

THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Q1 2025

Print-friendly Edition

COLONEL OF THE REGIMENT MEETS SWEDISH GOTLAND SHEEP MASCOT

On his travels as the United Kingdom Military Representative to NATO and the EU, our Colonel of The Regiment, Lieutenant General Sir Ian Cave KCB, met Corporal Harald of The Gotland Regiment.

The Gotland Regiment is a Swedish Army armoured regiment which has been active in various forms between 1963–1994 and 2000–2005, when it was disbanded. The regiment was re-established on 1 January 2018.

Every Harald has been a Gotland sheep, a breed that traces its lineage back to the vädur — a symbol representing both Gotland and the regiment. This ancient breed is renowned for its striking, curled horns found in both males and females. Gotland sheep have been depicted on regimental standards since 1811 and continue to be displayed on sleeve insignia today.



Leafyard Launch: A Message from The Mercian Regiment

We are delighted to announce a special gift from the Mercian Regiment to you and your family - free access to Leafyard, a premium mental fitness app (normally £160 for a year's membership) designed to help you take charge of your thoughts, build healthier habits, and train your mind to better handle life's challenges.

It has been rigorously tested in both veteran and serving communities and is proven to improve mental performance, helping veterans, soldiers,

and our families feel healthier, happier, and more mentally fit.

Think of Leafyard as a gym membership for your mind, a way to train your resilience. And let's not forget to share this with our families, who we rely on for much-needed support.

Redeeming your free access is easy:

Serving Personnel & Veterans:

https://app.leafyard.com/users/sign_up?voucher=AVAB-CXHA-9PFZ-QNXR

Families:

https://app.leafyard.com/users/sign_up?voucher=MJJE-MYXM-FFCY-9FNM

1 MERCIAN - COMMANDING OFFICER'S FOREWORD

Lt Col G Brown

1 MERCIAN has been a split callsign this quarter. The 1 MERCIAN Battlegroup (consisting of C, Dragon and HQ Coys as well as individuals from 4 MERCIAN and other Reserve units) focussed primarily on final training for, and then deployment on, Op CABRIT 16.

This has seen frenetic activity including final Battlegroup Headquarters validation, flights of personnel and freight out to Estonia, and then straight into a busy period of visits, in-theatre training, and deployment on our first major exercise where we faced the challenge of integrating a French Company from the 3rd Marine Infantry Regiment into our own unit, whilst also integrating our unit into an Estonian

Brigade. All of this while we were fighting Estonian conscripts, American armoured infantry, and Polish tanks!

Concurrent to all of that activity, B Company has been busy for 4 weeks on SPTA preparing as part of the Royal Tank Regiment Battlegroup for their own deployment to Estonia in September this year. A Company has managed the Rear Operations Group, ensuring no balls are dropped on the home bank. The 1 MERCIAN Welfare Team have been doing an amazing job planning activities for our families in the UK; my heartfelt thanks go to all who are supporting the many and varied tasks the battalion continues to undertake.

1 MERCIAN - OPERATIONAL PREPARATIONS & A VISIT FROM THE COLONEL-IN-CHIEF

Cpl Latimer

Prior to our deployment on Op CABRIT 16, the Battlegroup underwent pre-deployment training to ensure we were fully prepared to deploy. The culmination of this was Ex IRON CYCLONE and finally Ex CABRIT THUNDER, a Command and Staff Tactical Training exercise merging simulated forces in Combined Arms Tactical Training (South) and a real-life Battlegroup Headquarters deployed onto Salisbury Plain.

With that in our back pocket, we took a short trip of 15 hours to travel from Bulford out to Tapa camp where we were greeted by glorious snow to acclimatise us to the conditions. When we arrived it was all hands to the pump with

squaring the fleet in order to deploy on the upcoming exercises.

Soon into arriving we were made aware of a special visit coming up where our Colonel in Chief, HRH The Prince of Wales, was coming out to visit us. It is always special to meet any member of the Royal Family, but when they are the Colonel in Chief of your Regiment it makes it extra special. C Company led HRH through a tough but rewarding trench clearance serial, after he was dropped to our frontline by Challenger 2, before he drove an Archer Artillery vehicle back to camp. We were proud to show him our skills and drills, which set us up well for our remaining time in Estonia.

We look forward to the remainder of our time here, with multiple Battlegroup level exercises and training cadres on the calendar.

1 MERCIAN - Ex CABRITTHUNDER – CSTTX

Pte STachie

In February, the Battlegroup (BG) deployed onto Ex CABRITTHUNDER. This saw the manoeuvre elements of the BG occupy vehicle simulators in the Combined Arms Tactical Trainer in Warminster, and the BGHQ deploy onto Salisbury Plain training area. Ex CABRITTHUNDER was the final element of the BG's pre-deployment training for Op CABRIT 16, and this was my first deployment with the CIS platoon both as a signaller and a Bulldog driver.

The exercise was great for helping me to gain more knowledge and understanding in both

roles. During the exercise, I had the opportunity to deepen my understanding of signalling, as well as the establishment, maintenance, and movement of the BG's MAIN Headquarters. This skill is crucial for maintaining effective communication systems on operations and exercises and enabling the BGHQ to exercise Command and Control to the Sub-Units, in line with our mission.

The exercise highlighted the importance of setting up the HQ quickly and following the correct procedures for changing control between the MAIN and ALTERNATE HQs. The pressure to perform these tasks successfully reinforced how essential it is to act decisively and coordinate effectively with team members.

I found the responsibility of helping to set up the Battlegroup Main both challenging and rewarding. It taught me to work under pressure and the need to ensure that my Bulldog armoured fighting vehicle remains in peak condition. Maintaining the vehicle at a high standard with a wide range of other tasks is essential for ensuring our operational effectiveness and overall mission success. The exercise not only enhanced my technical skills but also driving skills in a tactical environment and I look forward to using this new experience on Op CABRIT 16.

4 MERCIAN - HONORARY COLONEL

Colonel Carl Richardson

I was pleased to have the opportunity to visit Major Rose and B Company in Widnes during a drill night in February. As well as seeing a range

of training exercises in action, this also provided an opportunity to receive a full briefing on the recruitment efforts taking place across 4 MERCIAN, including some of the new and innovative approaches the team are taking on social media. Initial results seem very positive and it is to be hoped that this may help to blaze a trail for others across the Army.

The visit also presented an opportunity to present outstanding Coronation Medals to soldiers on behalf of His Majesty. Hopefully this served as a fitting inspiration to those newer recruits who joined the parade as part of the presentation ceremony.

In March I was delighted to see the Richardson Trophy – awarded to the best Private soldier – make an appearance at Stoke City Football Club, ahead of their game against QPR. The match was sponsored by the Regiment and provided the opportunity for a range of engagement activity with fans before and during the game to help boost awareness and recruitment efforts. The 'Mercian effect' was clearly felt by the Stoke players as they won 3-1 to secure a valuable 3pts.

