

THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
Q2 2024**

KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS 2024: LT GEN SIR IAN CAVE KCB

We would like to congratulate our Colonel of the Regiment, Lieutenant General Sir Ian John Cave KCB, on his recent appointment as Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath in this year's King's Birthday Honours list.

MERCIAN CONNECT

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Mercian Connect is our brand new digital platform; connecting current and former members of our Regiment and antecedent Regiments. Hear the latest news in the Regiment on Mercian Connect before anywhere else.

1 MERCIAN - COMMANDING OFFICER'S FOREWORD

Lt Col G Brown

The last few months have been marked by deployments across Europe for much of the 1st Battalion. A (Grenadier) Coy deployed as part of the KRH Battlegroup to be part of a US Army Brigade in Germany on a very taxing validation exercise – they performed excellently and flew the flag for the Mercian Regiment perfectly.

The 1 MERCIAN Battlegroup deployed to Poland, taking command of a rifle company from 4 Mercian as well, as part of an Armoured Infantry Brigade. This was the largest deployment of British armour in a generation and saw us operating in the fields of Poland for around a month, using all of the equipment that we rarely get to see for real. The highlight was a crossing of a 200m-wide river using both British and US engineering assets.

The next few months will see us prepare for our training pathway that will deliver the 1 MERCIAN Battlegroup to Estonia for 6 months in 2025, starting in Castlemartin ranges to conduct live firing before moving back to Salisbury Plain to conduct Exercise IRON CYCLONE, training at the Battlegroup level.

Ex IMMEDIATE RESPONSE 24 – A SECTION COMMANDER'S PERSPECTIVE

Cpl J Stirrup

Exercise IMMEDIATE RESPONSE was 12 Armoured Brigade Combat Team's contribution to Exercise STEADFAST DEFENDER; the biggest NATO exercise in a generation.

Following a lengthy coach journey and an overnight stop in Sennelager, we arrived in Poland and deployed straight into the Brigade Assembly Area. Most of the Company had never operated above the Company level before and so it was an eye-opener for everyone to see that much armour and equipment in one place, from engineering assets to air defence, it was an impressive sight.

Before the exercise scenario began, we had a week to prepare and test our communications, as well as conduct some training. We used this time to conduct platoon and section level training in the area around the Assembly Area, using the thick woods and forests surrounding it. We largely focused this on armoured tactics as we had a number of newly qualified vehicle crews. As a section commander it was great to see lads preparing their own training that they could deliver back to the platoon. The ability to teach and provide the voice of experience is very important to Junior NCO development.

At the end of this training phase we had the chance to attend the "BFBS-tival", a live show with a variety of music acts which provided plenty of morale and stories for the next couple of weeks.

We then were deployed out on the area and the exercise scenario began, getting to see how a battlegroup and then a brigade operates on the ground. It was interesting to see the different component parts and attached arms working together to achieve the aim.

The exercise culminated into a river crossing followed by a brigade attack, involving a series of combined arms manoeuvres leading up to a bunker objective. For the vehicle crews the highlight was the wide wet gap crossing on route to our FUP, using the Engineers' M3 Rigs as both bridges and ferries to get across. B (Malta) Coy were then tasked with assaulting the final objective. After a week in the back of a Warrior, B Coy seized the opportunity and conducted an effective clearance of all enemy positions. Overall, the exercise was a good insight into how we will be likely to operate in the future.

Ex COMBINED RESOLVE 24

Capt D Arnold

As part of Exercise STEADFAST DEFENDER, the largest NATO exercise in a generation, A (Grenadier) Company deployed on Exercise COMBINED RESOLVE 24 as part of the Kings Royal Hussars Battlegroup, which itself was part of a multinational US brigade. 3/101 Brigade Combat Team (RAKKASANS) consisted of US, UK, Italian, Czech and Bulgarian troops.

The exercise phase consisted of ten arduous days, fighting a determined enemy in the Hohenfels Training area in Bavaria, Southern Germany. The terrain was unforgiving for armoured fighting vehicles with dense woodblocks and steep gradients, only adding to the challenge. The exercise was well resourced, including a full test of all combat service support chains, from resupply to medical support. The threat picture from the red forces, provided by the residential US Battalion based on the area, was constant

and 360 degrees. It ranged from conventional forces, special purpose forces and civilians. The KRH Battle group managed to adapt quickly and learn new TTPs to deal with the everchanging threat.

