

THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
Q1 2024**

1 MERCIAN - COMMANDING OFFICER'S FOREWORD

Lt Col Grant Brown

I write this forward as the 1 MERCIAN BG is busy deploying on Ex IMMEDIATE RESPONSE in Poland which, as part of Exercise STEADFAST DEFENDER EUROPE, is the largest deployment of the British Army in a generation. A (Grenadier) Company have also been preparing to deploy on Ex COMBINED RESOLVE as part of the KRH BG to Germany to form part of a US Army Brigade.

We have all been incredibly busy readying our fleet and ourselves to demonstrate UK capability in the face of continued Russian aggression. We must be under no illusions – Russia will be watching us as we prepare, as we deploy, and as we are operating in Europe. That's a good thing, it is the whole point of this deployment. But it will mean a rigorous approach to things like the use of mobile phones whilst out in theatre. We must expect Russian agents to be conducting an electronic collect on us while there, so the measures we will have in place are designed to protect all of us.

As always, I thoroughly appreciate the efforts of our soldiers, and I really do respect the support and patience from all of our loved ones – without you we would not be able to do what we are doing.

1 MERCIAN C COY - Ex IRON CYCLONE

C (Kohima) Company spent two weeks on Salisbury Plain training the next generation of Warrior Commanders. The exercise was planned and conducted by the Combined Arms Manoeuvre Centre and is designed to teach newly qualified Warrior Commanders how to tactically command the Warrior IFV. The course was four weeks long; two weeks in Sennelager, Germany and two weeks on Salisbury Plain.

This was C Company's first armoured infantry exercise since it's reanimation in September 2022. The exercise was the culmination of eight weeks of work. For many of the lads it was their first taste of armoured infanteering under ideal conditions of the wettest February in a decade. Despite the rain, wind, and mud it was an invaluable experience for C Company before it starts training for the battalion's deployment to Estonia.

1 MERCIAN - Ex SHARPE'S SWORD – JUNIOR OFFICER'S COMPETITION

Exercise Sharpe's Sword is the Battalion's annual Junior Officer's competition, designed to test the mental and physical robustness of the Battalion's young officers, whilst assessing their abilities and knowledge in a range of military tasks.

This year, the event began with eleven young officers from the Battalion being taken to a secluded barn on Salisbury plain at midnight on 7 Mar 24. They underwent a rigorous kit check by the RSM before setting off on a circa. 40 km individual march back to Bulford. Navigating by map and compass, and sometimes a wing and a prayer, participants made their way through a number of stands, including Communications, Armoured Fighting Vehicle recognition, Military Knowledge, and marksmanship tests. A start time of 0200 combined with a cold, wet and foggy night made the first leg challenging, but as the participants moved through the checkpoints

and the sun came up, morale improved markedly. There were even a few smiles on show as they trudged on to the range at Bulford around 1030 after 30 odd Km.

Firing sharpshooter rifles for the first time was a highlight for many, followed swiftly by an uphill stretch to the combat estimate stand. Here the young officers were put through their paces in planning for a company level defensive operation, giving back briefs to a group of Majors.

From here it was all downhill to the finish and a dinner night to celebrate and crown the winner. This year 2Lt Charles Gray was triumphant and was presented his prize by Maj Gen (Retd) Sharpe. A good day out for all, and a strong demonstration of grit, determination, physical and mental prowess of the junior portion of The Officers' Mess.

1 MERCIAN - ANTI-TANK PLATOON CADRE

After a well-earned Christmas leave and returning from Castlemartin ranges, it was time for the Anti-Tank Platoon to qualify all of their Javelin operators for another year. The Platoon deployed to Weeton Barracks in Blackpool, where the theoretical phase of the cadre was conducted.

Throughout the Platoon conducted physical training in preparation for soldiering with the additional weight that comes with using the Javelin missile system and vital lessons such as Armoured Fighting Vehicle recognition and weapon handling.

