

# **THE MERCIAN REGIMENT**

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Q2 2025

Print-friendly Edition

## THE LAYING UP OF 2 MERCIAN COLOURS

On Saturday 11th October 2025, The Mercian Regiment will be laying up the Colours of the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, at Lichfield Cathedral in Staffordshire. The day will consist of a Mercian Freedom Parade through the City of Lichfield, as well as a church service in Lichfield Cathedral.

### What is 'The Laying up of Colours'?

The Laying up of Colours is a ceremony in which the Regiment will formally retire a Battalion's Colours from active service. The Colours for the 2nd Battalion will join the Colours for the 3rd Battalion, as well as the Colours from the Staffordshire Regiment, in Lichfield Cathedral, where they will be preserved and available for public viewing.

### What are the 'Colours'?

Each Battalion has two sets of colours; a Regimental Colour, and a King's / Queen's Colour. They are ceremonial flags, which are emblazoned with the battle honours won throughout the Regiment's history, including that of the Regiment's antecedent Regiments.

### What will happen on the day?

- At 1300 hours: The Regiment will conduct a Freedom Parade through Lichfield City Centre in Staffordshire. Soldiers and Veterans, as well as the Regimental Band, will be led through the streets of the City Centre by the

Regimental Mascot, Private Derby XXXIII. The parade will both start and finish at Lichfield Cathedral.

The occasion will also be the first parade with 1 MERCIAN following the return of the 1 MERCIAN Battlegroup from Op CABRIT in Estonia.

- At 1345 hours: All guests are asked to be seated in the Cathedral, ready for the commencement of the church service for the Laying Up of Colours.
- At 1400 hours: The church service will begin, which will see the Regimental Colours laid up in the Cathedral.
- At 1500 hours: The service will be finished, and guests will leave the Cathedral. Some light refreshments will be available in The King's Head in Lichfield City Centre - further details on the refreshments will be made available in due course.

### How do I get Tickets?

Via MERCIAN CONNECT: Simply head to the event page on MERICNA CONNECT and navigate to the Laying up of 2 MERCIAN Colours event, then press sign up. When you provide us with your information on the sign-up page, we will use the information to send your tickets closer to the date.

Via your Regimental Association: Regimental Associations will be asking their members for

the names of those who wish to attend the Laying up of Colours. Tickets will be provided to Association chairs for distribution closer to the date.

Via E-Mail to RHQ Mercian: You may express your desire to attend by sending an E-Mail directly to RHQ Mercian through: [RHQ@mercianregiment.co.uk](mailto:RHQ@mercianregiment.co.uk)

## Annual Pilgrimage to the Memorial Tower at Crich

On Sunday 6th July, the Regiment held the 102nd annual Pilgrimage to the Regimental Memorial at Crich to honour the fallen of the Sherwood Foresters, the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters, and The Mercian Regiment.

The Bishop of Southwell led the service and was supported by clergy from the Catholic Church, Crich Parish, and the Padre from 4 MERCIAN.

Colonel Paul "Shove" Gilby OBE acted as the Colonel of the Regiment's representative. It was a poignant moment for Shove, as this was his last engagement in the Army in uniform. Coincidentally, the annual Pilgrimage was also his first event in uniform as a young Cadet.

The Lord Lieutenants of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire led the Civic parade of dignitaries towards the tower, behind Private Derby XXXIII.

This was Private Derby XXXIII's first pilgrimage following his introduction to the Regiment last year.

The Band of The Mercian Regiment, alongside members of The Derbyshire ACF Band, played beautifully throughout the service, with Corporal Wendy Roberts playing The Last Post.

Also on parade were the Mercian cadets from Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire, who assisted throughout the day, as well as the Standard Bearers of the WFRA, and the Colour Party from 4 MERCIAN.

Throughout the weekend, soldiers of 4 MERCIAN and members of RHQ helped set up the Pilgrimage. A thank you goes to them as well as many others, for their assistance in ensuring that the tradition from 1923 continues and our fallen are never forgotten.

## **1 MERCIAN C (KOHIMA) COMPANY - FTX SHIELD**

*Lt A Roberts*

In April 2025, C (Kohima) Company deployed as part of the Baltic National Defence Plan to the far Eastern borders of NATO – Narva. It is here that in 1700, 1919 and 1944 battles were fought as one side or the other recognised its importance; seize the isthmus, and you seize Estonia.

Amongst the ruined structures of the old textile factories, British soldiers operated through the day and night to provide security and presence for our Baltic allies. Part of our reassurance routine included close cooperation with the Estonian Engineers. Overlooking the river, into Ivangorod, C (Kohima) Company's soldiers were a visual representation of each of the NATO

forces and our commitment to every country in the alliance.

The next challenge was redeployment. Leaving the abandoned buildings just as we had found them, C (Kohima) Company extricated itself in a test of our redeployment ability. In a modern world, where situations can shift rapidly, this is a critical skill.

Should the call come, C (Kohima) Company is ready. But most importantly, we will be alongside our French and Estonian counterparts. FTX Shield was 3 nations, hundreds of soldiers, but one cohesive team under the NATO banner.

## **1 MERCIAN DRAGON (FIRE SUPPORT) COMPANY - EX BOLD EAGLE**

This quarter, DRAGON Company successfully deployed on Ex BOLD EAGLE 2 during Op CABRIT, a multinational exercise focussed on strengthening interoperability and demonstrating that we are ready to defend Estonia and NATO's eastern flank as part of the Forward Land Forces. Operating both alongside and against the Estonian Defence Forces, DRAGON played a key role in enhancing the ISTAR capabilities of the Estonian Brigade.

The exercise provided a dynamic and challenging environment, allowing the company to test capabilities in both offensive and defensive operations, working closely with the Estonian Bde's ISTAR assets such as recce and EW forces. DRAGON's role was critical to the success of combined arms manoeuvre, conducting the FIND function to call in fires, both

from archer and the Estonian K9s, and air assets with great success.

Ex BOLD EAGLE was a resounding success, it allowed us to develop our tactics and processes to suit a novel environment, and to integrate with French and Estonian partners.

## **1 MERCIAN - SAAREMAA SUN RUN**

*SSgt (SSI) L Hilson RAPTC*

At 0433 on Saturday, 30 May 2025, the 5th annual Saaremaa Sun Run set off under the rising sun on the breathtaking Estonian island of Saaremaa and Forward Land Forces Estonia were proud to take part.

Organised by SSgt (SSI) Hilson, the event brought together 70 personnel from across the Op CABRIT Battle Group. Each sub-unit lead took responsibility for coordinating and guiding their team, contributing to a well-organised and competitive field. Joining nearly 500 runners, including seven multinational teams, participants embraced the spirit of this unique endurance challenge.