The Grenadiers fought relentlessly to ensure the success of the Brigade plan. "VIP Hill" now renamed "Grenadier Hill" saw a prolonged defence against a harassing enemy. The final attack on the village of Kittensee involved the Grenadiers again playing a key part in the wider plan. With the exercise finishing in a three-pronged Brigade attack defeating the enemy in place with the assistance of an impressive final showing from the Brigades Apache AH-64 assets.

Due to the nature of the exercise many valuable lessons were learnt at all levels and the Grenadiers, supported by a Platoon from C (Kohima) Company remained stoic in the face of adversity.

1 MERCIANTAKE HOME ARMY FA CUP 3-0 AGAINST RTR

Congratulations to the 1 MERCIAN Football team on winning this year's Army Major Units Cup. The battalion fought hard against the Royal Tank Regiment, coming out on top with a score of 3-0.

This year's win follows on from last year's win in the Infantry Cup Final, which saw the Bn football team score 6-0 against 5 RIFLES.

COLONEL CARL RICHARDSON BECOMES THE HONORARY COLONEL OF 4TH BATTALION

On a crisp winter morning, the 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment proudly opened its doors to welcome its newest Honorary Colonel, Carl Richardson, to our headquarters in Wolverhampton. The occasion, on 23 Feb 24, marked a significant moment in our Regiment's history as we forged a new bond with a distinguished leader in both business and community service.

Col Carl is the guiding force behind The Richardson business, a cornerstone of the Black Country's economic landscape since the early 20th century. Leading alongside his two brothers, Col Carl has overseen the expansion of the family business, with interests that span across continents, from the United States and Canada to Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. Yet, amidst its global reach, the heart of The Richardson business remains firmly rooted in Oldbury, a testament to its unwavering commitment to its local roots.

With at least seven family members having proudly worn the uniform, the Richardson family's legacy of service is etched into the fabric of their identity.

The visit compromised a unit brief, a series of support weapons and capability stands, a photo with key battalion personnel, and, in a poignant moment of recognition, the presentation of several awards to our officers and soldiers for their long service and dedication.

The warmth and camaraderie shared during Col Richardson's visit underscored the mutual respect and admiration between our Regiment and the Richardson family. It was an honour to host him, and his acceptance of the honorary colonel role symbolizes a deepening partnership built on shared values and a shared commitment to excellence.

PROJECT EXTREME BALLS

In the first half of the year one of our Mercian Warriors, 2Lt Charlie Hubbard, of 4 MERCIAN, completed some of the most incredible and physically demanding feats that the world has to offer.

The initiative codenamed "*Project Extreme Balls*" saw Charlie prepare for and take part in both the 6633 Arctic Ultra: an extreme 400 km trek with 12,000 ft elevation in extreme Arctic conditions, as well as The Legendary Marathon Des Sables: a 250 km trek over 6 days in the extreme desert heat while also navigating its difficult terrain.

He took on these extreme challenges in an effort to raise money for The Mercian Regiment Benevolent Charity, who provide relief to past and present members of the Regiment and antecedent Regiments, as well as The OddBalls Foundation, who raise awareness of testicular cancer.

To begin such monumental tasks, 2Lt Hubbard underwent some vigorous training and prepared himself with gear and equipment that would help to keep him going through two very different temperature extremes.

2Lt Hubbard said: *"A huge focus during training was on injury prevention and single leg strength work. Running, walking, and hiking are single leg activities. You don't move on both legs on the same time, it's one after the other, so being strong through each leg was one of my key training objectives."*

Starting in the Arctic, 2Lt Hubbard went North into Canada, there he competed against 12 racers and scored an incredible second place when over the finish line! Charlie would then go on to describe the first trek as "The most difficult few days of my life". He burned over 25,000 calories in just two and a half days while pulling 45 kg of equipment, and with temperatures reaching as low as -40 Celsius, he found it impossible to sleep.