Stand Firm, Strike Hard.

4 MERCIAN - B (MALTA) COMPANY

Maj W Rose

B Company has had another varied 3 months: from delivering a night ambush in freezing conditions at Catterick, honing Mortar Drills at Swynnerton and Altcar, where two ACMTs and pistol shooting have also been delivered through to Pte Laurence Skidmore skiing in Val D'Isere

and the Honorary Colonel visiting, where a curry supper was enjoyed and Kings Coronation Medals presented.

Congratulations to Cpl Nadim Challah on being promoted and Ptes Taz Apergis and Ollie Forshaw for passing PJNCO Cadres. We wish Ptes Forshaw and Skidmore well as they mobilise on Op CABRIT. We say fond farewells to WO2 George Moitt who finishes as CSM and moves to the North East; Sgt Chris Strong, Mor PSI, who transfers to the Australian Army and LCpl Lew Bailey, Ellesmere Port PTI, who relocates to Dubai.

4 MERCIAN - PLATOON COMMANDERS QUALIFY AT INFANTRY BATTLE SCHOOL

2Lt M Olafisoye

2Lt's Izzy Spary and Michael Olafisoye from C Company, 4 MERCIAN recently attended the Platoon Commanders Battle Course (PCBC) at the Infantry Battle School (IBS) in Brecon. Having both successfully passed, Michael reflected on the course below:

Attending the course was one of the most intense and rewarding experiences of my military career. Designed to transform junior officers into combat-ready leaders, the course tested my physical endurance, tactical decision-making, and leadership under pressure.

The demanding training environment, combined with Brecon's unforgiving terrain and the relentless pace of section and platoon attacks,

made the course an extreme challenge. Sleep deprivation and constant evaluations further tested the resilience of all members of the platoon.

The first week began with classroom-based lessons before deploying on Tuesday and returning on Friday morning. This phase focused on harbour occupation, defence from a command-and-control perspective. We then moved into section-level offensive actions – with some practice at night, and once the sections became more accustomed to working together, we progressed to platoon-level operations.

The course concluded with a five-day summative exercise. Every member of the platoon took turns in command, performing the role they aimed to qualify for. As the platoon was understrength, many individuals took on multiple command appointments.

We operated both day and night, making it essential to rest whenever breaks were given. As an all-reserve course, we had the chance to build strong working relationships within the platoon. For me, having a fellow Mercian on the course was invaluable, providing much-needed morale when it was most needed.

Both now return to C Company as fully qualified junior Officers ready to take the next steps in their careers.

4 MERCIAN - Ex EAGLE SWORD

Sgt K Smith CGC

January 2025 saw 4 MERCIAN get straight back to training, deploying to Swynnerton Camp after enjoying a well deserved Christmas and New Year break with family and friends. On arrival troops were placed straight into a scenario, issued with essential kit and slotted into a Platoon. Commanders were briefed and told they would be dealing with an active enemy threat. The Saturday saw soldiers deployed onto the ground, gaining experience reporting and dealing with multiple different incidents, including ambushes, CPERS, Section Attack lanes, C-IED and CBRN Threat.

The exercise, being delivered by staff from C Company 4 MERCIAN saw exercising troops gathering Intelligence which enabled them to locate enemy positions, their main supply routes and develop the scenario. With this information exercising troops were able to conduct a successful night raid, which then set them up for success in the planning of a deliberate attack for Sunday. Throughout the night exercising troops defended against enemy counter attacks and probes where they were trying to find vulnerable points within the troop's defences.

Come early hours on Sunday morning in the FUP only whispers were heard with the passing of information as the platoon commander coordinated fire missions with an in-place mortar line. It was time to take the fight to the enemy, after a successful smoke mission the Platoon was able to secure their first objective, which led

them to simultaneously clear the area of all the enemy. Unfortunately, the enemies IDF was relentless and accurate which resulted in numerous casualties where the platoon had to work together to successfully extract the casualties to a nearby HLS. Testing both their physical fitness as well as their mental robustness.

Soldiers found the exercise incredibly valuable, testing well established drills as well as allowing for newer soldiers to gain valuable experience in a well-executed realistic training scenario. Soldiers' eyes were already looking ahead to the next challenging exercise.

4 MERCIAN - D (DRAGON) COMPANY

Maj R Peacock

D Company 4 MERCIAN supported the Stoke City v QPR engagement event at the Bet365 stadium.

The event was highly successful, with some good contacts made via the Honorary Colonel, and some good promotion of the Regiment as a whole."

4 MERCIAN - HQ (EAGLE) COMPANY - BRING A FRIEND NIGHT

Maj B Johnston MBE

Soldiers of 4 MERCIAN HQ company Javelin Platoon enjoyed a *bring a friend night* in Kidderminster for a training night in February

This was a great opportunity for the friends of our soldiers to understand what the Army

Reserve is all about: a sense of belonging, being part of a team, and enjoying what we do.

We will look to run these once a quarter in each location, where troops can bring their friends and family to get a feel for what the Army Reserves is all about.

4 MERCIAN - HQ (EAGLE) COMPANY - VISIT TO C (KOHIMA) COMPANY, 1 MERCIAN

2Lt A Boyer

Recently, I was fortunate enough to visit C Coy, 1 Mercian for a week during their armoured battle group exercise Iron Cyclone. The exercise included other units such as the King Royal Hussars, the REME and Royal Engineers. Enemy forces were provided by 1 Royal Welsh. It was a great privilege to take part in this exercise.

I arrived at Copehill Down Village on Salisbury Plain during the Battle Group's maintenance day, where I did my familiarisation with the Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicle. I had never worked with armour before so this was the beginning of a great experience. I joined Seven Platoon, and for the first few days whilst I was there, we practised fighting in woodlands, buildings and trenches, which was thoroughly enjoyable. After that we joined the battlegroup again and for the rest of the week, I lived out of a warrior, conducting forest and building clearances with the soldiers of Seven Platoon.

I had a fantastic time with C Coy, they were very welcoming despite how busy they were and I am

very glad that I was able to visit them in the field. I recommend all 4 Mercian Reservists spend time with 1 Mercian if they have not done so already.

4 MERCIAN - HQ (EAGLE) COMPANY - MY CAREER IN THE ARMY RESERVE

Pte J Bunn

I joined the Army Reserves in January 2022, and in that time I have achieved more than I ever imagined. I've experienced things I never thought I would, both within the Army and beyond what I would have encountered in civilian life.

Since completing my basic training, I've taken part in exercises in Poland, travelled to California and Yosemite, and visited various locations across the UK. I've also completed two Cambrian Patrols, met the Prince of Wales, and represented the Army in the Interservice Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Championships.

