

THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

Quarterly Newsletter Q1 2023

Print Edition

1 MERCIAN COMMANDING OFFICER'S FOREWORD

Lt Col Grant Brown

I am delighted, having just assumed command of the 1st Battalion, to write my first forward for this newsletter. It goes without saying that the battalion remains extremely busy, with much to look forward to through the rest of the year. The first quarter has not disappointed, with members across the Battalion taking part in inter-unit boxing, acting as enemy troops in Germany, Warrior gunnery ranges, Nordic Skiing, low-level skills training, specialist weapon training – the list goes on.

The continuing war in Ukraine reminds us how vital it is that our skills remain sharp and that we understand our capabilities. We need to continue to train as effectively as possible. Our role is, after all, to fight and win wars on land, and 1 MERCIAN continues to train to do so. We do, however, need to remember that life is for living. We must continue to seek enjoyment from what it is we do – whether that be professional satisfaction from a job well done, thrills from Adventurous Training, or the ability to take part in sport. Opportunities will be fleeting and part of my job is to identify them and ensure as many of our people get to take part in the 'fun' stuff as is possible.

As always, none of what we do would be possible without the patience and support of our families and loved ones. My thanks go out to them.

I'm hugely honoured to be the new Commanding Officer – I don't underestimate the effort that you all put in to making 1 MERCIAN the battalion that it is. Thank you for your hard work. Stand Firm, Strike Hard!

1 MERCIAN B (MALTA) COMPANY

Maj Thomas Onion, Officer Commanding B (Malta) Company

B (Malta) Company started 2023 with a bang with Warrior ranges in Lulworth (terrible pun intended), navigation training in Snowdonia and a section patrols competition in a very bleak Leek training area. All of this was in preparation to get the Company back under armour for the first time since Estonia all the way back in 2021 (readers will remember we've been busy training Ukrainians and training new crew since the amalgamation with 2 MERCIAN).

The Company deployed to Germany in a cold and frosty February to provide an enemy force ("Task Force HANNIBAL") for the RTR BG. After mission ready training, an extended tour in Estonia and significant top up training, the RTR BG are one of the most highly trained battle groups in the Army. Our job was to make life difficult for them... when many of us (myself included) were deploying on our first Armoured Infantry exercise. Fortunately, the RTR fully understood our training state and were able to provide both simulated training in the combined arms tactical trainer and space and time for us to conduct our own Company training. This was much needed before we faced off against a battlegroup significantly outmatching us with two squadrons of tanks, a Royal Welsh Company, guns, engineers and an obsession with black coveralls.

Once the force-on-force training started, we learned at pace, with the experience of talented senior and junior NCOs being a catalyst to bring the rest of us up to speed very quickly. Stand out moments include Cpl Stead of 5 Platoon bringing in fires to destroy the RTR's engineer RV during an obstacle crossing and Sgt Whitakers' excitement over the net whilst killing enemy vehicles (his excitement on the net even included the audacity of gripping my voice procedure), and Cpl Green's tactical patience waiting for tanks to cross the obstacle before targeting more engineer assets. The sum of these efforts allowed 5 Platoon to single handedly stop the BG in its tracks for at least 3 hours. It was during this serial that Lt Tom Jarrett attempted to develop some Electronic Warfare skills – playing Bob Marley's "We're Jammin" down the RTR BG net whilst their CO attempted to deliver orders. Fortunately, no-one was trying to shout 'stop stop stop' down the net at this time, and Lt Col Worth eventually saw the funny side after endex (the end of the exercise).

It was also telling that our TES (laser system) 'kill count' didn't seem to be included in the battlegroup after action review...

We return from Germany well prepared and confident as a Company – with lots of lessons learned and areas to improve on, eager to become masters of our craft. Our next job is Exercise AURORA 23 – deploying Warrior on a multinational exercise in Sweden. Look forward to reading about our Scandinavian adventure in the next newsletter.