Regardless, he pushed through and prevailed, which resulted in him being awarded with The Martin and Sue Likey Award, which is given to the person who best embodies the values of Sue and Martin Likey who both created the race 16 years ago. His name is engraved on a holden set of antlers hung in the Eagles Plain hotel, which is the last hotel before the Arctic circle.

Following his return to the UK, he immediately began training for The Legendary Marathon Des Sables.

Speaking about training for the event, 2Lt Hubbard said: *"A 60-hour race with minimal sleep has meant the priority was focused on reset and recovery. The short time between the two events for me was relatively busy so the focus was in executing quality sessions which have purpose for my goals. During the Marathon Des Sables I consumed a dehydrated (ration pack style) breakfast and dinner, and throughout the day I was eating trails foods, such as sweets, nuts and oat bars."*

Beyond the environmental dangers that the heat would present him, one of his biggest concerns was blisters, so to account for his feet swelling he wore shoes half a size bigger with gaiters sewn on to avoid sand entering the shoe.

2Lt Hubbard completed the Marathon Des Sables in the Moroccan desert, and subsequently caught the attention of the Carl Richardson, the Honorary Colonel of 4 MERCIAN, who donated through The Richardson Brothers Foundation to The Mercian Regiment Benevolent Fund, in recognition of the fundraising efforts of 2Lt Charlie Hubbard.

Commenting, Carl Richardson, Honorary Colonel of 4 MERCIAN, said: *"2Lt Hubbard demonstrated remarkable physical and mental fortitude in completing these two ultra marathons, and certainly possesses the strength of character for which The Mercian Regiment is well known. He is an outstanding young man who represents the very best of the British Army. Our Foundation was delighted to support his fundraising efforts, and we wish him well in the next stages of his military career."*

2Lt Charlie Hubbard said: *"I would like to thank the Richardson Brothers Foundation for their generous donation towards my fundraising campaign and helping me to reach my goal. All funds raised go directly to The Mercian Benevolent Fund which enables them to continue to support and provide relief to past and present members of the regiment."*

2Lt Hubbard has now headed to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst to embark on his Regular Commissioning course. Best of luck, Charlie!

4 MERCIAN- D (DRAGON) COMPANY- Ex IMMEDIATE RESPONSE 24

Maj Rich Peacock, OC

During the first two weeks of May, 4 MERCIAN deployed a Coy of 75 soldiers attached to the 1 MERCIAN battlegroup (BG) as part of Ex IMMEDIATE RESPONSE 24, a 12 ABCT deployment of 3 BGs, including 4-10 Cav from the US Army. 4 MERCIAN deployed a Coy minus, consisting of two platoons, a Javelin AT section and a HQ, as well as chefs, clerks and quality assurers as enablers.

During the exercise the soldiers learnt a significant amount about British Army capability and equipment, including CBRN, armour integration and military working dogs. 1 MERCIAN integrated 4 MERCIAN into the family regiment fold and supported

and enabled training for the Coy. Due to the heavily wooded nature of the training area, there was a significant amount of FIWAF (Fighting In Woods And Forests), with soldiers learning the complexity of fighting in forests and woodland.

Throughout the two weeks that the Coy was deployed, the weather (and consequently the morale) was excellent. The finale of the exercise was a riverine crossing of the wet wide gap, followed by a clearance of the far bank as the lodgement force, prior to the armoured BGs punching across the river. Special thanks to CSgt Harris, who not only had to wear his PSI cap, but also the OC's driver, signaller and general dogsbody cap!

4 MERCIAN- HQ (EAGLE) COMPANY

King's Birthday Honours 2024: Capt Paul Tyrer MBE

We would like to congratulate Captain Paul Tyrer MBE, of 4 MERCIAN, on his appointment as Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in this year's King's Birthday Honours list.

OP Interflex

Cpl Harley

Operation Interflex, the Army's effort to train Ukrainian troops, for us began in March 2023. Initially starting at Strensall camp near York, we conducted a series of pre-course admin activities ready for an intensive course at The Infantry Battle School in Brecon. When we arrived at Brecon, we were split between two courses: Skill at Arms, and 'M' qual. Having world class instruction from the permanent staff really honed our teaching skills and understanding of the role ahead. Our final week at Brecon was 'E' qual, or LFTT safety. A course that to have as a Reservist is incredibly rare.