The demanding 180 km relay course wound its way through Saaremaa's coastal paths, pine forests and rural villages, testing not only physical endurance but also teamwork and resilience. From sunrise to sunset, the teams pushed each other forward mile after mile.

But the run was more than just a physical feat. It symbolised unity among NATO allies, celebrated a shared sense of purpose and offered an opportunity to engage with the local Estonian

community. Events like the Sun Run strengthen operational fitness while building lasting multinational bonds.

For the Op CABRIT team, it wasn't just a race. It was an experience to remember.

## **HONORARY COLONEL CARL RICHARDSON**

The unquestionable highlight from recent months was the opportunity to join members of 4 MERCIAN in Berlin for EX FIRM VICTORY, a battlefield study of the Battle of Seelow Heights and the Battle of Berlin.

Falling just after the 80th anniversary of VE Day, the trip felt especially poignant, while there were also very real lessons to be learned about Russian doctrine used in 1945 and implications from that for present day operations in Eastern Europe in a NATO force.

Thanks in particular must go to Major Chatterley and Major Dickson for their organisational prowess and commitment to ensuring that a great trip was had by all.

Our family business was also pleased to support Reserves Day on 25th June, as part of the wider Armed Forces Week, helping to shine a light on the role of Reserves across the military, the contribution they make and the support they require and receive from family members. As always, thank you for all involved with the Mercian family for everything that you do.

## **4 MERCIAN B (MALTA) COMPANY**

Maj W Rose

The last 3 months has seen the start of another training year after 34 x members of B Coy earned their bounty and the refocusing of the Coy to deploying to Croatia this Autumn. B Coy sponsored a FIWAF weekend on Catterick where living in the field and clearing wood blocks was honed. Ptes Skidmore and Forshaw remain deployed on Op CABRIT and we wish them well.

Congratulations to Pte Spalding who attended and passed a PJNCO Cadre at short notice and LCpl Stanley who passed his Chef Class II. As always it was not all green training and the PSAO, Sgt Wood, Cpl Wilson, LCpl McFadden, Ptes Ladyman and Mealor all managed to squeeze in a battlefield tour of Berlin.

## **4 MERCIAN D (DRAGON) COMPANY**

Maj R Peacock

Another strong start to the training year for Dragon Company, after a strong finish to the 24/25 training year. Sgt Tristram continued with his deployment to Cyprus as a mountain bike instructor for 6 months, supporting the AT Centre on island with mountain biking activities; making the most of a fantastic opportunity to utilise his qualification. Highly recommended to anyone who gets the opportunity to do it.

As a Coy, D Coy began by supporting the progression to ATE in September with Ex FIRM STRIKE, an ITR exercise for RFT, Med and Nav. This enabling activity for the pre-deployment

requirements for Croatia in September gave the Bn a good shake out prior to a summer of training up to deployment on Ex SAVA STAR. A special thanks goes to Sgts Noon and Cohoon for organising the impromptu vehicle recovery serial at the back of Altcar Ranges!

## **Transferring to 4 MERCIAN**

*Pte Lloyd*

I joined the Army Reserve as an Officer Cadet in 2020 and spent three years in the Wales Universities Officer Training Corps, completing the Mod A and B syllabuses and being selected for a senior role in my final year. In my final year at Cardiff University, I transferred to the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Welsh and completed initial Phase I training.

After graduating, I transferred to 4 MERCIAN; and it was not what I expected!

On my first training evening, before I even got through the front door, someone came out to help me and show me around - my new platoon commander. I suspect his enthusiasm to meet a new face matched my own to get back into training; I was booked onto my next course within minutes.

Although I was very new, I immediately got to know all the personalities in the platoon by enjoying a drink with them after training. It's rare for the Army Reserve to have such a social life, especially as so few social traditions survived the upheaval of COVID.

On one of my first training weekends, a peacekeeping simulation exercise, I was quickly informed that I was going to be playing a local civilian.

Armed only with a second-hand tracksuit and an accent ripped straight out of Austin Powers, I got to meet the remainder of the battalion whilst showing off some truly shocking character acting. Sadly, no talent agencies have been in touch since...

Training has been varied and consistent. I've had a chance to learn new skills like constructing defensive positions and urban operations, and revise some important but lesser appreciated skills like, thrillingly, advanced map reading. Though my initial reaction to observing how close knit and friendly this unit was a surprise, I quickly came to understand how strong the culture and community is in my new unit. As a relative outsider who served across many different units, I wasn't sure if I'd be accepted at first. Four months in: I couldn't have been more wrong.

## **4 MERCIAN - BATTALION SHOOTING TEAM**

*2Lt Lynch*

This year 4 MERCIAN kickstarted a new Battalion Shooting Team. From the beginning, the team aspired to get itself competition ready and represent the battalion at various events.

Training started small – going through rifle practices and nailing down the details of grouping, zeroing and points of aim to make

sure everybody was confident with the basics and comfortable with their weapon. We then moved on to pistol training, something new and exciting for most of us in the team and a different challenge to mix up our usual progression.

Finally, we competed at the 3XX Operational Shooting Competition against teams from around the Division. The nature of the shoots – operationally focused, active and entirely memory based - brought a multitude of interesting challenges and pushed us to our marksmanship limits. A great time was had by all and we have walked away from the experience as better marksmen and more confident infantry soldiers.

This was all thanks to the commitment of various supporting staff giving their extra time to run our ranges, above not only their civilian lives but also their normal reservist workload. The team's first big steps this year have laid the groundwork for bigger and better things in the future, and surely many trophies to come.

## **4 MERCIAN - Ex FIRM SWORD**

COIN Ops

*2Lt Lynch*

The Exercise FIRM SWORD weekend saw 4 MERCIAN troops deploy to a FOB location on Swynnerton training area. The mission: reassure and protect a war-weary populace whilst degrading and ultimately destroying local organised criminal elements.

The pressure was high - the scenario was completely open-ended and it would be up to us to carry the mission to success. Luckily we weren't alone, attached to us was an Intelligence Corps analyst as well as two RMP personnel and a Royal Artillery drone operator.

For me, almost everything was a first. I had never conducted a COIN-style op, never done the role of Coy 2ic, never had live attached arms and never had so much freedom to play out the battle. As our first round of patrols went out I quickly realised the value of having specialists from other arms in the ops room. Our MI analyst was able to take very limited intel and craft clear battle picture. This immediately focused our efforts. Acting on this, alongside foot patrols, our drone operator was able to zip around scanning likely threats - this proved key as we were able to pre-see enemy positions and identify suspicious individuals by their reaction to the drone's presence.