1 MERCIAN DRAGON COY SUPPORT WEAPONS CADRES AND BASIC COMBAT SYLLABUS

Major Steven Broadhurst, Officer Commanding Dragon Company

In the early part of 2023 Dragon Company have been conducting some much-needed low level training. Getting back to basics has been a rewarding and highly useful opportunity for all participants.

The Recce Platoon have conducted a six-week training package which qualifies all participants as 'Recce Patrolmen'. They conducted a period of in-camp training before deploying to both Tregantle Fort in Devon and Brecon in south Wales for a gruelling three-week package.

The Anti-Tank Platoon has similarly qualified all soldiers as 'Javelin Gunners' in a well-run and arduous package on Salisbury Plain Training Area.

The Mortar Platoon have trained all previously light role soldiers to act as mounted soldiers, including live-firing mortars from Bulldog Armoured Fighting Vehicles.

The Assault Pioneer Platoon deployed to Swynnerton training area to conduct Urban and mobility support training. They spent time practicing mine clearance and honing their building breaching and assault skills.

The Sniper Platoon have completed a long stint live firing at Otterburn training area in Northumberland. This has been in preparation for their deployment on the US Army Sniper Competition as the British Army Sniper team.

All platoons then came back together to conduct a period of low-level training on Armoured vehicles, their *raison d'être*, to round off a very busy and rewarding few months.

1 MERCIAN Ex SHARPE'S SWORD 23

Capt Dean Davenport

Ex SHARPE'S SWORD is a competition conjured by Maj Gen Dr Andrew Sharpe CBE in 2001 to test Junior Officers in their military skills. Over the years, the competition has come in many forms, testing Officers with physically demanding, mentally challenging and fun (type 2) tasks to complete. During the tasks, the participants are scored by the directing staff and at the end of the competition, the Officer with the most points has the honour of having their name engraved on the Sharpe's Sword Trophy.

The 2023 competition consisted of an 17km navigation exercise, with seven separate tasks at checkpoints along the route. The first task was a kit inspection, with a twist. As this was an Officer's competition, alongside the expected; compass, medical equipment, and head-torch, the competitors were also expected to carry a bowtie and fountain pen. Once the kit check had been conducted under the meticulous eye of the RSM, WO1 Mark Giles CGC, the officers were set off in 10-minute intervals.

The first assessment was a sniper stalk, in which the competitor was displayed an enemy position on a map and provided with 15 minutes to apply camouflage, concealment and consider a route. Once the competitor was within range, the enemy held up a flash card with information on it. To read this information, the competitor had to get close enough to the enemy without being spotted. The next test was delivered at the 'Officer's Mess Forward.'

The Adjutant, Capt Dan Arnold, assessed the competitors in the enigma of 'Officership'. The 'Officer's Mess Forward' provided a civilised setting in which the officers were presented with different wines in which tasting notes were to be established. The Times quiz was to be completed and knowledge of Regimental history to be assessed. The stand finished with the Officers being required to finish a bowtie in under 30 seconds, once inspected by the Adjutant for quality, naturally. After a significant slog to the next checkpoint, competitors were greeted by the Rifle Company Commanders. Each competitor was given a FRAGO (a set of military orders) and tasked to conduct an estimate and back-brief their plan.

The final elements of the competition consisted of a medical stand, Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) recognition and calling for fires with the Mortar Platoon. By the end of the day, it was fairly even amongst the competitors and for 2Lt Langley and Capt Davenport, the front runners were even. In order to decide the winner, the Commanding Officer chose the crucible of the Tapper's Cup to allow each contender to state their case as to why he should win. In the end, after a valiant effort by both competitors, the Commanding Officer hailed Capt Davenport victorious and Sharpe's Sword Champion, until next year.

1 MERCIAN NORDIC SKIING TEAM

Capt Daniel Rhodes, MERCIAN Nordic Team Captain / OIC

“*Ski fast, shoot straight*”; the simple yet effective words of encouragement needed for any Nordic skiing team. Simple in saying, difficult in practice.