After a successful training period in the North of England the Platoon deployed immediately onto Salisbury Plain. Under their detachment commanders the soldiers soon got to grips with what would be expected of them as Anti-Tank soldiers, putting into practice all they had learnt in Blackpool, refining their skills as a Javelin Gunner. The tactical phase culminated after many hours of digging in observation posts before the soldiers occupied positions to conduct an Anti-Armour ambush, for this action they had to put into practice all of the skills they had been taught over the previous 3 weeks and it proved an excellent test of what they had learnt.

A special congratulations goes to Pte Hanrahan who was been awarded the position of top student for the cadre.

1 MERCIAN - RECCE PLATOON CADRE

The 1 Mercian Recce Platoon recently completed a rigorous 5-week cadre, marking a significant milestone in their operational readiness. Throughout the course, the troops honed their skills in various areas, including navigation, armoured training, and reconnaissance tactics.

A highlight of their training regimen was the completion of 8 solo navigation exercises, demonstrating their ability to navigate and operate independently in diverse terrain and conditions. This not only enhances their individual capabilities but also reinforces the Platoon's overall effectiveness in reconnaissance missions.

In addition to this, the troops engaged in armoured training using the Virtual Battlespace Simulator (VBS), allowing them to simulate real-world scenarios and

refine their tactics in a safe and controlled environment. This experience with armoured tactics prepares them for the challenges they may encounter in the field.

The culmination of their training saw the cadre deployed to Brecon for an arduous dismounted recce exercise. Operating from Sub Surface Observation Posts, they tested their skills in surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence gathering in the challenging terrain and environment. Having now completed the cadre, the Platoon is ready for its next deployment, leading the 1 MERCIAN Battlegroup from the front.

4 MERCIAN B (MALTA) COMPANY

This last 3 months has seen B Coy invigorated with many of our number returning to the fold after training Ukrainians on Op INTERFLEX and the fresh challenge of taking part in an Armoured Division wide wet gap crossing in Poland this summer laid in front of us.

We have had three LCpls promoted to Cpl. Congratulations to:

- Kirby
- Evans
- Stafford

And congratulations to five Ptes promoted to LCpl:

- Goldsmith
- McFadden
- Rynhart
- Hennegan
- Dalakouras

Ptes Comfort and Mann completed the Battle Camp phase of their basic training, on which Pte Mann was awarded Best Shot.

We welcomed Captain Tony Blackshaw in as Coy 2IC and said farewell to Cpl Jay Heaton who departs to a demanding civilian job after organising an excellent winter cohesion Go-Carting Event for B Coy.

4 MERCIAN - HQ (EAGLE) COMPANY FAMILIES DAY

CSgt Green, AT PL Sgt

On Saturday 3rd June, HQ Coy held an open day for soldier's families to give them an insight on what we do during training events and to show some of the equipment we use. The OC, Maj Johnston, opened the event by thanking the families for their continued support for the soldiers. C/Sgt Green then gave a brief history of the Glorious 1st June and its relevance to the Mercian Regiment of Today.

The soldiers' families were then invited to enjoy the stands that had been set up for them. At the front of the building there was a vehicle display with an SV and a Land Rover as well as an inflatable assault course. Both of which were popular with younger children. Inside the main building we had a weapons display which included a Javelin and a set of Virtus. The indoor range was in use as a BB experience which

proved to be very popular. Food and refreshments were provided, and the weather was on our side throughout the day.

4 MERCIAN - ARMED FORCES COVENANT SIGNING

Soldiers from 4 MERCIAN supported the Armed Forces Covenant signing by Marston's Brewery Wolverhampton. Businesses and organisations who wish to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces community sign the covenant. In doing so they make a range of written and publicised promises to set out their support. The Reserve Forces Cadet Association conducted the official signing of the Armed Forces Covenant with the CEO of Marston's and the Commanding Officer 4 MERCIAN.