Putting this information together, we built up to an evening attack against a known enemy gathering. This was where our core infantry skills were able to shine as the troops did what they do best. Close at hand were the RMP troops, who swiftly handled CPERS and collected key evidence, again feeding our battle picture.

Now clear on the enemy's disposition and with the potential to capture a high value individual, we launched a further attack the next morning.

Using all of our intel and analysis, infantry sections were able to sneak right up to a series of buildings and storm in - arresting one high value

target and killing another. This signalled mission complete and ENDEX.

FIRM SWORD was one of the best training experiences I have ever attended. The opportunity to take on a new and challenging role and the freedom to play out the battle, make mistakes and learn from them were both engaging and highly satisfying. I also learned a ton about other parts of the army and realised just how much value they add. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed it and I certainly look forward to future chances to work with other units.

#### An Exercising Troop's Perspective

*Pte Baird*

Ex FIRM SWORD took place over a weekend in May – a great opportunity for us as a section to get stuck into some proper soldiering. The exercise was all about section level patrolling and developing an intelligence picture, resulting in us working closely with each other, and dealing with real-time scenarios that kept us on our toes.

One of the best parts was operating together again in a FOB setting, building that section cohesion, and having a laugh in between the serious moments.

The roleplayers brought a different kind of pressure, and it made us think more carefully about how we moved and how we spoke to people.

The drone operator gave us a talk and demo. Most of us hadn't seen that kind of tech up close, so it was genuinely interesting to see how it works and how it can support what we do on the ground.

It got a lot of us thinking about how drones could be used more in patrol-level tasks. We also had the RMP lads come and run a CPERs handling session. They walked us through the proper way to search, restrain, and deal with captured persons.

Ex FIRM SWORD was a quality exercise – good training value, decent pace, and a solid bit of time in the field with the lads. Definitely looking forward to the next one.

### **4 MERCIAN- EX FIRM VICTORY**

After the success of the Battalion Battlefield Study to Arnhem in 2024, it was extremely easy to fill the spots for Ex FIRM VICTORY in Berlin.

This study was conducted at the height of the VE Day celebrations in the UK, looking at the Battle for Berlin from a Russian offensive perspective. Even more interesting due to the relevance relating to the current threat we face. Drawing on similarities we can see in the Russian Army as it operates in Ukraine raised some very interesting questions and stimulated plenty of thought.

Day 1- After arriving in Berlin, we were given an orientation of the city at Checkpoint Charlie and then returned to the hotel for a series of scene setting briefs.

Day 2- We first looked at the Crossing of the frozen River Oder and how the Russians used this to their advantage. We then moved on to the Battle for Seelow Heights learning of the intense rivalry between Russian Generals Zhukov and Konev and how it would affect Mission Command and the outcome of the Battle for Berlin. By the end of day two the sheer numbers on the Russian offensive were hard to comprehend, but it was very clear failure was not an option and their will to win at any cost.

Day 3- We walked through the Russian approach and attack on the city, concentrating on the attack on the Reichstag. In particular how pressure from Joseph Stalin and again rivalry between Generals motivated the Russian forces to race to be the liberators of the building at a huge human cost.

Day 4- We spent the morning waking around many of the historic monuments and places which included the site of the 1943 Rosenstrasse protest the only large-scale demonstration against the deportation of Jews in Berlin during the War.

Above I have highlighted just a small amount of the places visited and the themes which were considered. In total 75,000 steps were covered during our time in Berlin, and we learned and saw lots more than I can include in this short description. The lessons from Berlin echo through time reminding us that some principles such as courage, unity, resilience and innovation remain timeless. Thanks to the XO Maj Chatterley for the planning and our Guide Matt who was simply outstanding.

#### **4 MERCIAN - Ex FIRM STRIKE – Altcar Training Area**

*Pte Endres*

In April, 4 MERCIAN deployed to Altcar training area to conduct multiple training serials over 3 days, including brushing up on navigation skills at section level; both during daytime and nighttime hours. Troops practiced basic navigation skills using a map and compass, taking bearings to navigate through a series of checkpoints.

The training objective was to produce route cards to enable fast and efficient movement between checkpoints, limiting time taken to carry out 'nav checks' and enabling troops to remain focused on the patrol objectives.

The training weekend also included refresher lessons in battlefield casualty drills. Troops were given lessons in correct use of the aide memoire as well as being tested in delivering basic life support.

The training culminated in a mass casualty drill, testing the troops' abilities to manage a large scale casualty situation whilst remaining alert and ready to deal with the potential enemy threat.

The training objective was to correctly assess the situation and triage the casualties before communicating a CASEVAC request over the net and moving to the designated ERV.

#### **4 MERCIAN - EX BRIDGNORTH WALK**

*Capt Boxall*

On bank holiday Monday, 5th May 2025, 21 members of HQ Coy set out for the Bridgnorth Walk. This is a yearly event run in Bridgnorth, Shropshire where participants walk for almost 38km, with an altitude gain of 1000m. This is the first time the battalion participated in the event. The walk took approximately 7hrs to complete and included a 30% incline at Brown Clee Hill. All troops were wearing uniform and carrying their webbing and daysacks.

This was a great opportunity for the Coy to showcase 4 MERCIANs presence in the area as some of the Coy members live in and around Bridgnorth.

The organisers of the event were kind enough to provide space for our recruitment stand to showcase our Coy capabilities to other participants and the public who came out to watch.

The walk was a great opportunity to showcase 4 MERCIAN as the local unit, it also provided the troops an opportunity to test their mental and physical robustness and ensure their foot care is up to standard. Everyone had a great time and are looking forward to next year's event.

#### **4 MERCIAN - Worcester ARC**

*CSgt Williams*

The Worcester Platoon is going from strength to strength, welcoming a fresh cohort of recruits

ready to begin their transformation into soldiers. This energy is reflected throughout the unit, with seasoned soldiers recommitting to their roles; one of our team has recently completed a regular army career and is now fully embracing the challenges and rewards of the Army Reserve. To match this forward momentum, our ARC has seen significant improvements. A state-of-the-art 65-inch television is now in place to enrich our training and educational sessions. Furthermore, the Worcester ARC has been enhanced by the addition of several distinguished oil paintings, kindly loaned by RHQ, which now proudly celebrate our Mercian heritage.

The platoon is sharpening its combat readiness with a renewed focus on lethality and weapons proficiency.

Sgt Greenhill is leading the charge, running dynamic training sessions to ensure every soldier handles the Rifle, Glock, and NLAW with confidence and ease. To further elevate our marksmanship, we are hopeful for the future addition of a DCCT suite at Kidderminster ARC, which will be a game-changer for our coaching and mentoring.