From mid-November to mid-February, a team of 8 MERCIANs trained and raced as part of the MERCIAN Nordic skiing team at the Infantry, Divisional and Army Champs, reeling in their best Unit performance at each event.

For those not familiar with Biathlon or Cross-Country skiing (collaboratively known as Nordic skiing by the British Army), take away 90% of the downhill slopes you might know from days on the snow finishing at Folie Douce, replace it with flat track or uphill slopes, add in a Biathlon rifle with iron-type sights and an expectation to shoot a 4.5cm circular target under extreme fatigue and, finally, swap out the North Face puffers for Lycra race suits and you won't be far off.

Training and racing in state-of-the-art facilities from Idrefjall, Sweden to Ruhpolding, Germany, the team rose to every race occasion and batted well above their average (relatively inexperienced), taking home silver medals at the Infantry Champs, bronze medals at the Div Champs and a very respectable 5th place finish at the Army Champs.

Self-sustained, the MERCIANs travelled, lived, trained, raced and socialised together for the entire period and were often complimented for their comradery and closeness as a team on and, as equally importantly, off the ski track. In true MERCIAN fashion, grey space was often exploited with purely cultural trips to Oslo, Munich and Salzburg during downtime.

The success on the tracks was further highlighted by 4 members of the team being offered places on the Army Nordic development programme. Rumours of a European based roller-ski camp as well as a snow camp further afield during the UK summer have certainly kept morale high now the European winter season has come to an end.

The team will look to expand in size for the training camp next winter, taking with them “return skiers” from this year's team who will look to push higher up the podium, as well as the next batch of novices.

1 MERCIAN BOXING

THE BABCOCK ARMY BOXING ASSOCIATION INTER-UNIT BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

Capt A E Hill, 1 MERCIAN Boxing Officer

After a successful inter-company boxing competition in Oct 2022, the decision was made to pull together the best of 1 MERCIAN boxers to form the 1 MERCIAN boxing team, under the guidance of boxing level 2 coaches Cpl Goody and LCpl Shepard, who immediately set to work on the new squad.

Capt Hill (1 MERCIAN Motor Transport Officer) took over as the boxing Officer and his first task was to enter the Unit into the Inter-Unit Championships. The Championship draw took place, starting with 1 MERCIAN vs 2 PARA (the 2nd Battalion of The Parachute Regiment) on the agreed date of 16 Feb 23.

After the Christmas stand down, an intense 6-week training camp followed in the lead up to 16 Feb, with the team using both military and civilian boxing facilities across the recruiting areas to improve their skills.

The event was held in Aliwal Bks, Tidworth with an excellent turn out showing support for both teams.

During the early bouts, it looked like a whitewash was on the cards as 2 PARA took the early decisions - with some questionable decisions in there also. However, 1 MERCIAN came on strong in the later bouts, making it an excellent competitive evening, and a great spectacle for all.

2 PARA took a 6-3 victory overall and move on to the next round, but 1 MERCIAN boxers can hold their heads up high after giving a great account of themselves having not entered the competition for several years.

Next up for 1 MERCIAN boxing team will see them competing in the 12 Brigade Inter-Unit boxing competition taking place in June 23. Onwards and Upwards.

4 MERCIAN B (MALTA) COMPANY, WIDENESS

OP FIRIC Experience

LCpl Patrick Stafford

During the last Quarter myself L/Cpl Patrick Stafford, and L/Cpl Neil Kirby deployed to the Falklands on OP FIRIC with 3 PWRR as a Section commanders. After mobilisation we conducted Pre-Deployment training at Pirbright. Here we participated in some quality LFTT, we managed to get the SA E Qualification, and pass the Land rover GS Cadre. We were then both given the opportunity to attend Junior Brecon SCBC (Reserve). After two weeks of hard graft in ridiculous weather we both passed, and were ready to deploy as Section Commanders.

