CO

## FOREWORD

*Lt Col Rob Spalton*

Autumn 2022 has continued the trend of the rest of the year by being busy although a little different in flavour as we have focused on UK Resilience activity.

The United Kingdom Standby Battalion (UKSB) task has been “a thing” for some time now, holding units at readiness to cope with the plethora of disasters and crises that could befall the UK. But since its inception, the Army has become somewhat smaller and it is now “stacked” against readiness for other tasks around the world. The Integrated Review recognised this stretch and set out the aspiration for Reserve units to take on this role. The challenge here, however, is how can this be achieved by soldiers who also have full-time employment that they would be required to drop at a moment’s notice? A good question.

The 4th Battalion was selected (from a cast of thousands...) to take part in a trial of this capability to see how this could be achieved. Four units across the country were involved in the trial, each testing different combinations of terms of service and command & control. For us, 46 of our soldiers signed up to High Readiness contracts, committing themselves and their employers to responding within 24 hours to an emerging crisis. The trial lasted 3 months with (mercifully) no flooding in the West Midlands so we were mobilised and deployed on a flooding exercise in Ironbridge Gorge to test these procedures.

The exercise went well and we are now awaiting the analysis of the results to see whether we will be committed to the task in the future. Warfighting remains our core business and we would not wish to trade rifle and webbing for waders and a high-viz vest on a permanent basis but the model that we trailed shows that this is a capability that the Reserves can fulfil whilst maintaining their operational focus. Our soldiers very much enjoyed the opportunity to support and protect their local communities and are keen that we continue to do so in the future.

# 4 MERCIAN B (MALTA) COMPANY

*Capt 'Trapper' Travis (PSAO)*

The start of this quarter saw 12 members of B Company on 48hrs NTM and begin the UK Standby Battalion (UKSB) task in early September. This required a large administrative effort with lots of liaison with employers with the AO, Victoria Ford, putting in a great deal of work making sure all was in order with minimum fuss. Despite praying for more rain, troops were not called out to support a real situation, but did conduct a successful exercise which saw them deploy to Donnington and Ironbridge for a TEWT.

The main focus in November was of course Remembrance and the company had troops on parade in Widnes, Stockport, Ellesmere Port, Winsford, Chester Football Club and Northwich. All were well received with a particularly large turnout in Widnes; afterwards a reception for families and friends was held in all three company ARC locations. We also had a visit from LCpls Neil Kirby and Patrick Stafford fresh from attending the Section Commander's Battle Course before their deployment to the Falkland Islands on Op FIRIC.

Recruiting has started to pick up again with six recruits being attested during the period and many more applications in the pipeline. Widnes has three recruits in training and we will hopefully welcome another three trained soldiers in to the company very soon. Of note is Pte Barroy-Jones who is due to complete Phase 1 training in an impressive five months, a great achievement in such a short period of time!

December saw our preparations for some well deserved Christmas leave with lots of opportunities to look forward to in 2023. With plenty of overseas exercises and Op INTERFLEX, UK assistance to training Ukrainian Forces, 2023 looks like another challenging and enjoyable year.

B Company welcome Capt Ben Connor as the newly appointed Company Second-in-Command who joins us in early January.

# 4 MERCIAN C COMPANY

## **OP ILKANE – Support to UK Government and Border Force Strikes**

Three soldiers from C Coy, 4 MERCIAN deployed on OP ILKANE to support the UK Government's response to industrial action being carried out by Border Force staff during the festive period. Headed up by Maj Will Rose (OC D Company), our joined regular soldiers from 2 R ANGLIAN on tsk.

The mobilisation was as a result of a MACA request and came at short notice. Luckily 4 MERCIAN had just finished their UKSB High Readiness Task in support UK resilience tasks and there were soldiers available with the time to commit to this.

Once mobilised, Cpl Etches, LCpl Boycott and Pte Bulman deployed to Manchester Airport via Basingbourn to start their training. The training package took place over two weeks and consisted of classroom theory and legislation. The practical phase of training consisted of observation and assistance of Border Force Officers at Manchester Airport.

Our Reservist's transferable skills held them in good stead for the task. Cpl Etches' ability to translate and speak Russian, Pte Bulman who is fluent in French due his childhood being spent in France and LCpl Boycott who was able to bring his security skills from his civilian job as Private Security Officer were all able to bring their experience to the Border Force role.