Building on this momentum, the recent rotation of the Javelin Indoor Trainer (IDT) to our Worcester ARC was a major success. It offered an excellent introduction for aspiring Javelin gunners to gain an insight into the Javelins capabilities while allowing the already qualified Gunners an opportunity to show off their skills. The new year will bring further opportunities, with a dedicated Javelin Gunners Cadre already in the planning for January 2026.

The month of April saw Capt Boxall attended Worcester ARC to deliver some navigation lessons as he is now a fully pledged land navigation SME, this was such a hit with the soldiers that he returned by popular demand in May for a follow-up session.

Pte Baird, our latest DTTT-qualified instructor, stepped into the breach and delivered a crucial lesson on dress, equipment, and battlefield discipline to prepare our newest recruits for their upcoming CIC. The momentum continued into June, with the platoon tackling complex tactical subjects including Battle Group obstacle crossing and armoured Infantry Attacks, complemented by a session from Sgt Greenhill on the core fundamentals of CQB.

This June has been a sombre month as we mourn the loss of a cherished member of our platoon, LCpl James Freeman. To say Freeman was an outstanding JNCO is no exaggeration; he was the driving force behind many positive changes, always seeking ways to improve the experience for his fellow soldiers. His enthusiasm was infectious, whether he was proposing new lesson ideas or suggesting upgrades to our ARC. He was a true friend and a dedicated soldier who will be sorely missed by all who had the privilege of serving alongside him. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. His legacy will not be forgotten.

*Rest easy, brother.*

## **4 MERCIAN - TRAVELS**

*2Lt Boyer*

Based on the advice of former 4 MERCIAN CO Colonel Spalton, I took the opportunity to travel for five months before my transfer to the regular army in 2025. I had planned to work in Australia for three months, then spend a month eating in Malaysia then spend another month ranching and eating barbeque in Texas. Despite having an amazing time, things did not go to plan.

As I had declared I was an army reservist on my Australian working visa application, I did not receive my visa immediately (it normally gets approved in ten minutes). My application was delayed by four months (I had no idea it would take this long whilst I was travelling). This meant I had to adjust my plan. After spending two incredible weeks in Sydney from January to February, I went to New Zealand for three weeks. I went on a beautiful road trip around the North Island with some Canadians that I had met.

I then went to Malaysia to wait for my visa approval. I visited Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Ipoh, the Cameron Highlands, Kota Kinabalu and volunteered in a hostel in George Town, Penang for over a month. There I ate delicious Michelin guide Indian and Chinese food everyday for between two to six pounds.

Following Malaysia I went to Singapore which is the nicest country I have ever been in. Then I travelled to Lombok, Indonesia, which I was not the biggest fan of. After a week there, I flew to Malaysian Borneo in order to spend time looking for salt water crocodiles and orangutans on the

Kinabatangan River in the Jungle. In Malaysia I received my annual bounty which meant I could finally go to Texas in May.

Texas was my favourite place on my travels. The people were very hospitable and the barbeque was delicious. I spent three weeks working at a ranch just an hour outside of Dallas in a rural town called Poetry (where I finally received my Australian Working Visa). I then spent three fun days in Austin before flying back to the UK.

I had a fantastic time travelling this year, and I am very blessed to have had this opportunity before joining the regular army. Dealing with uncertainty (Mainly due to the Visa) was the most challenging thing about travelling by myself however, I was able to adjust my plans and adapt on the go thanks to my experiences and development from being in the Army Reserves.

## **4 MERCIAN - Personnel leaving HQ (EAGLE) Coy**

*WO2 Bolus*

This quarter has seen two of HQ Coy's main personnel leave to explore new opportunities elsewhere.

CSgt Newell (aka 'Sonic') has been a part of the establishment here at Wolseley House Wolverhampton for many years. For the majority of those years, he spent time working across the QM's department while still assisting HQ Coy wherever possible. CSgt Newell has been well known for doing any task that needs completing no matter the time of day and no matter how monotonous that task maybe he would still do it.

CSgt Newell will be missed greatly within HQ Coy, we all wish him well joining back into the realms of civilian employment.

Capt Paul Tyrer has been a part of HQ Coy for 3 years where he took on the mammoth task of PSAO. From my own experience of working with numerous PSAOs over the years the role is extremely busy. Capt Tyrer hit this task head on and delivered outstandingly, taking the Coy forwards in huge steps. Between the OC and the PSAO they have instilled a structure within the Coy, something that has been a huge challenge for HQ Coy. Capt Tyrer departs HQ Coy which has now been left in a fantastic place, quite possibly the best it has ever been which is down to his work with his admin team. We wish him well in his new role.

## THE BAND OF THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

*Sgt J Wood*

As the weather turned for the better and the greatcoats were replaced with ceremonial scarlets, The Band of the Mercian Regiment, along with its small groups, contemporary group and talented buglers, have had a busy few months with a distinctly international feel to proceedings!

### Local Engagements

Military Match Day, in April, was held this year at Stoke Football Club's Bet365 Stadium at the match between Stoke City and Queens Park Rangers. The Band entertained as the home fans

streamed into the arena, getting everyone in the mood to cheer!

In May, Worcester Cathedral rang with music and remembrance, as The Band of the Mercian Regiment and the Oakville Singers performed to a packed house with stunning back drops and acoustics. The concert, commemorating VE Day 80th Anniversary and in aid of The Worcestershire Soldier charity, featured music popular around the time of VE Day, including marches, Gershwin, popular songs and music to reflect with as part of the act of Remembrance. The combined sound of the Band, Choir and Cathedral organ echoing through the gothic architecture was simply stunning.

Another stunning venue to perform in saw the Band at The Army Benevolent Fund's VE Day Commemorative Dinner, hosted within Edgbaston Hall. The evening began with a short Sunset Ceremony, incorporating Sunset and the National Anthem, overlooking the beautifully landscaped golf course and grounds. Then, by special request, the band performed in the dining room itself, giving the diners a special treat with favourites including The Great Escape and The Post Horn Gallop played by Cpl Jason Pickin: plenty to clap along to.

### Belgium

In May, Cpl Pickin took part in the work carried out by the MOD War Detectives and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission by sounding the Last Post at the burials and rededication services of soldiers from The Great War. This included:-

- The burial service of two unknown soldiers at Loos British Cemetery, France.
- The rededication service of Pte John Walton of the 8th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment at CWGC Perth Cemetery (China Wall), Belgium.
- The burial service of Pte Harry James Birch of the 16th Battalion The Cheshire Regiment at CWGC Poelcapelle British Cemetery, Belgium.
- The rededication service of 2nd Lt William Bernard Knight at CWGC Oosttaverne Wood Cemetery, Belgium.