Our company moved up to Otterburn to conduct our Mission Ready Exercise, where we polished our lessons and practiced the various aspects that we will be teaching the Ukrainian troops coming through. It was at Otterburn that our mission changed, while initially we were to train the Armed Forces of Ukraine, it then changed to train the National Guard of Ukraine. With this rapid change of mission, our focus and training establishment changed. With true adaptability we took this in our stride.

Moving down to Longmoor training camp to begin six rotations of 200 Ukrainians per month, split between 3 platoons. Each rotation consisted of a range package where we took them through the basics of marksmanship all the way up to advanced application of fire. A field phase where we lead them through sections attacks. A trench exercise where took them through clearing and defending a trench. The rotation culminated in an OBUA exercise where everything we taught them was put into practice.

It was very heartening to see a progression from the start of the course to the end, as their skills and drills improved. All throughout the 6 month operation the company trained around 1200 Ukrainian troops, we also had a direct impact on their survivability

and lethality. To be a part of this major operation is an honour and I feel as though I have made a difference.

Farewell to CSgt Green

Maj Brian Johnston MBE, OC

April saw HQ Coy 4 MERCIAN and the Anti-Tank in Kidderminster say a fond farewell to CSgt Alex Green. Alex joined the Army Reserves in March 1987, and he has served in the Army Reserves for 37 years. During his service he has served his country on operations all over the world including Op Telic in Iraq, Op Herrick in Afghanistan, and Op Tosca in Cyprus. We wish Alex and his family all the very best for the future and thank him for his service.

Ex IMMEDIATE RESPONSE 24

Pte Roberts

Exercise Immediate Response is the largest exercise of NATO troops since the 1980s. The first part of the exercise consisted of a round robin of stands, showcasing the capabilities of Falcon Squadron, the Army's CBRN specialists. The Military Working Dogs showed us the various types of dogs they have access to, from bomb sniffing dogs to 'patrol' dogs, and animals that are trained to find and neutralise enemy combatants.

The second stage of the exercise was a battlegroup advance to contact, incorporating tanks, Warriors and all the support weapons from across the Mercian Regiment. Seeing all these working parts together was eye opening. With the javelin section providing ISTAR support talking my platoon onto the targets, worked well and really showed us how all the moving parts integrate. Some of the equipment and vehicles I had never seen before, such as bridge layers, armoured recovery vehicles and more tanks than I could ever imagine.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the exercise to Poland, it was an absolute amazing experience to be a part of such a large and important exercise.

Journey as a Combat Medical Technician- UPDATE

Pte Laura Hollomon

Read Her Previous Article Here:

<https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/97TA2o3NBDzvJ#4-mercian---hq-company>

At the beginning of 2024, I attended my Combat Medical Technician Course, Class Two. This is the second, out of three medical training courses that reservists complete to be fully qualified Combat Medical Technicians. The course was two weeks long, with the intention of building on the skills and knowledge developed on the Combat Medical Technician Class Three course.

The first half of the course focused on developing our primary healthcare and environmental health knowledge further, which was then assessed through a written exam towards the end of the week. This is something that for me I am familiar with due to my civilian job in healthcare; however, the course allowed me to refresh these skills and even put these skills into clinical practice when going out on Exercise Immediate Response 24 to Poland attached to 4 Mercian.

The second half of the course then focused on field care, specifically care under fire, field care in a semi permissive environment, followed by prolonged field care. This phase of the course was beneficial for applying the skills learned in a classroom into a more realistic environment. It has allowed me to feel more confident as a medic due to the further knowledge and clinical skills I have learned from the course.

I also feel confident with being able to teach the content I have learned to other soldiers at the level of medical knowledge they are required to have which could potentially save the life of the soldier next to them. Demonstrating what I have learned to the soldiers also helps prevention of disease and non-battle injuries, which is the highest cause of discharge in the Army, thus improving overall military effectiveness."