Most recently, I completed a Pre-Junior NCO course at ITC, where I received the Best Student award. The training and opportunities I've had with 4 Mercian have prepared me well, and I'm grateful for everything I've been exposed to in the Regiment. I'm excited for the future and look forward to progressing through the ranks.

FORMER 4 MERCIAN COMMANDING OFFICER FINISHES 268-MILE ULTRA-MARATHON

One Foot in Front of the Other. Repeat. A Lot: The Montane Winter Spine Race.

Col R Spalton

On 12 Jan this year I stood in a very snowy Edale in Derbyshire. On my back was about 10kg of kit and to my front lay 268 miles of the Pennine Way. I was toeing the start line of the Montane Spine Race, an ultra-marathon expedition race with the well-earned strap line: Britain's most brutal race.

The Pennine Way is a National Trail that takes most walkers about three weeks to complete. The time limit for the race however is 7 days with several cut-off times along the way. Unlike most similar events, it is a single-stage race, meaning that the clock is continuously ticking and there are no pauses for rest at the end of the day. Sleep therefore has to be carefully managed – too little and performance falls away; too much and you consume precious time. There are five checkpoints along the way where racers can rest but with 16 hours of darkness it is often better for racers to capitalise on daylight, push through the checkpoints and bivvy out for scant hours of rest. 26 years of service prepares you quite well for this routine but preparing to run/tab/walk/shuffle 268 miles is a different challenge. After 16 years of Regular service, I have been a Reservist for 10 years, so my routine is already a challenge- striking a balance between Reserve service, civilian employment

and my young family. Add to that the requirement to train for 40-70 miles per week and life is best described as “busy.”

Weather for a UK race in January is always grim – it just varies which flavour of grimness predominates. This year it was the cold and snow. As we set off, we spent the first two days battling deep snow. In some places the ground was frozen solid and going was good, in others, fluctuating temperatures meant sinking through the crust into thigh deep drifts. Slow going meant that cut-off times loomed, and I had to push harder than I'd planned to keep ahead of the game such that by Day 2 I already felt exhausted. The impact of the bad weather was such that each day large numbers of competitors were voluntarily retiring from the course or missing cut offs and been withdrawn; by the end of the race this level of attrition had reached nearly 60% of those that started. I trudged on.

Each day, I pondered the description of the route as a National Trail, judging this to be a little optimistic in places with indistinct trails and tough going. But there are some real highlights along the way – Kinder Scout, Pen-y-Ghent, Cauldron Snout, Cross Fell – taking in the most remote areas of England and the highest point outside of the Lakes before a final 26-mile battle over the Cheviots into Scotland. My own highlight this year was a bitter-sweet one as I traversed High Cup Nick in Cumbria. My previous companion over this route had been our ancient hound, Rommel, who we'd lost last year then just before Christmas I also lost my Dad, a former geography teacher, whom I could clearly remember explaining how glaciers had

shaped this unique feature of the English landscape. I cranked up the volume of my playlist with a bit of Top Gun Maverick booming through my headphones and a few deep breaths to steady my emotions I trudged on.

With each day of the race I could feel my physical condition deteriorating. It is physically impossible to consume enough calories to match the output and I lost more than 4 kilos in weight over the week. My feet were battered by the going and spent most of the week submerged in bogs so battling blisters and trench foot added to the fun. Finally, the fight to gain some rest meant that I slept in some random places – a bus shelter in the Cumbrian village of Dufton was my highlight this year. Two of my fellow competitors found the floor of the village's public toilets even more inviting.....

Having settled into a comfortable pace as the race progresses you tend to naturally team up with people who have adopted a similar pace. Fatigue, emotion and the pressure of cut offs mean you also have to get on pretty well but my race buddies, Colin and Bruce, tolerated me admirably well and we stuck as a team from Malham in Yorkshire to the end of the race. We worked well together – as one of us got tired, another would take the lead on navigation or spark up a conversation to keep us awake. We kept an eye on each other for feeding, hydration and sleep, strategizing as a team how we were to tackle each day.

As we entered the final 24 hours of the race we set off across the Cheviots on the final leg. We were however very conscious that this did not

make finishing a done deal – the terrain was some of the toughest of the course and we knew much of it would be tackled in darkness. We also knew that in each iteration of the race several competitors fall at the final hurdle. Several times people have successfully crossed the Cheviots, reached the last two miles of tarmacked road then collapsed as their bodies have shut down too early. With this in mind we pushed hard on the last leg and touched the wall of the Border Hotel in KirkYetholm, the official end of the Pennine Way, in just over 161 hours. The sense of relief and elation was phenomenal; having run and walked comfortably till the very end we found ourselves barely able to shuffle into the hotel.

Two weeks after the event and I've just about got feeling back in my feet and hands and I'm contemplating starting training again. As adventures go, this was a tough one but exceptionally rewarding. It challenges the body and brain for such a long time, testing limits of endurance. Unlike other Ultras, the Spine has a real sense of journey to it; brutal it is indeed, but beautiful to, travelling the length of the Pennines. My old battle buddy and Bn 2IC, Brad Bradley, eloquently put my challenge in context: "It's quite simple really; it's just one foot in front of the other. Repeat. A lot."

BAND OF THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

Sgt J Wood

As is traditional for Military Bands this year has begun with training, planning and rehearsing for the years performances. For the Band of the

Mercian Regiment this has included in depth training work on chords and deeper musical understanding, updates of using technology to inform music rehearsal techniques, and developing improvisation skills – all alongside the necessary military refreshers needed and of course the SCR, which for a change was in the sunshine not the snow!

Collaboration was the way forward with the Band of the Mercian Regiment joining forces with The Band of the Lancashire Artillery in February for a training and rehearsal weekend to create a bigger band, giving opportunity for a programme featuring larger more complex pieces than usual - designed to challenge, excite and cement the working relationship between the two bands. With sessions led by the Directors of Music from both bands, Captain Ian Johnson and Major Guy Booth, their sight reading capabilities were certainly put to the test.

Musicians from The Band of the Mercian Regiment were honoured to support the 25th, and last, Rorke's Drift Concert in Brecon, hosted by Gwent and Powys Army Cadet Force. Bandmaster, WO2 Trevor Farren spent Friday leading rehearsals of the huge band consisting of teenage cadet musicians and their instructors from all across the UK, joined by Mercian musicians and those Mercian musicians who also serve as ACF instructors. Over the years, the Band has proudly supported this annual event and the experience it has provided for so many young musicians, we wish everyone involved good luck in their future musical endeavours.