The Cheshire Regiment and Staffordshire Regiment are two of the four regiments that amalgamated to form the Mercian Regiment, so it was only fitting that the bearer party and bugler were provided from 1 and 4 MERCIAN.

### Senegal

Corporal Wendy Robert has recently returned from Senegal, where she was working under the direction of the Defence Attache and the UK Ambassador, as part of a visit to foster international relations and to support the Acts of Remembrance at the Commonwealth War Graves in Dakar Bel-Air Cemetery. She had a packed week working with other musicians and performing at official events. She worked with members of the 'Speciale Musique Forces Armees' to rehearse fanfares and other music for the official functions. Despite neither of them speaking each other's language, it proved music really is universal!

She played for the UK Ambassador's visit to 'Base Navale Amiral Faye Gassama' as part of the UK/Senegalese Maritime Domain Awareness Programme. On 'UK-Senegal Xaritoo Day' or Friendship Day at 'Place du Souvenir Africain', she performed fanfares and took part in performances of the national song 'Refllet Du Senegal'. After time for a little sightseeing, she was back in action to bugle for the Act of Remembrance at the Commonwealth War Graves in Dakar Bel-Air Cemetery. She had a very successful visit, some very different experiences and a lot of high profile involvement in events and celebrations across the week. Well done Cpl Robert.

#### Tunisia

In June, the Saxophone Quartet were invited by the British Ambassador to provide musical support to the King's Birthday Party celebrations in Tunisia. A freak thunderstorm forced a 24-hour postponement, meaning the quartet were asked to stay an extra day. Luckily, they were able to commiserate in the sun by the pool. It was a privilege to perform at this prestigious event.

As well as their jet setting, the Saxophone Quartet have once again been in action around the area to support functions, dinners and occasions, including the Annual Conference of the Royal Corps of Signals. A large dinner with over 250 people, this time the saxophonists definitely got to test out their lung capacity to the max!

#### Armed Forces Day 2025

The Band of the Mercian Regiment's Contemporary Group entertained visitors to the Armed Forces Day celebrations at Himley Hall. With music from stars including Taylor Swift to Pink and Ed Sheeran to Amy Winehouse, with a little bit of country thrown in, there was something to entertain everyone. There was plenty of toe tapping, singing along and even some dancing as the crowds enjoyed something different to what is typically expected of a military band. You could not have asked for better weather for a cracking day out!

#### Personnel news

CSgt Jason Pickin joined the Band of the Mercian Regiment from The Band and Bugles of the Rifles transferring from Regular to Reserve. He has now been appointed as the Bands new PSI. Congratulations and welcome to the Reserves.

Musician Kerrie Green has been listed in the King's Birthday Honours List as a Medallist of the Order of the British Empire and will receive the British Empire Medal. She has been nominated for Services to the Army Cadet Force and Young People, and for the work she does with Army Cadets Music. Huge congratulations to Musician Green, we are all very proud of you.

## **DERBYSHIRE ARMY CADET FORCE**

*Capt P Thomas*

#### VE Day 80

Army Cadets across the county supported community events marking the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day.

A Company cadets from Ashbourne, Wirksworth and Matlock detachments, came together in a show of unity and respect to support the Royal British Legion during a memorial service.

Cadets and Adult Volunteers marched alongside veterans and members of the community, with their presence greatly appreciated by the organisers and local attendees.

D Company's Etwall detachment teamed up with the parish council to host a 1940s themed party at the village community centre; Ticknall detachment attended the RBL's Melbourne branch service of remembrance at the war memorial.

At Derby cathedral, cadets attended a service alongside The Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire, Sea and Air cadets.

The values and standards instilled in cadets ensured the smartest turnout and conduct. The events further reinforcing Derbyshire Army Cadet Force's important role in community support, remembrance, and youth development through service and tradition.

## WW1 REDEDICATIONS AND BURIALS IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM

### May 2025

Burial of 2 unknown Soldiers, 1 Notts & Derby Regiment (Sherwood Foresters)

15.00 20th May 2025 Loos British Cemetery Extension, France

On 20th May 2025 a small party, consisting of Peter Gresty, Eddie & Martine Pickering and David Willis, were at the burial of two unidentified soldiers, 1 of these was an unknown Notts & Derby soldier. David Willis, from Stockport CRA & MVRA Branch The MRA, paraded the MRA Standard.

The burial party, furnished by 1 Mercian and commanded by Sgt Dominic Masters and Sergeant Martin Kelsall, performed their duties to a very high professional standard. The service was led by the Reverend Gary Birch CF, Senior Chaplain Headquarters South West.

As part of the service a representative from the British Embassy read a lesson and both Sergeants Masters and Kelsall read poems, the Regiment Collect of The Notts & Derby Regiment was also read.

The British Embassy representative and Peter Gresty then laid wreaths before others were laid by many of the attendees including the local Mayor and the Royal British Legion. The wreath laid by Peter Gresty was a Notts & Derby Regiment wreath kindly provided by the WFRA.

Pte John Walton, 8th Bn South Staffordshire Regiment.

10.30 21st May 2025 Perth Cemetery (China Wall), Belgium

On 21st May 2025 The Mercian Regiment Association (MRA) were represented at a rededication service for Pte John Walton, 8th Bn The South Staffordshire Regiment. David Willis, from Stockport CRA & MVRA Branch The MRA, paraded the MRA Standard. Pte Walton was Killed in Action on 15th February 1916 Aged 20.

As part of the service a representative from the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) read a lesson and Sergeants Masters read a poem, the Regiment Collect of The South Staffordshire Regiment was also read.

The JCCC representative and Peter Gresty then laid wreaths before others were laid by many of the attendees. The wreath laid by Peter Gresty was a South Staffordshire Regiment wreath kindly provided by the MRA.

Pte Harry James Birch, 16th Battalion, The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment and four unknown Soldiers.

15.00 21 May 2025 Poelkapelle Cemetery, Belgium

On 21st May 2025 a small party from The Cheshire Regiment Association (CRA), consisting of Peter Gresty, Eddie & Martine Pickering and David Willis were joined by The President of The Cheshire Regiment Association, and Colonel of The Mercian Regiment, Lt Gen Sir Ian Cave KCB at the burial of Private Harry Birch, 16th Battalion

The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment and four unidentified soldiers. David Willis, from Stockport Branch, paraded the CRA Standard.