As well as the Armed Forces Covenant, a ready steady cook type competition also took place. A team of military chefs went against the Marston's chefs. There were 3 judges: the CEO of Marston's, the Commanding Officer 4 MERCIAN, and the Dep Lord Lt Sylvia Parkin and the Dep Lord Mayor of Wolverhampton who presented the prize to the winning team. The Winning team was Marston's but a very close contest. The standard of food was exceptional.

A big thank you to Marston's for showing their support to the Armed Forces Community.

4 MERCIAN - CELEBRATION OF 104th BIRTHDAY

Captain Paul Tyrer, Colour Sergeant Chris Williams, Corporal Wendy Roberts and a few of the local Association visited Brooke Court Care Home in Kidderminster for Jack Beavon's 104th birthday.

Jack Beavon was a member of the 7th Battalion the Worcestershire Regiment and served at Dunkirk. There was a Remembrance Service where Last Post and Reveille was played by Cpl Wendy Robert from the Band of the Mercian Regiment. Jack was presented with a number of gifts from the Battalion along with a CO's Coin. When told that the coins were awarded for excellence, Jack replied that he'd been spoken to by a CO in the past about his insolence but never excellence! At 104 years young Jack is still as sharp as the tip of a bayonet.

4 MERCIAN - BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU TOURNAMENT

Pte Bunn competed in a BJJ competition. Since this competition he has gone on to win a gold medal at the Army BJJ Championship and selected for the Tri- service team.

Pte Jack Bunn, HQ Coy, 4 MERCIAN competed in the Roll Models Brazilian Ju Jitsu (BJJ) Competition held in Stoke-on-Trent. He secured 2 victories in the Gi Middleweight Division, earning an overall 2nd place. In the no Gi competition he won his first match but lost to the eventual winner of the contest. This was only Jack's second competition for the Gracie Barra Gym in Cannock and sets him up for the Army BJJ Championships later this month where he will compete with the 4 MERCIAN BJJ Team. If you think that you could "Roll with it" maybe you could find your role in 4 MERCIAN."

THE BAND OF THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

The start of the year for The Band of the Mercian Regiment has revolved around new music repertoire and development time laying the foundations for the years musical performances alongside some exciting public performances.

The Birmingham International Tattoo is Britain's biggest indoor tattoo, bringing over 1000 performers together. The Band of the Mercian Regiment, together with The Band of the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment, formed part of the fifty strong band who took centre arena to perform an intricate marching display to a mixture of traditional military band music and popular favourites to get the packed out arena dancing. With crown counter-marches, bomb bursts, cowboys and Indians and arrowhead formations, it certainly kept the crowd entertained! Working in large ensembles with other musicians on such a large scale in the public eye, and being part of the massed finale definitely gets the adrenaline going!

In March, as part of a series of Military Matchdays, a group from The Band of the Mercian Regiment entertained match goers in the 'Fanzone' ahead of the game at The Hawthorns in West Bromwich. There were opportunities to chat to some of the Reservists to find out more about their roles and how they balance civilian jobs with family life. The Band entertained the crowds with a series of popular favourites and the buoyant atmosphere certainly spread into the ground, as the home side celebrated with a 2 - 0 win against visitors Bristol City.

Small groups such as the saxophone quartet add a sense of occasion to many regimental events where a full band would not fit or be practical. This quarter, the saxophone quartet has been out and about entertaining at dinners and events around the area, notable performing at the dinner for Operation Ex Horseshoe Knowledge and the Master of Signals Lt Gen S Nesmith.

In personnel news, congratulations to Musician Katie Jenner, who has achieved a high pass in part one (individual performance) of CEQ2 which tests the technical skills required to be a competent British Army Band musician. She is now working on completion of CEQ2 part two "British Army Band Competence Assessment" which develops and evidences the complementary skills, knowledge and experience that form part of the musician's role.

And final news for this quarter – the Band has now been granted permission to recruit once more and is seeking both new musicians and recent ex-Regular musicians interested in joining their ranks.

DERBYSHIRE ARMY CADET FORCE

Derbyshire Freemasons donate to Army Cadets

Cadets and Adult Volunteers, from A & D Companies, came together at the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Derbyshire Freemasons to receive a £500 donation to each Detachment.