These skills were soon brought into action as all three soldiers deployed to Heathrow Airport on the 21 Dec to be in place for the strikes that took place on 22 Dec. All soldiers attended an RSOI package and once completed started a 10-day deployment at Terminal 3 Heathrow Airport

## **Ex AUTHENTIC EAGLE**

### *4 MERCIAN's Overseas Sports Trip to complete The Athens Marathon*

10 Reservists from 4 MERCIAN have completed a six-day overseas sports visit where nine personnel successfully and safely completed the Athens Marathon which is also coined The Authentic. The reasoning behind this title is that this race was the inception of marathon racing when a messenger named Pheidippides ran from the Battle of Marathon to Athens to announce the Greeks' victory over the Persians in 490 BC. The route is not only famous for its historical significance but also due to its arduous nature, with over half the race being uphill with an average temperature of 19C. The fastest time was



recorded by Pte Skidmore, an avid runner, who is currently completing a PhD and has been in the Reserves for two years.

The race took place on Remembrance Sunday, so it was fitting to visit the Phaleron War Cemetery on the Saturday – a Commonwealth War Cemetery containing servicemen who lost their lives during the Second World War. The most junior soldier on the trip, Pte Paul Shepherd, an outdoors instructor who has only recently passed the Combat Infantryman's Course, laid a regimental wreath on Pte William Perry's headstone. 21 year old Pte Perry was a soldier of the Sherwood Foresters, who lost his life on 25 Dec 1944.

4 MERCIAN also visited the Olympics Museum which allowed us to see the importance of the Olympic Games and the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens. The stadium was where the inaugural Olympic Games were held in 1896 and was also where the race finished for the 4 MERCIAN runners – a very historical place indeed. During the trip soldiers also visited the War Museum which was fascinating. The exhibition preserved and showcased war relics in an excellent and easy to understand manner. It was a great afternoon to understand how Greek warfighting has changed throughout the years and how the Hellenistic history of Greece has led them to where they are now. A post-race, hobbling visit up to the Acropolis was a scenic ending to the trip.

#### **C Company 4 MERCIAN Congratulate Pte Simms for Passing CIC(R)**

Pte Billy Simms joined C Company, 4 MERCIAN in Aug 21. He was awarded with his Regimental Stable Belt and ranks slides on passing the Combat Infantryman's Course on 10 Dec 22 and is now fully immersed within the coy as a Rifleman. Since joining the coy, Pte Simms has committed a considerable amount of his own time to complete the Reserve Recruit journey. The stable belt and rank slide were issued to him in the Stand Firm Strike Hard Bar in Bulwell Army Reserve Centre, in front of those who attended the drill night by PSAO, Capt Jay Longmate in the OC's absence.

Pte Simms lives in Newark. In his civilian role, he is employed as a professional speed skating coach. His job sees him working alongside some of the UK's top speed skating talent with ambitions to reach the Winter Olympics in their chosen discipline. His future aspirations in the Army Reserve is to become a competent Rifleman within his section and to gravitate towards becoming a Physical Training Instructor

# 4 MERCIAN D COMPANY

*Maj Will Rose, OC D Coy*

Another varied 3 months with green and adventure training completed along with supporting the Border Force. Members of D Coy deployed on Ex SPEARPOINT which saw a Multi Reservist Infantry cap badge subunit deploy on SPTA where they worked with Armour followed by a subterranean exercise in Corsham mines. Adventure training saw LCpl Daniel Legge from Sandbach and Pte Paul Shepherd from Leek complete the Athens Marathon in tough conditions.

Sgt Maj Paul Spilsbury from Stoke and Maj Will Rose from Newcastle Under Lyme trained to read passports at Stansted Airport and then deployed for 11 days over Christmas and New Year to lead the 35 x Service Personnel (a mix of Regular and Reservists) supporting the Border Force at Heathrow Terminal 3 on the early shift.

We look forward to the return of the Coy 2IC; Capt Rich Peacock from Stoke is now halfway through his Op SHADER deployment. A well done goes to 2Lt John Hardy who completed MOD C at RMAS and to Pte Iain Nullis from Crewe who was awarded Top Recruit on Mod 3 (an award voted by his peers).