The small groups have been busy providing a sense of occasion for events across the region. This has included the saxophone group out in support of the Royal Engineers Dinner Night, held at Chetwynd Barracks in Nottingham, providing dinner music, regimental marches and all the traditional elements of music that make a regimental dinner atmospheric. In March, the quintet were part of the musical support for the Exercise Horseshoe Mess Dinner, held at Beacon Barracks in Stafford. On this occasion they were working alongside the Pipes and Drums of the Royal Signals: well played to all involved.

In March, The Band of the Mercian Regiment played at Stoke Football Club, the Bet365 Stadium, for the match between Stoke City and Queens Park Rangers, as part of the clubs annual community day and the Regiments presence at the match. Playing favourites like Delilah, Lord of Dance and many tunes to sing along to, the atmosphere was electric as the home fans streamed into the ground. Stoke City went on to win 3-0!

More than Music! LCpl Michelle Pithers and Musician Nicky Letts have recently returned from skiing with soldiers from 4 Mercian in Schladming, Austria, where they have both achieved skiing qualifications and been truly pushed outside their comfort zones.

Personnel news:

A warm welcome to The Band of the Mercian Regiment and to the Army Reserves for WO2 Jason Pickin, who has joined us from his

previous post as BSM to the Band and Bugles of the Rifles.

Congratulations to:

- New recruit Musician Callum Potts who has now attested and joined our flute section. His first engagement with the Band was at Stoke Football Club.
- Musician Andrew Elwood on being selected for the Army Orienteering Team. His impressive results this season mean that he is now due to head off to Finland on an Army Team training exercise to prepare for the Jukola Relay, which is considered to be one of the biggest orienteering races in the world. We wish him every luck with his adventures!
- Musn Lewis Kirk who has completed his "*Battle Camp*", spending his 21st birthday in the field. As Musn Kirk is on a music scholarship with RCAM his training will follow a different route to other musicians within the band.

DERBYSHIRE ARMY CADET FORCE

D COMPANY TAKE PART IN THE RBLI'S GREAT TOMMY SLEEPOUT

Cadets and Adult Volunteers swapped their beds for a tent and sleeping bag - as they threw themselves in to RBLI's fundraising challenge designed to raise funds and awareness for veterans that are experiencing homeless in the UK.

Extremely wet weather on arrival was no obstacle to the resilient cadets, and they worked efficiently to build their overnight shelters. Once the skies had cleared, everyone enjoyed some soup, hot drinks and a chance to relax with friends.

The incredible fundraising efforts by the 113 D Company cadets raised nearly £5000. Every penny raised for Royal British Legion Industries provides safe, warm housing, while ensuring every veteran has a fair opportunity to gain employment, regardless of health conditions or disability.

EXERCISE VENTURER DERBYSHIRE ROCK

During the February half-term school break, 67 Cadets and 20 Cadet Force Adult Volunteers travelled to Gibraltar.

Cadets enjoyed an exciting day of adventurous training in the Bay of Gibraltar, with fun sessions of paddle boarding, dinghy sailing and yacht crewing, plus a speedy ride on a rigid inflatable boat. One group even found themselves accompanied by a pod of dolphins!

Cadets soaked up the culture in the British Overseas Territory and conducted battlefield studies; learning about the incredible history of the headland that is the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula.

Places they explored included:

- **Windsor Suspension Bridge** - 71 metres long, across a 50-metre-deep gorge

providing spectacular views of the city and beyond.

- **Devils Gap Battery** - Overlooking the Bay of Gibraltar and featuring a 6-inch naval gun with a range of 5,500 metres.
- **Apes** - The famous Barbary Macaque, known locally as the Rock Ape, is the only free ranging wild primate in Europe.
- **Europa Point** - The southernmost point of Gibraltar and offering views of North Africa across the Strait of Gibraltar. Features a 38-ton 12.5-inch cannon.
- **Skywalk Glass Walkway** - Standing 426m above sea level and offering panoramic views.
- **Jock's Balcony** - A concealed ledge on the north face of the Rock of Gibraltar once used as an observation post during WWII.
- **Moorish Castle** - Construction commenced in the 8th century. Part of the castle housed the prison of Gibraltar until the prison was relocated in 2010.
- **Hay's Level tunnels** - Part of a vast tunnel system initially built by the Royal Engineers during WWII.
- **Union Jack Steps** - Painted to commemorate Gibraltar's first Sovereign Referendum in 1967.

- **St Michael's Cave** - A network of limestone caves, at a height of over 300m above sea level. During World War II the entire cave was prepared for use as an emergency military hospital.

It was an amazing experience for everyone, with feedback including:

"Throughout this week I have had an experience that frankly I didn't think was possible in the Army Cadet Force".

"I found learning about the Hay's Level tunnels very insightful and having a tour guide plunged us into the past, and gave us a feel for the history that may not be local to us but is ever-present in shaping current military tactics".

The exercise also received support from HQ Centre (East) Cadet Training Team's WO2 Philip Hayes – Training Safety Advisor, and Sgt Dale Eaton lent his Adventurous Training skills.

MERCIAN REGIMENT MUSEUM (WORCESTER)

Gheluvelt to Gheluvelt - Raising Money for the Museum

A team of dedicated cyclists will embark on a 320-mile, four-day cycling adventure from Gheluvelt Park in Worcester, to Gheluvelt in Belgium (Ypres).

The journey commemorates the courageous sacrifice of the Worcestershire Regiment on October 31, 1914—a pivotal moment that helped safeguard the British Empire.

The event also celebrates Worcestershire's rich and diverse history, reminding us of its enduring legacy while raising vital funds.

Visit: <https://www.g2gcyclechallenge.co.uk/>

VE Day Commemorations

A special concert commemorating the 80th anniversary of VE Day took place at Worcester Cathedral on Saturday 3 May, featuring regimental marches and wartime songs. The income from tickets sales helped contribute to the fundraising campaign for The Worcestershire Soldier Gallery at The Commandery.

To further commemorate VE day and Operation Varsity - the successful airborne operation launched by Allied troops toward the end of World War II – there are new items currently on display at the Worcestershire Soldier Gallery at Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum providing a great opportunity to make the most of the current exhibition before it closes.

Read about the story of the landings 'Bouncing the Rhine' the name given to the operation by the pilots along with details on the 53rd (Worcestershire Yeomanry) Airlanding Light Regiment RA's advance. Visitors can also see one of the original maps used on the operation, an item of Uniform showing the Glider badge and Pegasus badge, the emblem of Airborne Forces along with a Luftwaffe helmet, Respirator (Gas Mask), entrenching tool, bayonet, water bottle and mess tins. The exhibit also features several pictures including a picture of several officers in a Staff car listening to the announcement of the cessation of hostilities.

CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

Birkenhead Branch

Peter Jackson

On 17th January, we received the sad news that our President, Harry Goodenough had died. Standards were carried at his funeral on 12th February. Stephen Beswick kindly offered to sound Last Post and Rouse. Although our numbers have dwindled it was encouraging to know that we could pay our respects in an appropriate way.