Once in the Falklands we quickly settled in as the Roulemont Infantry Company. We started our duties on long range patrols being transported via helicopter to various isolated farms across the islands where we stayed with the local farmers and helped with CIMIC taskings as well as military tasks. We also manned the QRF which we were tested on during Ex Cape Defender where we had to respond to various scenarios including intruders on camp, bomb threats and securing the airfield. I also deployed onto onion range to complete LFTT and blank firing exercises across the challenging terrain the Falklands has to offer. I thoroughly enjoyed my deployment and managed to gain a huge array of experience and skills which has helped my development as a junior commander. I had chance to visit several Battlefield sites being shown how the British were able to retake the Islands by men who actually fought there.

I would highly recommend Op FIRIC for all soldiers as it provided a good test of my abilities and allowed me to gain a lot more experience to use for the future. The deployments are every 6 months, and are a perfect stepping stone for junior soldiers to get their first deployment under the belt.

4 MERCIAN C (KOHIMA) COMPANY, BULLWELL

Major Deepe Rawji

C Company have hit the ground running by providing a busy period of instruction on training evenings in the final quarter of the training year. CBRN training, RFTs, GPMG training, J2 updates from Eastern Europe, medical training, MS Guidance, CQB lessons in the skills house and completing Op Teamwork have been the bulk of the first 3 months.

The first Bn training weekend was conducted on 13-15 Jan 23, Ex Winter Eagle at Swynnerton where ITR's were covered to enhance our troops opportunities to achieve their certificate of efficiency. There have also been troops deploying on various exercises. Four members of C Company went on Ex Frosted Eagle (skiing in Austria). Pte Wells from Nottingham attended PJNCO Cadre in Catterick in January with a strong pass. He has dived straight into an acting LCpl role on a recent section patrol competition, of which the team came first. Good job!

WO2 Woodward from Mansfield has provided CBRN training for the entire Bn. He has incorporated immersive chemical attack training, and has improved CBRN reporting. The end of January saw the company dinner night at the University of Nottingham where we said farewell for Sgt Orton after 35 years of service in the Army Reserves. A well-attended event with Pte Bulman from Nottingham receiving the best soldier award for 2022.

Cpl Noble from Newark and Pte Wells attended Army Officer Selection Board last week. Congratulations to them both for passing Main Board. They will be seeking regular commissions in the near future. Four members of the company qualified in DTTT in March. Cpl Leatherland from Alfreton, qualified with the T4 competency. This allows him to teach the DTTT course within the unit. Overall a busy, but very productive time for C Company.

4 MERCIAN D (DRAGON) COMPANY, STOKE

Major Will Rose

D Coy has been focusing on core skills to achieve annual "Certificates of Efficiency" with field training out of a FOB at Swynnerton, support weapon training in Leek, shooting the ACMT at Kingsbury Ranges and completing the Role Fitness test in Nottingham. Concurrently we have been preparing 5 members of the Coy to train Ukrainians as part of Op INTERFLEX. Major Rich Peacock from Stoke on Trent remains deployed on Op SHADER. WO2 Paul Spilsbury from Stoke on Trent has been checking passports at Heathrow as part of Op ILLKANE. Pte Ed Foster from Macclesfield instructed on the Bn skiing trip as one of the 5 D Coy personnel who attended.

Congratulations go to LCpl Joe Boote from Macclesfield and LCpl David Brinton from Winsford on their promotions. Congratulations to Sgt Connor Ball and family on the birth of his baby daughter. We send our best wishes to Capt Steve Condliffe from Talke currently on sick leave.

4 MERCIAN HQ (EAGLE) COMPANY

Maj B Johnston MBE

Recruits from 4 MERCIAN attend a pre-Combat Infantry Course over the weekend 3-5 March 23. This pre course training is designed to better prepare the recruits for the future and ensure they are ready for the Combat Infantry Course at the Infantry Training Centre for the British Army in Catterick. 4 MERCIAN run the pre training every month to allow recruits to fully develop their skills including fieldcraft, shooting, first aid and fitness. All our recruits can attend as often as they want while they build up to attend the Combat Infantry Course.