# 4 MERCIAN HQ COMPANY

## **Detachment Commander's Course**

*Cpl Jack Harley, Anti-Tank Platoon, Kidderminster*

I recently went down to Combine Arms Manoeuvre School (CAMS) at Waterloo Lines Warminster to attend the Anti-Tank Detachment Commander's course ran by the Anti-Tank Division. The first week consisted of classroom work, learning the nuances of Battle Boards, fire control methods, along with the battlegroup employment of the Javelin both in offensive and defensive actions. We were taught a great deal in a short space of time to ensure we caught up with our regular soldier counterparts. While 'Anti-Tanking' is nothing new to me, it certainly was an eye opener to see how the weapon system fits in to the wider Battlegroup context.

During the second week, we deployed on exercise onto Salisbury Plain as a full Anti-Tank Platoon. Each day consisted of orders followed by a short battle prep period then straight into action. After each tactical operation, there was a quick turn around and then we launched straight into the next one. We conducted ambushes and delay action, deploying on foot and carrying upwards of 50kgs each time which took its toll on our bodies but gave much needed experience on the realities of operating Javelin. Our enemy were the very capable and proven Challenger 2 and Warrior IFV, giving us real armoured vehicles to test our mettle against as they tried to outwit us.

All in all, the course was thoroughly enjoyable and we learned a lot concerning both Anti-Tank tactics and the employment of armoured vehicles in a conventional war. I look forwards to using this newfound knowledge on further deployments with the Battalion.

## **Preparatory Training for Combat Infantry Course (Reserve) (Pre-CIC(R))**

*Maj B D Johnston MBE*

We continue to run a Pre CIC(R) weekend for all Battalion recruits who are preparing to attend the Combat Infantry Course (Reserve) at ITC Catterick. The Pre-CIC takes place in Altcar Training Camp each month, planned and conducted by a Reservist team of instructors led by CSgt Keeble and supported by his team, Sgt Dickinson-Wood, Cpl Wilson and Cpl Clark. Without this team, our recruits would not be as well prepared for the 2-week CIC course.

The Pre-CIC course content continues to evolve in line with Common Military Syllabus (Reserve) (CMS(R)) requirements and prepares our recruits to not only perform well on the actual course but also prepare them for their future role as an infanteer in the Army Reserves.

Feedback confirms that recruits enjoy the Pre-CIC weekends, which they can attend as frequently as they wish prior to attending CIC, gaining the confidence and skills that they need. It allows them to complete a Soldier's Conditioning Review (SCR), Role Fitness Test (RFT), live firing ranges, field craft lessons and application of fire shoots in the DCCT, where they can hone their marksmanship skills.

### **Remembrance Day Parade – Sun 13th November**

*Pte Michael Tierney*

On Friday 11th November, members of HQ Coy from Kidderminster and Wolverhampton paraded at 1930hrs and took the evening to complete online individual training requirements. We also started preparing our service dress for the parade on Remembrance Day. We enjoyed ourselves whilst ironing, sewing buttons and polishing shoes. We finished the evening having a small social with pizzas.

On Saturday, we continued completing ITRs and finished off preparing our uniforms. It was also a good opportunity to tidy up the Army Reserve Centre (ARC), conduct much needed admin and do some fitness training in the gym. Sunday morning, we began the day with drill practice and rehearsal around the ARC car park until it was time to start shuttling personnel to the city centre where the parade began. Once everyone had arrived, CSgt Williams (PSI), and three recruits including me dressed in MPT, moved to St Mary's Church with the wreathes ahead of the main parade. The parading platoon then marched through Kidderminster Town Centre and along the main ring road to the church.

The whole parade consisted of a local marching band, town dignitaries, our Anti-Tank Platoon, CCF, ACF, Scouts and several other organisations with the 4 MERCIAN contingent leading the marching troops immediately behind the band. On arrival at the memorial, the Priest said a few words which were followed by a bugler playing the Last Post and Reveille. The parade then moved into the church for a Service of Remembrance. After the service, we once again formed up and marched back through town where the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Sir Nicholas Lechmere took the salute.

This was my first Remembrance Day as a Reservist and I found it to be a very moving day.