Experience in The Army Reserves

Pte Thorne

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Army Reserve so far. I joined to test myself physically and mentally. I have always been a big fitness enthusiast, but have always wanted to put it to the test. Alongside that, and a long time wanting to join the military, but working a full-time career straight from school, I was immediately attracted to the Army Reserves upon finding out about it.

The biggest challenge I thought I would have would be the cardio aspect, but I have grown a love for running from joining and training for the required fitness tests to the point now I even compete in running events.

At the start of training and being away from home, spending nights away with strangers, it was daunting. However, on completion of both the 9 nights at foundation and 15 nights at battle camp, on both occasions I felt at home being there. I have made lifelong friends that I am still in contact with months later and have spent time outside the Army socialising with.

In my time from joining to my current moment in training, I am at my peak physical fitness due to my newfound love for cardio training, going above what I thought I was capable of. I have grown stronger mentally, testing my mental strength and realising I was capable of more than I thought. I have learnt new skills in the Army which are transferable to civilian life such as working as part of a team.

I am looking forward to what more life in the Army Reserves has to offer.

THE BAND OF THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

With the start of a new training year the Band have been hard at work, with small groups entertaining around the region, individual successes and training for the upcoming summer performances.

Saxophone Quartet

The saxophone quartet are having a busy season and have been out entertaining around the region. In April they provided background music to entertain and added to the sense of occasion at the Tri-Service Emergency Medicine Dinner held at DMS Whittington. In June, they performed at the 81 Signal Squadron all ranks summer ball held at Bosworth in Nuneaton and then later in the month it was back to DMS Whittington for an End of Course Dinner for the RAMC. Well played!

D-Day Commemorations

Pause, Reflect, Remember - D-Day 80 - members of the Band of the Mercian Regiment were privileged to be invited to work with the Band of the Royal Yorkshire Regiment as they travelled to Normandy for the 80th Commemorations of D-Day.

One of the events they took part in was a Service of Remembrance, at the beautiful Bayeux Cathedral, which was attended by Princess Anne. The service is a traditional event, held each year on the eve of the anniversary, and followed a series of engagements for the Royals. Following the service, the procession, led by pipers from France, Germany and the UK, moved back to the Cemetery for a vigil.

Taking part in events such as these is incredible. They are poignant, moving, and something that those involved will remember for a lifetime: not only having the chance to pay their own respects, but to have the opportunities to create the moments for others, those who gave so much, and their families, to do so too.

Musician Jordan Kinsey - A Master of his Music!

Congratulations to Musician Jordan Kinsey who has completed the final element of his Master of Music in Instrumental Performance at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. This is a huge achievement for any musician, and we are extremely proud of Jordan and the hard work and determination he has put in to achieve his goal.

Talented New Musicians

Welcome to the Band Lewis Kirk, who has attested in May. Musician Kirk, originally from Preston, is studying Trumpet at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire with an Army Music Bursary. Also welcome to LCpl Matthew Curtis who has transferred from the Welsh Guards Band on a Regular to Reserve Transfer – welcome to the Reserves!

Upcoming Events for the Band

- Crich Memorial, Regimental Pilgrimage 7th July
- Shrewsbury Flower Show 9th/10th August – Tickets on Sale now

THE STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT MUSEUM

As we enter the summer months our events and activities are really getting into full swing.

Spring has seen a multitude of themed events from '*Meet the Yanks*' through to Communications and Cold War era themed days. These events have proved successful and well attended by our visitors, despite some wet weather. The Communication story is particularly interesting and it's lovely to see visitors still being excited to have a go on a Morse Key or Signal Lamp. April also saw the Museum host a Gallipoli themed event in conjunction with our partners at the Gallipoli Association, which is an important campaign to remember, particularly when it involved many of the Regiments that make up the Mercian Regiment. Soldiers from the Worcestershire Regiment and Territorial Forces from the North Staffordshire Regiment and Cheshire Regiment all took part across the campaign. This year also marks the important 80th Anniversaries of both start of the Normandy and Arnhem Campaign. It's important we reflect on all these operations and learn from their stories and experiences of those who fought them.

Summer is nearly upon us, even though we might not think it, with all our events we have planned it should be an excellent Summer, despite the weather. Hopefully we will see many of you at the Museum.