The burial party from 1 Mercian, again commanded by Sgt Dominic Masters and Sergeant Martin Kelsall, performed their duties very professionally. The service was led by the Reverend Gary Birch CF, Senior Chaplain Headquarters South West.

As part of the service Lt Gen Sir Ian Cave KCB read a lesson and both Sergeants Masters and Kelsall read poems, the Regiment Collect of The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment was read by Peter Gresty.

Lt Gen Sir Ian and Peter Gresty then laid wreaths before others were laid by a multitude of attendees. Many locals attended the service including the local Mayor, representatives of Belgium Armed Forces and local standard bearers.

Note: Rev Gary James Birch CF had been due to conduct this service in 2024, which was unfortunately cancelled due to flooding, and had requested to come back this year to do the service for a casualty with 2 out of 3 names the same as his own.

2Lt William Bernard Knight, "E" Coy. 4th Bn. North Staffordshire Regiment, attached to the Bedfordshire Regiment

10.00 22nd May 2025, Oosttaverne Wood Cemetery, Belgium

On 22nd May 2025 The Mercian Regiment Association (MRA) were represented at a rededication service for 2Lt William Bernard Knight, 4th Bn The North Staffordshire Regiment. David Willis, from Stockport CRA & MVRA Branch paraded the MRA Standard.

Present at the service were members of 2Lt Knight's family. In addition to the MRA Standard 3 Belgian Standards were also paraded. 2Lt Knight was Killed in Action on 21 April 1915 Aged 28.

As part of the service a member of the family of 2Lt Knight read a lesson and both Sergeants Masters and Kelsall read poems, the Regimental Colour of The North Staffordshire Regiment was also read.

The family and Peter Gresty then laid wreaths before others were laid by some of the many attendees. The wreath laid by Peter Gresty was a North Staffordshire Regiment wreath kindly provided by the MRA.

The Last Post and Reveille for all four services was expertly played by Cpl Jason Pickin from The Regimental Band of The Mercian Regiment.

The members of the Regimental Associations, who travelled and attended the services, would like to thank The Mercian Regiment, The MRA

and the CRA for their donations which allowed them to pay their respects. We would also like to thank the ladies from JCCC and all of the staff at the CWGC for the work they do which leads to success stories such as these.

#### MENIN GATE

On the evening of the 22nd of May 2025, following supper with the Burial Party and members of JCCC, the MRA and 1 MERCIAN party paraded under The Menin Gate to take part in the Last Post ceremony.

As part of the ceremony David Willis, escorted by members of 1 MERCIAN, paraded the CRA standard. Peter Gresty and members of 1 MERCIAN laid Wreaths.

#### **Last chance to visit the current Worcestershire Soldier Gallery - 31 August 2025**

- The Worcestershire Soldier Gallery at Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum will close on 31 August 2025.
- This is your last chance to visit the current exhibition ahead of the creation of a brand-new exhibition planned for The Commandery.
- Don't miss out, the exhibition is open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am – 4pm. Sundays, 10am – 3pm. [Closed Mondays and bank holidays].

Visitors have until 31 August 2025 to visit the current The Worcestershire Soldier Gallery at Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum. Bringing

together the collections of the Mercian Regiment Museum (Worcestershire) and the Worcestershire Yeomanry Museum, the free to visit Worcestershire Soldier Gallery tells the stories of soldiers who have served in local regiments from 1694 to the present day.

Helen Hunter, Collections Manager, The Mercian Regiment Museum said:

*"The current exhibition, opened by Princess Royal in September 2003, brought highlights of the Regimental collections, formerly held at Norton Barracks, into the heart of the city for the public to enjoy. Now is the time to re-visit your favourites in the exhibition ahead of our planned closure and move to The Commandery."*

Stamford Cartwright, Curator of the Worcestershire Yeomanry museum added:

*"Whether your favourites are the Yeomanry propellor and pear blossom OR the medal of Black Drummer John Freeman, the detailed Sikh jacket or the Victoria Crosses of the Regiment, this is your last chance to see them in their current home."*

The Worcestershire Soldier at the Commandery will see the creation of a brand-new exhibition of Worcester's regimental displays. This exhibition will secure the future of the gallery as well as bring the Worcestershire Soldier's story into the heart of Worcester's heritage quarter. In doing so this provides an opportunity to redevelop the current displays, which have been in place for over twenty years. It is anticipated that the new galleries will open in early 2028.

The Worcestershire Soldier at The Commandery, funded through The National Lottery Heritage Fund will create an engaging and educational space that celebrates the rich military history of Worcestershire, with a focus on the experience of its soldiers. The project has also received generous support from the UK Government's Towns Fund.

For more information about The Worcestershire Soldier at The Commandery and to find out how you can engage with the collections during the closure visit the Museum Website.

### **Museum of the Mercian Regiment (WFR Collection)**

We can announce that we have been successful in the award of a grant of £25,000 that will see us enhance our planned exhibition on the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two. The grant will fund the following:

- Display in Nottingham Castle and Pop up displays at Wollaton Hall and Nottingham Library
- Digitalisation of material from our archive in connection with the Second World War
- A dedicated collections page for the display of this material on our website, which will be accessible through a QR Code for those visiting the gallery and seeing the pop up exhibitions
- Educational outreach through the employment of a Freelancer

- Addition of audio units for the gallery to play digitised oral histories from the museum archive

We hope to be able to share images of the work in the next newsletter.

### **STOCKPORT BRANCH CRA & MVRA - THE MERCIAN REGIMENT ASSOCIATION**

#### May 8th VE Day Commemoration

On the 8th May, members of the Association attended a service at the War Memorial in Stockport to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe.

After the service, Steve Whaite, Derek Sykes, Dave Willis, and Mike Rogers displayed standards outside St. George's Church together with Standard Bearers of all services throughout Stockport.

#### May 8th Monte Cassino

A contingent of the association led by Tony Angel and Mike Pilkington led a memorial party to lay a wreath at Cassino War Memorial to commemorate the service personnel killed during the battle.

#### May 14th Crich

On May 14th Dave Willis and Mike Rogers went to Crich Cemetery to carry Standards for the Dedication Ceremony of the Grave of Pte. Charles Bown, and its recognition by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Although Pte. Bown died in July 1919, he died as a result of injuries sustained by a gas attack at St. Omer in August 1918.

Residents of Crich have long battled to see the grave recognised, and we the association were happy to commemorate this event.

#### May 20th Loos

There was a burial service at Loos British Cemetery Extension for an unknown soldier of an unknown regiment, and an unknown soldier of The Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derby) who died in May 1917.

They were buried by soldiers of 1 Mercian Regiment, and Peter Gresty and Dave Willis attended on behalf of the Association, with Dave Willis as Standard Bearer.