Cadets were led inside the historic building once owned by Rolls Royce and the development facility for the Merlin Engine used in World War II aircraft and tanks. Inside the Lodge room, the Freemasons gave a warm welcome and the presentations

began under the direction of the Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro Ian Copestake, who was flanked by Derbyshire High Sheriff Theresa Peltier, Derbyshire ACF Honorary Colonel Leigh Timmis, and senior members of the Provincial Grand Lodge.

Detachments plan to invest the money in expedition, sports and IT equipment, to enable high quality training and better the Cadet Experience.

Altogether, with the presentations to B & C Companies in June 2023, Derbyshire Freemasons has generously donated a total of £16,000 to Derbyshire ACF.

Maj Greg Wakeling, Officer Commanding A Coy: *" The funds will help hundreds of Derbyshire cadets to realise their full potential and for that I am extremely grateful. "*

Cadet Force Adult Volunteer saved drowning elderly man

Derbyshire ACF Sergeant Major Instructor (SMI) Ian Powell's prompt action and effective first aid skills, acquired through the Army Cadet Force, ensured an emergency situation was managed effectively.

Whilst SMI Powell was conducting a canoe training course on Cromford canal, the driver of a mobility scooter lost control and careered into the chilly water nearby. He quickly moved towards the scene and found the man submerged. Once the man was released from his safety belt, SMI Powell moved him to the canal bank and utilised survival clothing and equipment before handing the situation over to medical professionals.

Now a proud recipient of a Royal Humane Society certificate, SMI Powell associates the award with the first aid and leadership skills developed over a long Cadet Force career.

Read more here: <https://eastmidlandsrfa.co.uk/news/quick-thinking-army-cadets-volunteer-honoured-for-saving-drowning-pensioners-life/>

Ex Venturer Derbyshire Rock

Derbyshire ACF Senior Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV) have completed an Exercise recce to support the plans for 70 cadets and 20 CFAV to visit Gibraltar in 2025.

The leadership team which includes Maj Al-Khamiri, Ex OC; Capt Bulloch, Ex Training Officer; WO2 Phil Hayes MBE, Training Safety Advisor, met with personnel to agree a programme of adventurous training, military engagement and cultural experiences. Follow Derbyshire ACF at <https://www.facebook.com/DBYACF> for updates on this and more!

Stockport Branch CRA & MVRA The Mercian Regimental Association

February Meeting

The final meeting prior to the March AGM had a slightly lower attendance than usual, with 15 present plus Aidan Lees Zooming in from a sunny, yet wet Saturday morning in Auckland, New Zealand, and a poorly Steve Whaite from Marple, Cheshire. Mike (Buck) Rogers gave an update on his fundraising progress for The Big Battlefield Bike Ride, which included a £100 donation from the Branch. Condolences were proffered to

member Brian Hartigan on the passing of his brother Michael, of both and 1st and 7th (V) Battalions of the Cheshire Regiment.

Following a welfare briefing by Derek Sykes, there were updates from the CRA and MVRA liaison representatives: the big-ticket item was the Meanee Reunion to be held in Chester exactly 181 years to the day since the battle, which is the primary celebration of the Cheshire Regiment – ‘Ever Glorious’.

Standards were requested to be on parade for the memorial service for LCpl Jamie Webb (ex 1st Bn Cheshire Regiment and 1st Bn Mercian Regiment (Cheshire), KIA Afghanistan 26/3/2013) on 26th March, at Handforth War Memorial.

There is a new initiative from Stockport County FC who shall (via Mark Ward MC) be running a weekly veterans’ meet-up from 1000-1200hrs every Thursday.

The next shotgun shoot is scheduled for 14th April, and assistance was offered, if required, for anyone applying for the Veterans’ ID card.

17th February 2024

The 181st Anniversary of Meanee saw Branch members in attendance at the CRA AGM at the Castle, Chester where our treasurer, Steve Whaite was granted The Maj Gen Peter Martin Award for services to the Branch. Well done, Steve!