D-Day 80

On 5 and 6 June this year, a series of major commemorations in the UK and France took place to honour the brave personnel who risked their lives for freedom and peace. Members of The Mercian Regiment and the regimental family supported D-Day events around the country.

In particular, veterans and the local community met on the site of Crich for prayer and the lighting of the Beacon. Ven Andie Brown led with some poignant words and prayer, before the beacon was lit at 2115 hrs by the Crich firefighters.

THE MERCIAN REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION- STOCKPORT BRANCH CRA & MVRA

14th April 2024

Stockport Branch of the Mercian Regimental Association held their Spring shotgun shoot at Doveridge Shooting Ground near Uttoxeter on Sunday 14th April. This is the tenth year of the branches shotgun shoots and the 19th held so far.

The event was well attended as usual, with members and their families there on the day. Professional coaching was available for any novices from a qualified BASC shooting coach and shotguns were also supplied for those without.

Best shot of the day went to Dave Allatson ex-RA. He didn't drop any short on the day! The next shoot is on Sunday September 15th September.'

Burial of 2Lt James Arthur Greenhalgh, 1st Battalion The Cheshire Regiment, and two unknown Soldiers

On 22 May 24 Peter Gresty, Chairman CRA, and Tony Angel Vice Chairman Stockport branch MRA attended the burial of 2Lt James Greenhalgh 1 Cheshire. 2Lt Greenhalgh who was killed in action on 22 October 1914 who was identified through DNA tests from family members with the help of the MOD War Detectives, and two unknown soldiers of unknown regiments were also laid to rest in Guards Cemetery, Windy Corner, France. On the 23 May 24 the plan was to bury Private Harry Birch 16th Battalion The Cheshire Regiment and four unknown soldiers of unknown regiments. Regretfully the Burial of Private Birch and the four unknown soldiers was postponed as the Poelcapelle cemetery, Belgium, was waterlogged. Mr Tony Angel read the collect, and Mr Gresty carried the Standard.

Following the reception we departed to the memorial for 2Lt Atkinson, 1 Cheshire at Violaines communal cemetery. His Memorial is now dedicated to all the soldiers of The Cheshire Regiment who are still missing. Each year the town holds a Cheshire Regiment memorial day around the 22 October. 2Lt Henry Atkinson was reported missing on 22 October 1914, shortly after the war his mother had a memorial placed at the supposed location where he disappeared. On 09 February 1923, 2Lt Atkinson's body was recovered 400 metres from the Memorial and he is now buried in Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery.

Ken's Curry Night

Friday the 7th June saw the association take part in the Annual Ken's Curry Night in honour of Ken Ward. The meal was well attended and was joined by members of 4 Mercian Mortar Platoon, at the Chilli Massala in Edgeley Stockport. A great night was had by all and the association thanks the staff at the Chilli Massala.

Brigadier (Retd) John Thomson Funeral

On the 14th June members from the association attended the Funeral of Brigadier (Retd) Dr John R Thomson OBE QVRM TD DL at Chester Cathedral. Standard Bearers from the association were in attendance and led the procession into the cathedral.

Salford Red Devils v St Helens

On the 23rd June the association's Standard Bearers, Derek Sykes, Steve Waite, Dave Willis, and Mike Rogers, were asked to parade the standards at Salfords ground to celebrate the beginning of Armed Forces week, in front of a packed crowd, and SkyTV cameras. The crowd were also treated to a Gun Display and a demonstration from the RAF Red Devils. After a close game Salford came out victorious, well done to all who took part.

GMP Armed Forces Flag

On the 24th June 2024 Mike Rogers of the MRA together with John Ward attended GMP Force Headquarters for the unveiling of the flag to commemorate Armed Forces Day which was attended by the Deputy Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, The Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester Kate Green, and a representative of the RAF.

Armed Forces Day

Once again the people of Stockport turned out in numbers to support Armed Forces Day. A full parade with Standards being carried by Derek Sykes, Dave Willis and Mike Rogers carried standards, and there were stalls from The CRA/MVRA, 4 Mercian, plus cadet forces, SAAFA and others, with many attractions including military vehicles, and a replica Spitfire placed in the town centre, many thanks to SAFCO, Stockport Council and all the individuals and businesses that helped make it a huge success.