#### June 20th Ken's Curry Night

On Friday the 20th June, members of the association gathered at the Chilli Massala in Edgeley for the annual Ken's Curry Night, set up in commemoration of ex Sgt Major Ken Ward.

The evening was well attended and a fitting tribute, to a beloved ex member of the Company

#### June 22nd MVRA Picnic

On Sunday 22nd June members of the association attended the Annual MVRA picnic with Mike Rogers displaying the Stockport MRA standard. Led by the MVRA Padre Major (retd) Ian Strongman and accompanied by the Tenbury Wells Town Band the service was held at the MVRA memorial at the NMA.

There was an uplifting speech given by the President of the MVRA Major General (ret'd) Alan Hawley CBE reminding us of the importance of remembering all the service personnel that gave their lives to the Regiment.

Despite the bad weather initially which threatened to dampen proceedings, the sun appeared as the service began, and the weather held fine and warm for both the service and subsequent picnic, a chance to meet old friends, and make new ones, and was a highly successful day.

The numbers this year were not as high as previous years, and this is to be expected due to age and commitments, and we thank those members who found time to attend this year's event, and encourage members of the association, and indeed of the wider regiment to attend future events, and not let the event pass into memory.

## **WORCESTERSHIRE & SHERWOOD FORESTERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION**

### BADAJOS 2025

On 6 April, the annual Badajoz commemorations took place at Nottingham Castle.

### REUNION

*Ms Clark. Assistant Regimental Secretary*

Saturday 7 June 2025 saw the annual WFRA Reunion held at the WRFC, Worcester and many turned up to enjoy meeting up with friends of

old. The event, organised by RHQ, was supported by members of the Worcester Branch WFRA as well as soldiers from 1 and 4 MERCIAN and cadets from H&W ACF.

The Worcester Museum were also in attendance and provided information about their new gallery. And Worcester Branch WFRA held a 'bottle raffle' to raise funds to offset the cost of the day.

Unfortunately, this was the first year that I have seen the rain stop an outdoor service and march past however this did not stop the service taking place. Nor CSM Rigely from using his parade voice!

Inside the venue, the Standards were placed over the Silver Drums and Rev'd Peter Hart led the service. Following this, Capt Boxall gave the Address and updated the attendees on what is happening in the regiment. We were superbly hosted by the WRFC and the Tenbury Town band entertained us and the new Regimental Mascot, Pte Derby XXXIII was not at all phased by being inside.

### DOKKUM PARADE

Col David Sneath (late WFR) marched with Royal Canadian Dragoon veterans in Dokkum, Holland, which was liberated on 15 April 1945 by B Squadron RCD in which his father, Cpl John Sneath, served.

### 76-YEAR-OLD WFR VETERAN TACKLES CHALLENGING OBSTACLE RUN IN ALABAMA, USA

Former CSgt Michael Hammond BEM from the Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters Regiment took on the challenge of completing the OneWorld Canine Obstacle run in Alabama in the US - at the age of 76!

The obstacle run is approximately 5k, with 49 difficult obstacles spread throughout the course for participants to tackle. These include going through a river and creeks, with climbs of 6,500 ft; it is considered by many to be the hardest canine obstacle run in the USA. Despite the name, the course can be completed with or without a dog.

Arriving in Anniston Town, Alabama, on May 13th, Mike began to acclimatise and train in preparation for the event, which happened on May 17th. According to Mike, the temperature on the day was low 30 degrees Celsius, which made for a challenging environment for the 1,000+ participants who were participating in the obstacle run!

Mike was given the honour as the very first British Army Veteran to ever attempt the run to start the event and run first, and in doing so he proudly wore a green vest with the WFR cap badge.

After completing the run, Mike said: "*It was hard and tougher than I expected...also I superficially damaged both knees on rocks in the fast flowing creeks early on.*"

Mike completed the course in just shy of the two-hour mark, finishing at 1 hour and 57 minutes. A former US Forces member that Mike knew personally was astounded as to how he managed to do it, to which he replied: *"I'm a British Army Veteran, Ex 1 WFR ..... the best!"*

He also said: "It was obvious talking to a lot of USA military veterans who compete that they were not giving me much chance at my age of 76 years of completing this run."

Following the obstacle run, Mike had a well-deserved pint and had a lay down for a good while.

Mike said: "It was an honour to take part in the OneWorld Canine Obstacle Run; especially sharing the platform with many USA vets: I thank them for their service."

#### CHESTERFIELD BRANCH

*Brian Green. Secretary*

Chesterfield Branch have been busy during the reporting period and 2 events that they attend, stick out: Firstly a meeting at the local RBL which hosted a Chelsea Pensioner who came to promote the Chelsea Hospital and talk about its history and how to enlist as a pensioner. And then a 1940s market day held on 10 April.

#### DERBY BRANCH

*Alan Derbyshire. Chair*

We have a growing "sick parade" with five members "out of action," and we wish them well.

In May to celebrate VE Day we held a curry lunch at the Mount Everest Gurkha Restaurant, with forty-seven members and guests attending, four being from the Gurkha Association. Our thanks go to our new entertainments committee, Kirsty, Bethany and Evie, who excelled in decorating the venue, and Paul Derbyshire for providing the 1940's music. Some dressed the part as Dads Army, Land Girls, Housewives and a little boy evacuee. It was a great afternoon, really good food, and plenty of it, excellent company and, we drank the restaurant out of Gurkha Beer!

Alan Derbyshire wearing the scarf presented to him by Suresh, former Cpl with 7 Gurkha Rifles, and owner of the restaurant. And drinking Gurkha rum!

We continue to meet at the Army Reserve Centre (HQ Derbyshire ACF) on Sinfin Lane, Derby, and welcome serving and former members of the antecedent regiments, and personnel from other arms, all are assured of a warm reception.

#### LONG EATON & WEST NOTTS (LEWN)

*Gary Crosby. Chair*

The branch has been busy attending several Regimental Funerals, providing both a Standard, gratefully paraded by Damo Cowlshaw, as well as a Guard of Honour at each service. As a Branch we have assisted RHQ Nottingham with taskings for the Nottingham City Branch Badajoz Parade, whilst the Chairman, Gary Crosby has acted as liaison with Nottingham Branch RAFA in supporting the Albert Ball VC Parade.

Members have represented the WFRA at a VE Day 80 tea party hosted by Broxtowe Borough Council as well as attending the combined VE Day 80 & VJ Day 80 Veterans dinner hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council at the East Midlands Conference Centre.