I want to thank members of our branch for their efforts and resilience and assure them that it has not gone un-noticed. What connects us, and all of the CRA, is our diverse links to the Regiment and its people.

SOUTHERN REGION

George Szwejkowski

We came out of our hibernation just in time for our Annual General Meeting, held online on Thursday 23rd January 2025. It will come as no surprise that the same committee members were re-elected once again.

On 29th January we were stunned to receive the sad news that Julian Stott had passed away. He had been a great supporter of the branch and had already booked to attend our Meeanee Dinner this year. Our condolences to his partner, April and his family.

Several of us travelled to Nacton on 31st January in order to attend the memorial service to

celebrate the life of Lt Colonel Dick Peel DL. It was a very moving service and General Keith Skempton CBE DL gave the eulogy on behalf of the 22nd.

On 22nd March, thirty-two of us sat down to our annual Meeanee Dinner, held in the Union Jack Club in London. Sadly, it was the first time in our 26 year history that Linda Taylor was not there, demanding money with menaces for our charity raffle. We all felt her loss and Tony Twiss, our president paid tribute to her in his speech. Everyone seemed to enjoy the evening and those attending generously raised the sum of £340 in the raffle. Aaron Stott, the son of Julian Stott also asked that payment for his dinner tickets should also go to the raffle takings, making a total of £440. £100 has gone to the Cavell Nurses Trust with the remaining £340 going to the Not Forgotten Association.

We look forward to the Inter-Services T20 Cricket at Lords on 22nd May. We are already looking for volunteers to take part in the Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph on Sunday 9th November. If you would like to take part in this event, do get in touch. You will see more information elsewhere in this newsletter.

KIRKHAM BRANCH

Roy Banwell

The branch had a good start to the new year with a dinner at the excellent Bistro in Kirkham attended by Billy Birkett and wife Jean, Tommy Davies, Myself, Andy Owens, Noel Brooks and his wife Brenda. Unfortunately Dave Pettigrew was too ill to attend that evening. A night of

good banter and food, well done Billy for organising it, get well soon Dave.

The year marches on with the unfortunate loss of Daphne Atherton. Her funeral was well attended by Brian's family and army friends. Brian and myself later in the month went on a short 5 day coach trip to Scotland to celebrate Dee's life. This was quickly followed by the Blackpool reunion organized by Eddie Bates, well done Eddie a well attended weekend enjoyed by all.

We are growing, I was contacted on Facebook by those that may remember him, Ray McHugh from our Berlin days. Ray has started to attend our meeting and brings Reg Gandy along with him they both live in the Preston area, Ray has also persuaded Ricky Burchett to walk across the road once a month wearing his shorts and join us for a laugh.

Ray McHugh seemed to come back into the fold when he attended the Chester Cathedral for the Dropping Well victims on 6th December last year and he also bumped into his best man for his marriage in Berlin Dave Loftus ex RAPC. Also a nice catch up with his old Platoon commander Major General Skempton.

I am travelling south on the 21st to stay in the Union Jack Club in London to attend the Southern Regions dinner at the club, it's another meet up I recommend a look at. So if you are reading this don't think about it help us grow more.

SANDBACH, MIDDLEWICH & COMRADES

Hayley Slack

The Sandbach, Middlewich & Comrades branch has seen a slight increase to the number of new members since the back end of 2024, thus strong holding our presence in the community.

Our continued participation at the Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Clubs has certainly played a part in raising our brand awareness, as has our increased presence on social media.

Charity Work/Fundraising

Our charity work hasn't been as active as we'd have liked due to ailments & family commitments, but with the help of the community and meeting donations, the funds are still trickling in.

One of our newer branch members Steve is raising money for the Royal British Legion by running the London Marathon. In preparation for this, he has run the New York, Chicago, Boston, Berlin and most recently the Tokyo marathon last week. Once London is under his belt, this will be all 6 world major marathons complete! All this to celebrate turning 60 this year!

Another one of our members Neal is taking part in the 'Great Tommy Sleep Out' on Saturday March 15th and will be sleeping rough in Sandbach. We couldn't be prouder of our members.

NHS Dental Initiative

Our NHS Dental initiative launched by our welfare officer Chris Tunney has been a resounding success! Chris has successfully launched the initiative with a local dental practice and has managed to get several of our branch members on the NHS list for the practice and are now receiving NHS dental care.

Flag Replacement

The flag at our garden of remembrance at Sandbach Cemetery needed replacing, so this was dutifully done by Chris, keeping the garden and the memory very much alive

Social

Our branch has organised a social curry night for March 29th. This is a great chance to meet members and their partners etc, socialise, network, and enjoy beer, banter, and curry plenty! Whoever orders a korma is footing the bill!

We are also looking to join the Sandbach armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club members on a day trip to the Arboretum. Date still TBC, but a local coach company has offered their services for free if the cost of fuel is covered. Another great community social.

Other Business

Our long standing member Lenny Davies turned 90 on February 9th, and a number of us celebrated the day with him at the care home and ensured his day was as special as he is.

The ladies of the branch have now set up a ladies support group and had their first meeting Saturday 1st March. It was a resounding success and thoroughly enjoyed by all. This will now take place every month going forwards, and the ladies will be looking to support with fundraising and socials.

Acorn Camping Reunion

Acorn Camping Reunion, Alvanley Cheshire WA6 9DD, a great place to relax and catch up with old friends. 2025 will be our fifth year that this event has been held, it all started back in 2020 when the Covid Lockdown was on, Vic Evans was at a relatives property when he said that the Croft/Field looks well after he had cut the grass, he then said to his relative we could hold a camping weekend in the Croft/Field and so the Acorn Camping Reunion began.

The planning is on-going for this great event and is as follows:

- Thursday 21st is a free day/night but no access to the site until after 13:00hrs, Thursday night is a free night so we can all get together and arrange the site by siting the Porta Loos, BBQ/Fire Bucket etc. Thursday evening is a trip to The White Lion Pub for a drink and maybe some food, this is just to keep in their good books while we are on site and we do get Vouchers for a meal for two for the Raffle.
- Friday 22nd 2025 is just a relaxing day with Food, Beer, Banter, BBQ and fingers

crossed Music Entertainment later in the day.

- Saturday 23rd 2025 when people decide to get up, is the same as Friday but we will have Fancy Dress later that Afternoon.
- We will also have the W.A.Gs Tea party at 12:30 open to all women on site.
- Late afternoon early evening is our main BBQ and Fancy Dress.
- Ronnie Warren and Ian Murphy have kindly agreed to do the BBQ for us and when this is on no other cooking on the BBQ is to take place.
- The Raffle will take place after the BBQ along with the Port and the Thank You's
- Sunday 24th 2025 10:45am We will be going over to the Church for our Wreath laying service. Sunday is another day of rest.
- Monday 25th 2025 is clean up and all to be off by midday.