This is a challenging but enjoyable training weekend that recruits attend numerous times as they build up their fitness and skill set. This also enables 4 MERCIAN training team to assess recruits to ensure they attend the Combat Infantry Course ready, able to achieve a first-time pass and become a fully trained Infantry soldier able to deploy on operations anywhere in the world.

Re-signing The Armed Forces Covenant

Capt Paul Tyrer PSAO

4 MERCIAN were invited to attend Wolverhampton Civic Centre to witness the Mayor of Wolverhampton, Councillor Sandra Samuels OBE, re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant and confirming the Council's status as Gold Award winners of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

Prior to the signing, LCpl John Ramsden and Capt Richard Jones delivered a presentation on their experiences within the Armed Forces. A further 11 local companies and organisations also signed the covenant on the day."

Training Overview, HQ Coy, Wolverhampton 1st January- 31st March

2Lt Hubbard

HQ Coy had a busy start to the calendar year with several troops from the Coy partaking in the first Battalion exercise of the year, Ex Winter Eagle. This demanding exercise tested soldiers on their competencies in key ITRs such as CBRN, C-EO and BCD. In addition, the troops were provided opportunities to conduct VCPs as well as OPs. Other training HQ Coy has been involved in include an ACMT, Ex

Eagle Support and Ex Challenge Eagle, where HQ Coy could further develop their soldering and marksmanship drills.

HQ Coy has made one of its objectives to provide Coy training days. The intent is to provide training for the troops which they may not ordinarily find on a battalion weekend. In February, Lt Murdoch took the lead in planning the first Coy day of the year. The day included a navigation exercise in Cannock Chase followed by C-EO, and BCD.

Looking ahead to the rest of the year, HQ Coy has a multitude of training days planned. In April there is a day of DCCT training planned, and a chance later in the year for troops to refresh their soldiering skills in an urban environment.

My Journey in the Reserves

Pte Bates

"My experience of joining the reserves has been exciting, engaging, challenging and progressive. Initially, it was quite daunting, especially being the only female training to be an infanteer. The terms used were like a foreign language to me, and I was still questioning if joining the reserves was for me or not.

However, after my induction interview, where I was made to feel welcomed, I realised quickly that everyone at Worcester and Kidderminster were approachable and supportive. After attending a few drill nights, I started to recognise some of the terminology which had confused me, I felt confident to ask questions when I didn't understand, and I booked my Mod 1 training after being there for just over a month.

In January 2022 I began my basic training, where I attended Donnington for several weekends. This was perfect for me as I didn't need to take any time off work and with it being every other weekend. I still had my personal time as well as being able to ask my unit for advice between each visit. This was ideal as learning how to live in the field was pretty straight forward, but that was not necessarily the case when it came to weapon handling. I expressed this at drill nights, and the training staff would then ensure I had some 1-2-1 support with practicing weapon handling before I would return to Donnington. Because of this, I became confident with my drills, and now love the time I get to spend at the ranges. I did my Mod 3 pretty quickly after completing Mod 1 and 2 where I went to Grantham for 2 weeks. This could be intense at times as you are putting everything you have learnt over your basic training into practice, but the staff were supportive, and patient. I completed my basic training in April 2022.

Due to covid and being injured, I went to CIC a little later than planned in January of this year. I was the only female to complete the course yet in no way did I ever feel excluded from the rest of the platoon. My section made sure I didn't miss out on any orders or timings as well as making sure I wasn't feeling isolated with having to be in

separate accommodation. And it wasn't just my section which did this, all the lads would go out of their way to include me, and the staff were very supportive and would check in with me regularly. It was an intense 2 weeks, which wasn't helped by the cold nights, but morale within my section remained high and was a massive contributor for me not only passing the course, but also being awarded top student. This course really pushed me out of my comfort zone with the cold, sleep deprivation and physical demands, yet looking at what I have achieved, it is an experience that not many people go through and has made me a better soldier, and person because of it.