THE STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

Wolverhampton Branch

The Wolverhampton Branch of the Staffordshire Regiment Association have continued to go from strength to strength over the past 3 months. We have seen a change of Chairman, attended several events to raise funds to continue our support of local veterans and have also had 2 branch members recognised in the Wolverhampton's top 50 volunteers.

Change of Branch Leadership

The branch over the past 5 years under the leadership of Steve Yates has grown beyond all recognition and culminated in the Wolverhampton branch being awarded the "Queens Award for Voluntary Service" (QAVS). Steve and his committee have driven the branch to a position that is now recognised across the Wolverhampton area and beyond. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Steve for his contribution and leadership and wish our new Chairman (Chris Banks) all the very best in leading the branch through its next chapter.

Recognition of outstanding Volunteering in the Wolverhampton 50/50 awards

The Branch Treasurer (Mrs Anne Partridge) and the branch Community liaison officer (Simon Hamilton) have both been short listed in the Wolverhampton 50/50 awards for 2024. Both attended a ceremony on Sunday 23rd June at Wolverhampton Civic centre for all those that had been short listed. Both did themselves and the Branch proud with this recognition of their unwavering efforts to support both the veterans and the scouting community across the city. Well done to both for your outstanding efforts.

Fund Raising Activities

The branch has conducted 2 collections so far this year with collections at Asda in Darlaston and Tesco in Willenhall where over the both days the members of the public donated over £900 to the branch to support our charitable activities, an excellent effort from all the volunteers that turned out to man the stand.

Rifle and Pistol Airsoft Range

The Airsoft Range is deployed across the 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.

Staffords in the Community

The branch continues to support veterans in the community with the latest loan of an electric wheel chair to the SRA (Rugeley Branch). A very happy recipient testing it for speed and stability. Well done team and especially Adria Bassford (Branch Secretary) for arranging this delivery and training.

Members of the branch also had the opportunity to attend the Royal Garden Party courtesy of the Not Forgotten Society and Pete Oliver. What a fantastic day and so proud of the SRA representation at the very prestigious event.

We are very proud of our branch secretary (Adrian Basford) who has been appointed as the town Cryer for Litchfield. Ade is a fantastic ambassador for the branch and other regimental activities and his selfless commitment to creating success, support to veterans and branch members is to be commended.

WORCESTERSHIRE AND SHERWOOD FORESTERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

On the Glorious 1st June, the WFRA held its annual Reunion. Held at the Worcester Rugby Football Club, who were magnificent hosts, attendance was up this year. The Tenbury Town Band entertained us all with their music whilst the Worcester Branch held their annual raffle, the museum provided all things museum and there were even some back copies of Firm and Forester for sale. The Drumhead service was led by Revd Peter Hart from St Martin with St Peter, Worcester with the Standard Bearers bringing on the standards. And the Regimental Mascot was on duty. Following the short service, Maj Anderson, OC C Coy 1 Mercian, gave a heartfelt Address and then the Veterans, under the capable hands of WO2 JT Kauleta (WSM C Coy 1 Mercian), paraded to rapturous applause. With thanks to C Coy 1 Mercian, the Hereford and Worcester Cadets and the Worcester Branch, who all assisted RHQ in making this event such a success.

Derby Branch

As with all branches we are actively looking for new members and we are pleased to report that we are fortunate to have 7 new members; we look forward to seeing them at meetings and functions. By popular request, we held a curry lunch at the Mount Everest Gurkha restaurant in Derby. This was an enjoyable afternoon with the owner, a former Gurkha soldier, laying on an excellent buffet. And for Armed Forces Day, one of our members, Mick Doyle took part in the War Memorial Village Derby commemorating the event.