Remember this is your weekend, and the cost is only £10.00 per night per pitch for two people more than two people is an extra £5.00 each this is to cover the cost of the weekend, so if you do three nights two people in a caravan, tent, motorhome it's £30.00 and that's a cheap weekend.

All that I ask from everyone is to respect what we have in place, and please let me know that you are on site for the day so I can account for you, its for your own safety. The Acorn Camping Reunion is only open too those that have worn the 22nd Cheshire Regiment Cap Badge and their immediate families.

2nd Battalion Normandy D Day Plaque

Peter Gresty

During a visit to the D Day Museum in Arromanches, France, for the 80th Anniversary Nick East and Andy Smyth were horrified to learn that a bronze plaque presented by Maj Gen Peter Martin CBE had gone missing.

Upon investigation we were told, by the curator, that during the move of the museum to its new location a large number of bronze and brass plaques had been stolen, enquiries by the police had not led to the return of any of them.

Once informed of the loss of this important piece of regimental history I made enquiries with several foundries, and sign companies, as to the feasibility of having a new plaque manufactured. We were helped immensely by the fact that our own museum was holding a plaster cast and a silicone mould of the original plaque.

Once a quote had been obtained discussions with the War Memorial Fund and the trustees of the CRA very quickly secured the necessary funding. The War Memorial Fund donated 50% of the cost and the CRA donated the remaining 50%, the money for the CRA donation came out of the money donated by the Belgium Trip Fund

which was run by Tranmere Branch and has now closed.

I am very pleased to say that we have now taken delivery of the new plaque, pictured above, and plans will be made to get it to Arromanches and presented to the curator of the D Day Museum, who has already agreed to display the plaque prominently when they receive it.

Operation Grapple 1 - BOSNIA

Tudor Ellis

In October 1992, the 1st Battalion, The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment deployed to Bosnia on Op Grapple 1. Some of the events of the tour have lived long in the memory of those that served there. Members of the Battalion have returned in the years since deployment. This year, men of 3 Platoon, A Company visited. 10 members of 3 PI, accompanied by 2 members of 2 PI and 1 member of B Company made what was to be an emotional journey to their operational areas of 32/33 years ago. On Day 1 the group toured the operational areas around the Lasva Valley. The UK Ambassador Julian Reilly hosted the group for drinks at his official residence in the evening. On Day 2, the group travelled north, over the mountains, to Tuzla where we were received by the incumbent Bosnian Army Armoured Infantry Battalion. The preceding two sentences cannot do justice to the memories invoked as the sheer scale of what the Platoon had achieved and been part of began to sink in.

16 April marks the anniversary of the Ahmici Massacre. It has taken a number of years to process the reality of what happened on that day

and those that followed. Memory and recollection are strange things, but having pieced together the timeline it is clear, that 3PI, alongside 3 Troop, 9/12 Lancers operated for over 48 hours in the killing zone of one of the most problematic episodes of the conflict in 1993. Those attending the ceremony had a chance to process some of their deepest memories. Our assistance in those darkest of times still resonates with the inhabitants we saved, who still live there, as well as thanks for assisting with the immediate aftermath burying the dead and helping the wounded. We then travelled to Gornj Vakuf and conducted a short service in memory of LCpl Wayne Edwards at his memorial on the bridge where he was killed in action on 13 January, 1993. Kevin Hendrie, the Gunner in the Warrior AFV immediately behind him on that day, laid the wreath.

We held a team dinner in Sarajevo, attended by Colonel Bob Stewart DSO, before the group travelled back on the Thursday. Courtesy of Ryan Air who cancelled the return flight and offered no assistance from that point onwards, Bosnia threw up another logistical challenge and we eventually made it home via Zagreb and various airport in the UK the following day on Good Friday. A fine time was had by all, and it really did not feel like we are all over twice the age from when we were there!

STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

Wolverhampton Branch

Another busy period for the branch supporting our members and the wider veteran community

The Wolverhampton Branch of the Staffordshire Regiment Association have taken the decision to become a member of the Mercian Regimental Association and with effect 1st April 2025 the branch will be known as "*Wolverhampton Branch (Stafford's) The Mercian Regimental Association*" This will allow longevity of the branch and also give us an opportunity to integrate in to the wider Mercian family, whilst retaining our Staffordshire heritage and history.

Following our AGM our long-standing Vice President Mr Gordon Partridge has stood down. Gordon has been instrumental in leading the branch, maintaining our standards, representing the branch at many formal and civic events. The branch has flourished under Gordons direction and support and we thank him for his loyal support. Gordon will continue to support the branch as a member. The following new committee members were elected at the AGM – Chris Banks (Chairman), Chalky White (Vice Chairman), Chloe Doyle (Vice Secretary – Membership) and Stacy Hamilton (Air Soft Range Officer) Our thanks to these members and all committee members for their on-going support.

Branch Treasurer Receives Colonel of the Regiment Commendation

Anne Partridge is the Treasurer of the branch and has been for more than 5 years. Anne has been the constant in everything we have done and continue to do. All members of the branch seek Anne's guidance and wisdom on almost everything to do with help and support of veterans.

Anne is extremely hard working, committed, enthusiastic, and selfless in her support to the mission of the branch, she enables many things to happen, she builds relationships that enable our teams to help veterans in the community, she was instrumental in the branch being awarded the Queen's Commendation for our charitable work and builds our solid reputation across the many areas we are involved in. Anne also sits on the Armed Forces Covenant board in Wolverhampton, works with other local charitable organisations to ensure appropriate support to veterans when needed and is respected across many communities for the tireless work she does.

The Commendation was presented by Lt Col Charlie Whitting (Commanding Officer 4 Mercian). Anne has been awarded The Colonel of the Regiment Commendation for her valuable service to the veteran's and wider local community.

Branch Standard's Carried at the Birmingham International Tattoo

For the second year the Wolverhampton Branch have paraded the standards at the Birmingham International Tattoo. The Branch Standard is carried by Paul Davies and The Tamworth

Standard was carried by Stacy Hamilton. Both represented the branch with honour and were immaculately turned out and for most of the time in step. Well done to you both and thank you.

Rifle and Pistol Airsoft Range

The Airsoft Range will again deploy across region this summer and is the main source of income for the branch to support the membership and the veteran community. We are always looking for people to support range activities and if you are interested then please get in touch, (No previous experience needed). See forecast of events for future deployment dates and locations.

Hednesford Branch

Birmingham Tattoo

Jayne Woolle

Tony Hopley was invited to take part in this year's Birmingham Tattoo on Saturday 8th February. He proudly carries the Hednesford Standard for the Hednesford Branch of the Staffordshire Regiment Association.