Since the New Year, two Members of the branch, Chairman, Gary Crosby and Secretary, Maj (Retd) John Cotterill have been a part of the Nottinghamshire County Council World War Two, Roll of Honour research team, this follows on from the Great War Roll of Honour which recorded 14,000 World War One fallen on a website and in 2019, on a permanent Memorial at the Nottingham City War Memorial site at the Victoria Embankment. This remains as the only Memorial in the Country on which the names of all of a County's War Dead are engraved. The names for this Memorial and the accompanying biographies for the website took nine years to collect, the project which was led by Kimberley man, David Nunn BEM has now switched fire to World War Two.

One lead researcher for each of the County's eight districts is gathering the names with John Cotterill leading Broxtowe whilst Gary Crosby is leading Ashfield. The names of the fallen are gathered initially from War Memorials in each District, then from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones in the local Cemeteries, followed by the names of men on the CWGC website with next of kin in the relevant Districts, finally chasing down the last few names from various Wartime media archives and social media interest groups, which also allows public appeals to be made for information and

photographs to be sourced, to ensure as few people as possible are missed. It is thought that the Nottinghamshire World War Two dead, including the Civilian Blitz Victims, will number around 6,000 and the process of gathering all the names, creating biographies and adding photographs will take several years. One of the big differences between World War One and World War Two is that from the Great War the vast majority of dead were Army, within the Army most were Infantrymen of whom around 3,000 were Sherwood Foresters and by the time of World War Two, far fewer dead were Infantry. The RAF are looking as if they will account for around 30-40% with the Army around 50%, the Sherwood Foresters will probably account for around 10% of that number, so probably in the hundreds rather than the thousands.

Nottinghamshire war dead from both World Wars are being recorded on the online Roll of Honour which can be found on the Nottinghamshire Council website.

#### WORCESTER BRANCH

*Nigel Fish. Chair*

The Branch had a busy time in April with marking the marking the 75th Anniversary of the Presentation of The Silver Drums to the Worcestershire Regiment which happened on the 15th April 1950. It was a very big occasion and on the same day the Worcestershire Regiment were awarded the Freedom of the City and marched with bands playing, bayonets fixed and Colours flying. It started on the 11th April, with a ceremony that was held at the old Sgts Mess that is in the grounds of the old Norton

Barracks. VIP's and local dignitaries were present as was Pte Derby XXXIII.

The following day, on the 12th April, at the Guildhall in Worcester City, a ceremony was held in the forecourt and the drums were on display inside the Guildhall. Later they were moved to the Cathedral where a Drumhead Service was held during the Evensong conducted by the Dean of the Cathedral. Capt Boxall of 4 Mercian was present to deliver the reading.

On the morning of Sunday the 13th April, a short ceremony was held at Worcester County Cricket Ground with the Silver Drums set up in front of the Cathedral where the drums were presented in 1950.

On the 3rd May we were treated to a concert by the band of the Mercian Regiment and civilian choir it was a very good evening, kicking off the VE Commemorations. On the 8th May, VE Day, the branch was present at the Guildhall in Worcester ready to parade at 0900 in Cathedral square and later in the evening at Fort Royal Park for a Drumhead Service and Beacon lighting by the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire.

On the 1st June, the branch was present at The Worcestershire Regimental Stone in Gheluvelt Park to mark the Glorious 1st June 1794. We had the pleasure of the company of the Mayor of Worcester, the Armed Forces Champion and County Archivist.

And on the 7th June we were present at the Annual Reunion at Worcester Rugby, with some branch members assisting with running the

event and the Drumhead Service was held indoors due to the rain.

#### WORKSOP BRANCH

*Lindsey McGuire. Secretary*

As always at Worksop Branch, members dip in and out of Branch activities according to their preferences, some like the formal occasions while others prefer social activities. The Branch has something for all.

Early in April members met for a walk around Budby South Forest. Many will remember this as 'Proteus Training Area'. Still heathland, now fenced off into separate areas of conservation grazing and signposted as a site for naturism, April was perhaps a bit early for that!

Later in the month, we had 2 very different social evenings. The first an informal quiz night in the bar of Worksop Rugby Club with our friends from Worksop Branch RBL and the second, a formal dinner night where a large group from the Branch came together at The Blue Bell in Carlton-in-Lindrick, to dine out the wife and daughter of ex WOII Dave Swan, who sadly departed in December last year.

The Branch attended a number of commemorative events in May for the 80th anniversary of VE Day. We spent a few very cold hours on The Embankment in Nottingham for the Concert for Peace where we expected to see more of the Regimental family than we actually did. Maybe publicity was lacking as we felt the event was not that well attended considering it was free and the transport from other towns was

very under-used. Locally, there was a good turnout for both the morning commemoration and the beacon lighting in Shireoaks in the evening.

On 30th May, we marked the 100th anniversary of Worksop War Memorial. The commemoration in Memorial Gardens was attended by a number of dignitaries including Professor Veronica Pickering MBS HAC, the Lord Lieutenant for Nottinghamshire and Regimental Mascot, Pte Derby XXXIII. Worksop Branch were extremely proud to have Pte Derby attend and his presence helped to demonstrate the links between the WFRA and The Mercian Regiment. The event also highlighted the strong partnership and collaborative working now in place across our local Armed Forces Community.

These links were again demonstrated publicly at Worksop Armed Forces Weekend which was a phenomenal success and once again Pte Derby XXXIII was in attendance as well as 4 Mercian having a recruiting stand, both of which were located with the Branch stand. Here are a few snippets from Simon Kirkham's After Action Report: I loved the whole weekend. Clearly a massive effort into all of this. Probably one of the best RBL events of its type. More stalls and I noted it was a significant number of folk coming through Worksop Branch stall. Three figure numbers I'm sure. Great work.

## **FINANCE PROBLEMS AND DEBT**

The financial crisis does not appear to be easing, and therefore you could find yourself having money problems and falling into debt very

quickly. The key to helping resolve this issue is to get help as soon as you identify you are experiencing problems. Try not to ignore the issue, as it will only get worse as time progresses. Below are a number of free help sites that can give you advice on how to tackle your money problems and get you back on track.

- <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/>

This site can give advice on Benefits, Family Care and Money Troubles. You can call them free of charge Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm on 0800 1387777

- <https://nationaldebttline.org/>

This is an independent debt advice charity. If you're struggling with debt, they can help. You can call them free of charge Monday to Friday from 9am to 8pm on 0808 808400, or chat online.

- <https://www.stepchange.org/>

Step Change is another independent debt advice charity who are non-profit, and their advice is free. They specialise in getting your finances back on track and are non-judgemental. You can call them free of charge Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm on 0800 138111, or chat online.