I no longer question if the reserves are for me. The skills I have developed have not only allowed me to get to where I am now in my military career, but also how they support me in my everyday life. Leadership, communication, organisation, self-discipline, and resilience are just a few benefits which being part of 4 Mercian have given me. I look forward to seeing how I can continue to progress."

4 MERCIAN GOING FOR GOLD

4 Mercian took part in an employer engagement event in Kidderminster last week. The event was called “Going for Gold” and is an advocacy event for Gold Award Association members of Defence’s Employer Recognition Scheme to lead/mentor Silvers and key Bronzes on their journey to Gold. Sustainability (Planet, People & Productivity/Profit) is the theme which underpins the event and how that relates to the Armed Forces Community.

The support of businesses is vital to Defence, including the recruitment and retention of Reservists, the employment of veterans and service spouses/partners. The Employer Recognition Scheme was launched to recognise those employers who support Defence People objectives and encourage others to exhibit the same behaviours. Defence is keen to provide recognition to those employers that are going above and beyond the call of duty in supporting our People. Employers can reap real rewards from employing military personnel such as Reservists and Service Leavers, acquiring a portfolio of skills and behaviours that are beneficial in a modern working environment.

To date, more than 10,000 organisations have publicly pledged their support for the Armed Forces community by signing the Armed Forces Covenant.

THE BAND OF THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

Sgt Jennie Wood

The start of 2023 has had a training focus with The Band of the Mercian Regiment focussing on new music and preparing for the upcoming concert series.

Some of the Musicians started their year as part of the Regimental skiing trip Ex Frosted Eagle where they further developed their skiing abilities and pushed themselves out of their comfort zone.

Many of our musicians do other roles within the wider Army family, some also serving as ACF musical instructors to help pass on some of their musical experience.

The much looked forward to Rorkes Drift Concert in Breacon, this year was supported by several reserve musicians who worked with the cadets to prepare the music and to support on stage, along with those Mercian musicians who are also instructors, and alongside members of the Band of the Royal Welsh Regiment to produce a top notch concert complete with pyrotechnics, bugles, pipes, and a stunning display of what the young musicians are capable of. Well done to everyone involved.

As always, our saxophone group have been out and about in support of dinners and events around the region providing tradition and ceremony and some great dinner music. Our duty bugler Corporal Wendy Robert has been in demand for solemn Last Post honours, and has been assisting to provide the required calls as needed.

In February she was also invited to perform the calls for the Lord Lieutenants of Worcestershire's event to announce this year's Lord Lieutenant's cadets who will accompany him on official royal events around the region - a very positive evening!

In March, members of The Band of the Mercian Regiment were out on parade with The Band of the Royal Irish Regiment as part of the St Patrick's Day festivities in Shropshire.

This year the celebration was in sunshine, unlike previous years, and included the traditional presenting of the Shamrocks, then wearing the Shamrock in their head dress, and meeting the Regimental Mascot Brian Boru X (Conri) who is an Irish Wolfhound.

As a reserve musician being on parade with other bands is a good opportunity to meet other musicians, play very different music, and can be an enjoyable day, when it's not snowing that is!

Upcoming Events

- 13th May - Market Drayton Festival Centre: *From the Classics to the Modern - An evening's entertainment with The Band of the Mercian Regiment. Come and join us as we play a selection of music that reflects the nation's mood for celebrating the King's Coronation, coupled with favourites spanning all genres and tastes. Tickets are free, but need to be booked.*
- 3rd June - A Programme of events and music at The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent
- July – Sonderborg Ring Riders Festival, Denmark

ASSOCIATION VISIT TO 1 MERCIAN

On the 7 February, over 60 Association Members and their spouses, from all of the antecedent regiments, and a few other guests were invited to Picton Barracks to visit 1 Mercian. Following arrival refreshments and a look around the anti-rooms, the Commanding Officer, Lt Col Dean Canham OBE welcomed all and presented the Union flag, from the coffin of Cpl Pearce, to his family. Both gave an emotional speech about the ceremony.