Some of the Hednesford Branch veterans organised a mini bus to take a small group of us to watch the event. Tony was told to be there in full dress for the training at mid day ...a long day preparing as the show didn't start until 6pm!

it was a very proud moment for myself and the other veterans to see Tony representing us all. It was a fabulous event with many special people taking part.

WORCESTERSHIRE AND SHERWOOD FORESTERS REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

Chesterfield Branch

Johnno Johnson, Chair

On the 18th March, members of the Chesterfield branch WFRA visited France to lay wreaths to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII. During their 4 day trip, they were able to visit various locations, beaches and museums as well as Pegasus Bridge. All enjoyed the trip as well as meeting with the locals who welcomed them wherever they went.

Derby Branch

Alan Derbyshire, Chair

The Derby Branch continues to enjoy the hospitality of the HQ Derbyshire ACF where we now hold our monthly meetings. At meetings and events, we see the “hard core” of the Branch always present. Unfortunately, like other branches, we have long-standing members who are experiencing the effects of aging and health issues, preventing them attending meetings. But we do stay connected via email and post. Except for monthly meetings, there has been little activity since Christmas and we are looking forward to a Curry Lunch in May to celebrate VE Day. Our new entertainments committee have things well in hand and we look forward to a very enjoyable afternoon. Captain Danny Parr, our “press-ganged” Secretary has taken to the role with gusto, even though he is heavily committed elsewhere. Danny is still trying to work out how he “volunteered” for the post! One of Danny’s

extra curriculums is shooting, he being a member of the Gheluvelt Company, which has contacts within the Regiment. He regularly takes part in shooting competitions, the latest being at Bisley in the “Historic Service Rifle Competition.”

We welcome serving and former members of the antecedent regiments, and personnel from other arms, all can be assured of a warm reception.

Mansfield Branch

Keith Kenworthy, Secretary

We are getting back into our, admittedly feeble, stride after a lengthy spell of ‘hit and miss’ monthly meetings. Currently we have one member in hospital and another on the point of being admitted. Perhaps we are all material for the old time Invalid Battalions of bygone days, no good for front line services but okay for soaking up the ‘incoming’ stuff I suppose. The branch was a 100 years old on Crich Pilgrimage Day 2024 but we didn’t get round to having a get-together until 7 April this year. This was held in the Bold Forester hostelry in Mansfield which is a venue favouring the ex-services community and hosting any veteran on a Saturday morning. It is very popular and patronized by quite a few ex Forester and WFR personnel.

Worcester Branch

Nigel Fish, Chair and Acting Secretary

The branch has been fairly quiet of late with only socials, Branch meetings and the Branch Annual Lunch. It is about to get busy with planned events of the 75th Anniversary of the

Presentation of the Silver Drums to the Worcestershire Regiment in April. The Branch Chairman and Parade Marshall have been involved with Worcester City Council officials in the run up to the VE Celebrations for May and the planned VJ 80 in August. So in the background it is very busy! As a branch we have been enjoying coffee mornings at the old Sgts Mess at Norton Barracks and on the 14th February, branch member, Valentine 'Val' (as he prefers to be called) Easterlow was surprised on his 89th birthday with a cake and candles and a rendition of 'Happy Birthday'. The ladies of the mess enjoy the branch meeting there, they also supply great cakes! On 21st February some members attended the funeral of Sgt Bob Leeson nr Ross on Wye, Bob was RBL Parade Marshall for Herefordshire, giving the parade commands at some very big events and ceremonies.

Some members of the branch have been enjoying social evenings and lunches at the Maple Leaf, Lower Wick Worcester where they enjoy games of evening skittles and lunchtime darts. Landlord and Landlady, Dave and Heidi put on free food for the evening get togethers. On Saturday 22nd March it was the Branch Annual Lunch at Worcestershire County Cricket Club. It was a very enjoyable occasion with a great atmosphere and food. Our branch guest was Cllr Pat Agar who spoke of her role as Armed Forces Champion for the City and her upbringing as an RAF Forces child on Cyprus during the troubles there.

Also in attendance was the guest of the Branch President, the High Sheriff of Worcestershire,

Charles Moyle JP and his wife Henrietta. He presented an award to Alan 'Kipper' Fish for a lifetime of charity work. Then on the 25th at the Branch AGM, the High Sheriff was with the Branch again to present another High Sheriff's Award to Kipper's younger brother, The Chair and Acting Secretary of the Branch, Nigel. It was nominated by Tom Wisniewski Chairman of the Polish Association of Worcester, for building relations between the Branch and Polish Community.

Worksop Branch

Lindsey McGuire, Secretary

The branch benefits from a strong membership, with usual attendance at meetings being around 15-17 members and generally higher for social events. As a Branch we recognise that "one size does not fit all", while some members like the structure of meetings and formal events, this isn't for everyone hence we also welcome members who prefer the social aspects and don't often attend meetings. The Branch meeting in January was well attended and provided a good opportunity to review recent events as well as looking forward to events planned for the coming year.

In February the Branch was represented at the Worksop Branch RBL – Poppy Appeal event which took place in the Town Hall. Certificates were presented to individuals who support the RBL with poppy selling as well as to the Branch for support from members. A small group gathered for another E Coy 'smoker' later in the month.

The Branch Standard was on parade at the flag raising ceremony hosted by Bassetlaw District Council for Commonwealth Day on Monday 10th March and those present were treated to tea and biscuits in the Ceres Suite afterwards. Representative from Worksop Branch WFRA attended the March meeting of Bassetlaw Veteran's Network where our input is valued by other local Armed Forces organisations on matters such as the council's booklet which gives details of services for the Armed Forces/Veteran's community and arrangements for Remembrance Parade. We are delighted that the Branch is now well integrated in the local Armed Forces community.

6 Branch members attended the WFRA Notts & Derby Area meeting hosted by Mansfield Branch, giving them an opportunity to catch up with other members of the regimental family as well as contributing to the discussions of the day.

Worksop Branch AGM took place at the end of March with Branch members gathering for our annual group photograph prior to the meeting and guests joining for a fantastic meal afterwards. It looks like being another busy year for the Branch with numerous Branch and public events to look forward to. The next Branch meeting will take place on Sunday 18th May 2025 at The Station Hotel, Carlton Road, Worksop, S80 1PS. 18:00 start. All welcome.

Veteran 'Fish' Brothers Alan and Nigel Presented High Sheriff Awards

Brothers Alan and Nigel Fish, both former members of the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters Regiment, have each received a High Sheriff Award from the High Sheriff of Worcestershire.

Alan 'Kipper' Fish

Alan 'Kipper' Fish, aged 84, was recently presented with the High Sheriff Award, following a lifetime of service to others.