It also saw Branch members in attendance at the Meanee Reunion.

And our Facebook friends from “The 22nd Regiment of Foot” ‘Across the Pond’ also celebrated Stateside.

22nd Across the Pond: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hm22ndregt/>

24 members of Stockport branch of the MRA attended the AGM on Fri 01 Mar 24 at the Armoury Stockport, regretfully due to the train strike some members could not attend. Two members attended via the Zoom call facility.

The Chairman thanked the members for their continued support and help, as we looked back on a once in a lifetime year, marked by the Coronation of His Majesty The King, and a successful Armed Forces Day in Stockport, which had huge support from the People of Stockport

The Meeting looked forward to another busy year ahead with many events planned.

Following the AGM we were served with pie, peas and gravy supplied by the secretary Pete Marsh, we then retired to the bar for a few drinks.

26th March 2024

On 26 March 2024 a plaque was unveiled next to Handforth War Memorial for Lance Corporal Jamie Webb. The event was well supported by many members of Stockport branch CRA & MVRA The Mercian Regimental Association. The standard was carried by Mr Derek Sykes from the branch.

Lance Corporal Webb died on 26 March 2013 as a result of wounds sustained during an insurgent attack on his patrol base in the Nad 'Ali district of Helmand province on 25 March 2013.

WORCESTERSHIRE AND SHERWOOD FORESTERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S VISIT TO CRICH

On Saturday 13 April, we were honoured to welcome the Archbishop of Canterbury to The Crich War Memorial. This was part of his tour of Derbyshire and thankfully, although very blustery, the weather stayed dry for the picnic and prayers where many spent time together and prayed for all those in The Church of England in Derbyshire.

The Archbishop of Canterbury led a clypping prayer together, where everyone joined hands to surround the Tower, to remembered those no longer with us, those in pain or struggling and prayers were said for our schools, churches and communities. The children wrote prayers and attached them to the railings to the tower which were then taken to Derby Cathedral.

BADAJOZ 2024

On 6 April, members of The Mercian Regiment joined members of the WFRA to commemorate the Badajoz Battle Honour, at Nottingham Castle. The Lord Mayor of Nottingham also joined us and gave an address to those gathered, after the Red Jacket was raised.

Special thanks to Lt Dulson (1M) for reading the citation and Act of Remembrance, CSM Walton (4M) for taking the parade and Cpl Thornton & Pte Bramley for bringing the Regimental Mascot.

Following the commemorations, all were invited to visit the gallery where the Curator talked to us about some of the exhibits.

Chesterfield Branch

On Easter Sunday, the Chesterfield Branch WFRA presented Mr Roy Crump with a plaque and certificate to say thank you for all his many years volunteering at Crich. And in particular his care of the flower barrels and floral borders. We thank Roy for all of his help over the years and wish him well for enjoying his retirement.

MERCIAN VOLUNTEERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Eagle Dinning Club

On Friday 08 Mar 24 the Mercian Volunteers Eagle Officer's dining club held their annual dinner at the Dovecliff Hall Hotel Burton upon Trent. It was attended by 20 ex officers of both the 1st and 2nd Battalions the Mercian Volunteers. Our thanks to Lawrence Chell and Tim Rickets for its excellent organisation and we look forward to next years dinner.

MVRA AGM

The MVRA AGM was held on Sun 17 Mar 23 at Rock Steady Eddies, Walsall and attended by 30 members of the association, with all branches being represented.

Following the meeting we were treated to an excellent curry and the hospitality of the Walsall branch.

MVRA Annual Service

On Sat 22 Jun 24 the MVRA will holding their annual service of Commemoration and picnic at the National Memorial Arboretum. This is the main event for the association in 2024 with the Mercian Regiment Association and all Antecedent associations also being invited to attend. Following the service the association will enjoy a picnic in the area of the Mercian Grove.

The Mercian Volunteers Grove dates back to 2004, with a plaque for 4th Battalion The Mercian Regiment being added in 2007.