## **Ex Snow Eagle**

*2Lt Hubbard*

The Battalion's successful training calendar year concluded with a weekend which sought to strengthen cohesion between all companies within the battalion. The weekend kicked off on Saturday morning, quite literally, with the inter-coy sports event. The morning saw companies compete in dodgeball, rounders and finally with football seeing HQ (Eagle) Coy emerging victorious.

The day then continued with some important briefs; the first was led by Lt Luke Boxall on substance misuse and the potential adverse consequences. The Battalion then received an interesting briefing on Regimental history from the Adjt, Capt Niall Donnan. The Regimental Colours were displayed with Capt Donnan reminding personnel of the immense sacrifice of our predecessors in antecedent Regiments. Specifically, the focus was on Ferozeshah Day, however, as the battle was on 21 December, this was the Battalion's only opportunity to remember the sacrifices of those before them prior to Christmas stand-down. Evening activities included the World Cup football match (England v France), less said about that the better, followed by pizzas and some party games.

The weekend concluded with a closing address from Commanding Officer, Lt Col Rob Spalton, where he presented soldiers within the Battalion a coveted CO's Coin recognising exceptional efforts across the year. Recipients of the coin were, 2Lt Hardy, WO2 (CSM) Woodward, LCpl Khan, Pte Kershaw and Pte Cavender.

# NEWS REGARDING THE MERCIAN GALLERY IN NOTTINGHAM CASTLE FROM THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

You have no doubt heard the news that the Trust that runs Nottingham Castle has gone into administration and I wanted to reassure you about the future of our gallery.

1. The Castle is now closed to all visitors and will remain so until the Council have developed their plan to reopen. It is the Council's stated intent that Nottingham Castle as an attraction will reopen. As can be expected this is breaking news so there are no further details on reopening dates and we should not expect anything this side of Christmas. I have undertaken to keep trustees and other interested parties updated and news will be passed on to the wider regimental family, when appropriate.

2. Security of Artefacts. All artefacts we display in the Castle belong to the museum and Council not the Nottingham Castle Trust (NCT) therefore would they are not assets that the Insolvency Administrators could seize. Our artefacts are secured in modern cases that have been assessed for their suitability as part of our full accreditation. In addition Castle security was not handed over to the NCT and remain funded by the City Council. In other words the security profile has not changed indeed the absence of visitors reduces the risk of theft or damage. All artefacts are insured under the City Council insurance policy. The Council have now established a forward office in the castle that will be occupied during the working week.

3. Security of Tenure. There is no threat to our security of tenure in the castle. The Museum was and remains part of the Castle visitor experience and the fact that the City Council intent is to reopen as soon as practicable is of further reassurance.

4. Security of Museum Employees. The Curator, Museum Enquiries and Bookkeeper posts are not under threat all are funded by the Museum and Grant in Aid and are nothing to do with the NCT.

# STOCKPORT BRANCH CRA & MVRA THE MERCIAN REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

*Steven Gregory, Publicity Member*

## **October Meeting**

On Friday 7th October, the Branch meeting was opened with a minute's silence for Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and closed with the Loyal Toast to His Majesty King Charles III.

Twenty-four members were present with nine apologies. Topics included a future widows' event (proposed to be held annually on the second Saturday in February); MVRA Service of Remembrance at the NMA; coffee mornings at the ARC; establishment of welfare comms through SSAFA; Remembrance Sunday arrangements (back to normal); Ken's Curry Night; Ladies' Dinner Night; final preparations for the East Cheshire Reunion; AGM agenda item to revisit the Cheshire Regiment Memorial at the NMA on a regular basis; a proposed trip to Normandy next year; awareness of a Ukrainian Aid drop-off centre in Macclesfield and last, but by no means least – formal thanks to the Branch's standard bearers who have turned out frequently (and often at short notice) through the tumultuous events of September: namely Derek Sykes, Steve Whaite, Brian Hartigan, Les Heighway and Joe Sutton.

## **75th East Cheshire Reunion**

The 75th occasion of the East Cheshire Reunion was celebrated at St. Julien's Barracks on Saturday 29th October. It is believed to be one of the longest-running military reunions in the world. The inaugural event was held in Macclesfield on 30th October 1948. Whilst the event is now attended by those with strong affiliations to the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment, the original attendance was restricted to "Only those Officers, Warrant Officers, NCOs and Men who served with the 7th Battalion during the war years – 3rd September, 1939, to 8th May, 1945". The occasion, now probably Stockport Branch's main event, was moved to Stockport from Macclesfield in 1999, on the sale of the Drill Hall on Bridge Street.