Following a traditional army 'curry lunch', all were invited to visit the stands that the troops had assembled; A Grenadier Coy provided a Warrior Armoured fighting vehicle and many took their chance and clamoured over it. D Dragon Coy provided an Assault Pioneers stand, an 81mm Mortar stand (the Battalion's organic fire support) and a Javelin Anti-Tank weaponry stand. Much equipment was held whilst interacting with the soldiers and reminiscing about days gone by.

Everyone then moved to the WO's and Sgt's Mess where WO1 (RSM) Marc Giles CGC welcomed everyone and gave a brief history of the mess. Everyone was free to look around the mess that had been recently refurbished with artifacts from all 3 antecedent regiments (as had the Officers Mess) and look at dining room set ready with all its splendour, for the Commanding Officer's, dine out.

The feedback to the visit was very positive and thanks are giving to the CO, the RSM, all hosts and all troops on the stand for making it an enjoyable and memorable day, for all.

WORCESTERSHIRE & SHERWOOD FORESTERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

HRH UNVEILING OF NORTON STATUE

On 4 April , HRH The Princess Royal dedicated the plaque for 'The Sentry'. A life sized WWI soldier bought about by the dedication of a local enthusiastic residents turned historians, The Norton Worcestershire Regiment Group (NRWG), who all live on the site that used to house Norton Barracks, the home of The Worcestershire Regiment. HRH, who is Patron of the WFRA met with the NWRG, civic dignitaries, members of the WFRA, members of 1 Mercian and LCpl Derby.

CHESTERFIELD BRANCH

On the 20th January, Chesterfield Branch provided a complimentary trip for its members, to go to The Royal Hospital Chelsea. Members were met by John 'Tich' Bryne, ex WFR and now a Chelsea Pensioner. He and other RHC guides took the members on a friendly, beautiful and informative tour and a great day was had by all. There was even time for a spot of shopping.

Worksop Branch update - January-March 2023

Branch members attended Crich Memorial grounds on Saturday 14th January 2023, invited by Rachel, daughter of Ian "Duke" Middleton to be present at the scattering of her father's ashes. Duke had served with 3WFR and later been very active with Royal British Legion, serving as a case worker as well as belonging to the RBL Biker Section. He was praised for his attendance and support at many RBL functions by the local Vice Chair of RBL. Ian also qualified as a SSAFA case worker and served Worksop Branch, WFRA with equal vigour.

February was a little more light-hearted with members getting together to 'blow the cobwebs away' with a steady 4 mile walk organised by Branch chair, Lee Simcox at the start of the month. At the end of the month screeching cats were reported locally as members enjoyed drinks and karaoke at the Sherwood Ranger, Carlton in Lindrick where members were well looked after by the owner who is ex 1WFR.

The Worksop branch AGM took place on Saturday 25th March 2023, attended by 17 members. Following the meeting, 24 members and guests enjoyed a meal and the branch Chair thanked former branch secretary, Mark Butcher for his hard work and dedication supporting the branch. Having played a large part in building the branch to what it is now, Mark remains a key member of the branch but has passed on the secretary's baton after 10 years, in order to pursue other interests.

ARMED FORCES PENSION SCHEMES (AFPS) - DEFERRED PENSIONS

Overview and History

Pension members who have served in the Armed Forces since 1975, and did not qualify for an immediate pension may be entitled to a Deferred Pension.

Prior to 6 April 1975, there was no provision for a preservation of pension benefits and Service personnel who left the Armed Forces had to have completed 16 years service from age 21 (Officers) or 22 years from age 18 (Other Ranks) to be eligible for a pension. Those who left before that date, without completing the above criteria, had no pension entitlement unless they were medically retired.