He received the award from the High Sheriff of Worcestershire at the recent Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regimental Association lunch at New Road Worcester in front of his friends, family, and fellow veterans.

For over 30 years, Alan has raised £125,000 for the Royal British Legion, as well as £20,000 for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Alan began his service in the military at the age of 18 and was part of the 7th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment, the Mercian Volunteers, the Home Service Force, 4th Battalion, the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment, and the Light Infantry.

He obtained the rank of Sergeant before his retirement from the Armed Forces at the age of 52, where he was presented with his long service medal by HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne, who was Colonel-in-Chief of the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters Regiment at the time.

On retirement he became involved with the Royal British Legion, West Malvern Branch, becoming a Poppy Collection Organiser, and a Welfare Caseworker. He walked a yearly beat uphill and down dale in West Malvern, North Malvern, Cowliegh and parts of Newtown parishes collecting for the Poppy Appeal.

Alan continues to be the Treasurer for the Kidderminster branch of The Mercian Volunteers Regimental Association. He also continues to proudly carry the Worcestershire Regiment's Standard for the Worcester Branch of the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regimental Association.

Nigel Fish

Mr Nigel Fish was presented with the High Sheriff Award during the Worcester Branch's AGM on the 25th March, in appreciation of his extraordinary service and unwavering dedication to both the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters Regimental Association and the Polish community.

Born in Malvern, Nigel gave five years of dedicated service in the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters Regiment, where he exemplified discipline, leadership, and dedication. After leaving the Army, he pursued a career as a painter and decorator.

In 2011, Nigel became a member of the Worcester branch of the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters Regimental Association, where his steadfast support and dedication quickly became apparent. Behind the scenes, he

played a crucial role in establishing the branch website.

He stepped into the role of Chair of the Worcester branch in 2017, and in 2018 he also took on the responsibilities of Secretary, guiding the branch with loyalty, commitment, and a deep sense of purpose.

For many years, Nigel has been a valued friend to the Polish community and is described as a respected member of their organisation, as well as a steadfast ally to the Polish community.

Nigel helps to tend the graves of Polish Airmen killed in World War II. His kindness, dedication, and tireless efforts have strengthened the bonds between their communities, and his contributions to honouring those who fought for freedom will be remembered for generations. To many he is a friend, a leader, and a devoted supporter of both the Polish community and their history.

MERCIAN VOLUNTEERS REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

Meanees Dinner

Members of the association together with their partners, attended the annual Meanees Dinner in Chester.

As always, the turnout, and the quality of both food and entertainment, was outstanding and the Committee would like to extend its thanks and appreciation, for an excellent evening.

Laying up of Colours

On the 23rd February 2025, The Manchester Branch of the RAMC Association invited the association to the laying up of their Standard at the St Julien Armoury Barracks in Stockport. Alongside of this it was to fulfil one of the wishes of the Late Colonel John Evans, former Commanding Officer of 207 (Manchester) General Hospital, to buy a round of drinks for the 'Troops'. The Manchester Branch of the RAMC Association has sadly closed, and the Branch's Standard will be laid up at St Julien Armoury Barracks, Stockport. The current associations who meet at the Barracks have kindly agreed that the RAMC Standard can be laid up alongside the Cheshire Regimental Association Standard that is housed in the Trustees Room at the Barracks. Earlier this year 207 Hospital Squadron were approached by Brigadier (Retd) Robertson and David Evans, son of the Late Colonel Evans, to facilitate one of the wishes of the Late Colonel to buy a round of drinks for the 'Troops'.

Annual General Meeting

The 2025 Annual General Meeting took part at The Armoury in Stockport. The AGM was well attended with over 25 members taking part.

The President of the Association, Peter Gresty and the Chairman of the Committee, Mike Pilkington thanked all the members for their continued support, and the effort that they have put into contributing to the Association and its events, and looked forward to another busy year,

that this year including celebrations for the 80th Anniversary of VE and VJ Day.

After the meeting, members retired to the bar where a supper of pie, peas and gravy had been laid on by Peter Marsh and Peter Galley.

Op ASCEND - EXPANSION

Thousands of veterans and their family members across the UK will have access to enhanced career support thanks to plans to expand Op ASCEND. The service will work with industry bodies to make sure businesses are set up to make the most of the talents veterans have to offer. The free service has so far equipped 3,000 veterans and family members with the tools to make their next career move.

When jobseekers sign up to Op ASCEND for employment advice, specialist-trained advisors can support with:

- CV writing and interview preparation
- Advice on entering new sectors such as energy, data and digital, telecommunications and construction
- Tips on how to navigate recruitment schemes run by veteran-friendly employers
- Access to employment fairs
- Advice on retraining or setting up a business

Speaking to an audience of industry leaders and veterans at Mission Community's annual National Transition Event in Silverstone, Veterans Minister Alistair Carns announced plans to expand the support available under Op ASCEND,

which is run by the Forces Employment Charity (FEC). The service will align more closely with the MOD's official resettlement programme – the Career Transition Partnership (CTP).

Minister for Veterans and People, Alistair Carns DSO OBE MC MP said:

"Op ASCEND is a natural extension to the government's resettlement scheme, enabling veterans and their families to further maximise their potential and take their careers to the next level."

"This is about delivering a clear, easily accessible offering for veterans. From the time they join, to the time they leave service and beyond, veterans will be empowered to succeed, whether that be in protection of our nation, or through meaningful careers which maintain and develop their skills."

For those just leaving the forces, there is a range of transition and resettlement support available through the CTP. For those who left service more than 2 years ago and are looking for a new job or to progress within their career, Op ASCEND is available to them. This could include provision for those veterans looking to set up their own business or hone their enterprise and entrepreneurial skills.

Sam, a British Army veteran who recently secured a role as a physical oil trading contracts analyst in the energy industry thanks to Op ASCEND, said:

"I found Op ASCEND online, and was assigned a mentor to help me navigate the process. There's

the intangible side of the service - knowing there's people around that care, are interested and want to see you succeed. Knowing you can connect with an advisor, write to them or call them up if you're having problems and get some advice. Then there's the tangible impact of the employment events – they're actionable, you can go ahead and do something with it."

As well as offering career advice to the armed forces community, Op ASCEND has worked with over 300 businesses to date, helping them understand the commercial benefits of hiring veterans. The service encourages employers to:

- Review their work in recruiting, progressing and retaining talent from the armed forces and their families
- Run employment events to connect job-seeking members of the military community with job opportunities
- Expand or create new military pathways to help veterans with their transition and keep them connected to those with similar backgrounds

Sign Up to Op ASCEND:

<https://careersafterservice.campaign.gov.uk/>

Op ASCEND succeeds and enhances the Op PROSPER service.