One hundred and twenty-five comrades from many eras, including serving/recent Mercians, enjoyed hearing 'Wha Wadna Fecht for Charlie'; an Act of Remembrance; Hot Pot Supper and a few beverages whilst being entertained not only by Bollington Brass Band, but also by Cheshire Police Corps of Drums. Along with memories of a great evening, everyone took away with them a set of Cheshire Regiment coasters, made exclusively for the event. It was great to see Karl Bond, one of our Branch members who had travelled from Victoria, Australia specifically for the event. Karl was in A Coy, 1 Mercian (V) and also A Coy, 3 Cheshire (V) at Stockport before emigrating in 2008.

### **November Meeting**

Another well attended meeting, odd month so 'formal' dress – an eclectic mix of regimental ties were on parade: Mercian, Cheshire, Mercian Volunteers, Royal Artillery and even Seaforth Highlanders! Topics covered were: Remembrance (both Stockport and Whitehall), Ballykelly, Ladies' Dinner Night, Ken's Curry Night, accoutrements for Branch Standards, hardship funding and a widows' event.

### **Remembrance Sunday**

On Sunday 13th November it was 'back to normal' for the parade in Stockport with all being welcomed into St. Julien Barracks for hotpot and a pint. All three Branch Standards (Mercian, Cheshire and Mercian Volunteers) were on parade. Separately, eight members of the branch formed up as part of the Mercian Volunteer's Regimental Association contingent in the march past at Whitehall proudly wearing oak leaves as a formed body in the presence of Royalty. This is obviously rooted in the Cheshire and Mercian Regiments' traditions, but we will be the only MVRA Branch with oak leaves, carried over from when Stockport was home to 'A' (Cheshire) Coy, 1 Mercian (V).

### **Kens' Curry Night 25/11**

We've been going to the Chilli Massalla in Edgeley since the sad passing of Ken Ward in 2009. Ken was a long-serving CSM of 'A' (Cheshire) Coy, 1 Mercian (V) and 'A' Coy 3 Cheshire (V). He bequeathed a curry celebration in 2009 and it has become one of our Branch traditions since. Fifteen members enjoyed the event on Friday 25th November; the first since we were locked down.

### **Ballykelly 40th Anniversary**

Another of our antipodean members, Aidan Lees (who regularly 'Zooms' into Branch meetings), came over to the UK from Auckland, NZ, and thence to Ballykelly to join the other Branch members and standards in the Act of Remembrance on 4th December to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Droppin' Well atrocity. There was also a service on the actual anniversary, 6th



December, at Stockport War Memorial Art Gallery, attended by Branch members and other ex-Cheshires.

### **December Meeting & Ladies' Dinner Night 9/12**

On Friday 9th December, a short meeting was held in the run-up to the main event of the evening: the Ladies' Dinner Night. Pete Gresty was on Meet 'n' Greet, Pete Marsh Maître D', belly-robbing by Pete Gally/Erica Mills and pan-diving led by Keith Meadowcroft, remainder tasked as appropriate by Mike Pilkington. Twenty-four ladies dined, and later danced to beats from DJ Mike 'Buck' Rogers.

### **And finally...**

It was great to see that the Stockport's 'Old Contemptibles' Association Standard (1921-1976), alongside Chester's, has been refurbished and mounted for display in the Museum for years to come. Well done museum volunteers Mike Chatterton and John Harrison.

# THE WORCESTERSHIRE AND SHERWOOD FORESTERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

At the annual general meeting for the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters association, the association president, Brig (Retd) Peter Dennis CBE, presented Messrs Doyle & Higginbottom, both of Derby branch, with their Merit Awards.

# WORCESTERSHIRE & SHERWOOD FORESTER REGIMENT VETERAN CELEBRATES 100TH BIRTHDAY

December 2022 saw the celebration of WFR veteran Albert Renshaw's 100th birthday.

Albert, who is based at a care home in Leek, Staffordshire, received a visit from soldiers from The Mercian Regiment, where they presented him with a Commemorative Mercian Regiment coin and birthday card.