The Pension rules were changed so as to allow for individuals who left before the immediate pension point to accrue benefits under the scheme but not to be paid until they had reached pension benefit age:

- From 06 April 1975, deferred pensions could be claimed for payment at age 60 for all those discharged over the age of 26 with a minimum of five years reckonable service. Reckonable service starts from age 18 for other ranks and age 21 for officers;
- In 1978, the age criterion was removed;
- From 06 April 1983 Service personnel no longer needed 5 years reckonable service, but 5 years contracted out service (contracted out service is service from age 16 earned after 6/4/78
- On 06 April 1988, the qualifying period was reduced from five years to two years
- On 6 April 2006, the deferred pension age changed to age 65

AFPS 75

AFPS 75 deferred pension member whose service ended **before 6 April 2006**, should claim their pensions, from Veterans UK, at age 60.

AFPS 75 deferred pension members whose service ended on or after 6 April 2006, but who had at least two years service before 6 April 2006, should claim the proportion of their pension which relates to their pre 6 April 2006, service at age 60 with the remainder becoming payable at age 65.

AFPS 05

AFPS 05 was introduced in 2005 and for those joining or rejoining the Regular Armed Forces from 6 April 2005. Serving members of AFPS 75 were given the opportunity to transfer to AFPS 05 by 6 April 2006. AFPS 05 deferred pension members should claim their pensions from Veterans UK at age 65.

RFPS 05

RFPS 05 is a scheme applicable for those starting or renewing a Full Time Reserve Service commitment /contract from 6 April 2005 and Serving members of FTRSPS 97 were given the opportunity to transfer to RFPS 05 by 6 April 2006.

AFPS 05 and RFPS05 deferred pension members should claim their pensions from Veterans UK at age 65.

Claiming an Early Payment of a Pension in the Event of Permanent ill Health

A deferred member of any of the pension schemes mentioned above, is entitled to apply to claim for an immediate payment of a deferred pension and lump sum before reaching age 65 and

- In the opinion of Veterans UK (who has received evidence from a medical practitioner or other specialists) that the deferred member has suffered a permanent break down in health which has left them unable to work full-time, in any capacity, and this condition will continue until deferred pension age (age 65).
- He is not an active member of another occupational pension scheme
- Early payment of the pension may be subject to review and stopped if it is considered that the criterion for payment was no longer met.

Early Payment of Deferred Pensions with Actuarial Reduction

A deferred member can claimed for an immediate payment of a deferred pension but with an actuarial adjustment to take account of the longer period for which the pension will be in payment. The ages from which this form of early payment may be claimed are:

- AFPS 75 member - the proportion of the deferred pension payable at age 65 may be claimed from age 60;
- AFPS 75 Pension Credit Member (PCM)* – If this pension is the result of a Pension Sharing Order (PSO) and the PSO has taken effect then the PCM can opt to claim it from age 55

- AFPS 05 - from age 55. Such a claim will not affect any EDP payments which are being paid.
- AFPS 05 PCM* – If this pension is a result of a Pension Sharing Order (PSO) and the PSO has taken effect then the PCM can opt to claim it from age 55
- Reserve Forces Pension Scheme (RFPS) from age 55
- RFPS 05 PCM* - If this pension is a result of a Pension Sharing Order(PSO) and the PSO has taken effect then the PCM can opt to claim it from age 55

** Pension Credit Member (PCM) – This relates to an ex spouse of the member in whose favour a Pension Sharing Order has been made by a Court as part of a divorce settlement. A PCM becomes a member of their ex spouses pension scheme and they are a member of that pension scheme in their own right.*

Reduced life expectancy

Deferred members of AFPS 05 and RFPS 05 and Pension Credit Members of these schemes, with a reduced life expectancy of 12 months or less may claim their deferred entitlement earlier. Applications of this nature should be made to Veterans UK.

What do I do next?

Veterans UK will not contact you to commence payment of a deferred Pension you must contact them. To find out if you are entitled to a deferred pension ring or write to the Veterans UK Enquiry Service on **0800 085 3600** or **94560 3600** or alternatively: E-mail: **Veterans-uk@mod.uk**