# THE ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

Regimental Headquarters has had several personnel getting in touch asking "How do I become a Chelsea Pensioner?" To be eligible for admission, a candidate must be a former non-commissioned officer or soldier of the British Army who is:

1. Over 65 years or of State Pension age (whichever is higher).
2. Either in receipt of an Army Service Pension or War Disability Pension which you would be required to surrender upon entry to the Royal Hospital OR if you do not receive an Army Pension you would be required to make a weekly financial contribution (payable by Standing Order) towards your living costs. This contribution will be based on an assessment of affordability completed during the application process. Please note if you are in receipt of an Army Service Pension and/or War Disability Pension you may also be required to make a top-up contribution (also based on an assessment of affordability).
3. Free of any financial obligation to support a spouse or family.

To be able to live independently in the sheltered accommodation (Long Wards) – the Royal Hospital Chelsea is unable to accept direct entries to the nursing wards.

If you have lost your partner / wife and have felt lonely over the Christmas period and would like more information about living at The Royal Hospital Chelsea, please contact Lt Col (Retd) Bill Temminck on [Philip.Temminck100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Philip.Temminck100@mod.gov.uk).

More information about The Royal Hospital Chelsea can also be found [here](https://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/eligibility-how-apply). (<https://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/eligibility-how-apply>)

# PLANNING FOR YOUR FAMILY SHOULD THE WORST HAPPEN

## Planning tips to help your next of kin

Like every good Soldier it is best to be prepared. As Benjamin Franklin wrote: **"Nothing can be certain, except death and taxes."** It is not ghoulish to give serious thought to how your loved ones would cope with sorting out your affairs if they don't have the necessary information.

Putting together an emergency file that contains your personal data, such as birth, and marriage certificates, as well as details of insurance policies would help the family with the inevitable administration.

## Important Numbers:

1. National Insurance Number
2. Military Service Number
3. NHS Number
4. Driving License Number
5. Passport Number

## Where to Find things:

Making sure that your family know where you store important information can make the process much easier for them. Consider letting them know where you have the following stored:

1. Your Will
2. Power of attorney
3. Insurance policies
4. Deeds of house or lease of house
5. Rent book and tenancy details
6. Medical cards
7. Pension documents
8. Birth /marriage certificates
9. Banking/savings information
10. Certificate of stocks/shares or investments
11. Income Tax records
12. Car documentation
13. Keys

14. Address book
15. Pre-paid Funeral Plan
16. Computer passwords
17. Valuable items

### **Initial Action by the Bereaved:**

There are several steps that are required to be taken by the bereaved on the passing of a loved one. These steps include, but are not limited to:

1. Inform doctor
2. Register Death obtain death certificate minimum 5 copies
3. Inform relatives and friends
4. Consult Will, identify executor
5. Instruct Funeral Director
6. Inform Armed Forces pensions at Veterans UK
7. Apply for pensions as necessary
8. Inform Gov.UK if claiming State Pension
9. Make appropriate insurance claims
10. Instruct solicitor to wind up estate
11. Prepare obituary
12. Cancel policies that are paid out by direct debit
13. Inform/change gas/electric account holder
14. Inform local council re council tax if account holder
15. Inform Bank (if separate or joint account)
16. Cancel and pay off any credit cards
17. Inform premium bonds

**Ensure your family knows where this information is kept in a secure location**

### **Details of who to tell:**

There are several people and organisations who will need to be made aware of your passing. These include:

1. Doctor
2. Friends and Relatives
3. Solicitor and estate executor
4. Bank
5. Employer
6. Veterans UK if getting a military pension
7. HMRC
8. Gov.UK if obtaining state pensions or entitlements
9. Car Insurance company

10. Council Tax Office
11. Any clubs and military associations

**Your wishes:**

Finally it is important that you make your wishes known to your family.

1. Location of any donor cards
2. Any wishes concerning medical research
3. Funeral plans already made
4. Ceremony, place, order of service
5. Notices

You might think that the 'be prepared' list is obvious, but you would be surprised how many times we are contacted for advice.

The checklist here gives a guide to your spouse/partner may need to do should you die. It is not exhaustive as everyone circumstances and will need to add/remove some categories or topics. However, we urge you to complete a Will stating your wishes to stop your estate from being declared intestate and your family then needing to apply for probate which will cost them time and money. Doing this would save your next of kin a lot of distress at this most vulnerable time.