Our Standard Bearers are beginning to suffer from that dreaded problem, age and health. They must be commended as they do attend where possible even though marching is becoming a problem. We hope to overcome this with the aid of senior Army cadets taking on the role for some parades, already having two volunteers, for which we are extremely grateful. We normally hold our annual dinner to coincide with Badajoz Day, but due to a number of our regular attendees being away it has been changed to September, to become an Alma Dinner. To those members who due to illness can no longer attend we wish them well and thank them for their past support. We would be pleased to see past and present members of the Mercian Regiment and former members of the antecedent regiments at our meetings, all can be assured of a warm welcome.

Long Eaton and West Notts Branch

On 7th May every year a small memorial service takes place to commemorate the death of a man who was, indisputably, Nottingham's most famous son during the Great War. The annual Albert Ball Memorial Service, held at the statue of Albert, raised by public subscription, at Nottingham Castle, is always attended by members of the Nottingham Branch and the Long Eaton and West Notts WFRA, as well as representatives of the RAF. By its very repetition it is possible that those attending forget what a remarkable young man we are commemorating.

Albert Ball was born in Nottingham in 1896, the son of a plumber who became Lord Mayor of Nottingham. He was educated at Nottingham High School and then Trent College. In September 1914 he joined 2/7th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters only 2 days after it had been formed. A month later he decided he would see action quicker if attached to the Divisional Cyclist Battalion.

In 1915, when training with the cyclists in Luton he got his Royal Aeronautical Club Ticket and was then attached to the Royal Flying Corps. His passion had always been engineering and he soon harmonised his twin Lewis guns so that their fire met 15 yards in front of his aircraft. He would hunt alone and pursue his targets quite ruthlessly although he was always conflicted about killing, writing to his father:

"I only scrap because it is my duty ... Nothing makes me feel more rotten than to see them go down, but you see it is either them or me, so I must do my duty best to make it a case of them".

His tally of victories, in the terrible mid-year of the war, when Britain needed heroes, was recognized by the eventual award of a Victoria Cross, three Distinguished Service Orders, a Military Cross and several foreign awards. In a two periods of combat on the Western Front, totalling only 11 months, Albert Ball destroyed or forced down 44 enemy aircraft.

On 7 May 1917 he was in a dog-fight with eleven German aircraft outside Lille when he crash landed and was killed near Annoeullin. There is no proof of the German claim that they shot him down and it seems likely that he became inverted due to thick cloud and exhaustion and was unable to pull out of his dive. He was four months short of his 21st birthday when he died.

Worcester Branch

It has been a busy time for Worcester Branch lately with all the D-day Commemorations and other activities. Thanks to all the volunteers in the branch that make things happen, without them things would be impossible. Members of the branch had a social night at the Maple Leaf pub in Canada Way, Lower Wick, Worcester. They enjoyed a game of skittles with Anita Fish being the winner with 41 points. The landlords welcome veterans in the pub; they provided the room for free, put on a magnificent buffet at no charge and would not take a donation. The branch will be there again on the 17th August and all are invited. Members of the branch have also been holding a fish'n'chip Friday at the Berkeley in Egdon, Spetchley nr Worcester. It is

the venue where the branch have been holding their Annual Dinners (lunchtime) with this years on 28th September. If you wish to attend, please speak to the Chair.

Worcester Branch members volunteered to help set up the Annual Reunion that went well, a good day was had by all. thanks to Cindy Clark for organising this. The venue of the Worcester Rugby Club works well.

Worcester Branch have been involved in the organising of the D-Day events in Worcester City working closely with the City Council. The branch were on parade in Cathedral Square on the 6th June for a short ceremony of raising the D-Day flag. an address by branch President Lt Col Mark Jackson OBE on the Worcesters involvement in the Normandy Landings. In the evening there was a beacon lighting event in Fort Royal, an historic setting of the battle of Worcester in the English Civil War. The Branch were also involved with the Commemoration service on the 22nd June 2024 in Gheluvelt Park at the Worcestershire Regimental Stone to mark 80 years to the day that the Worcesters landed in Normandy.

Worksop Branch

After a quiet start to the year, Worksop branch activity picked up in the spring with the Branch hosting the WFRA Nottinghamshire and Derby Area meeting in March. At the end of the month the Branch AGM was attended by 18 members with a good number staying on for dinner afterwards.

In May, Worksop Branch answered a call for Standards to attend the funeral of Margaret Sibcy who had been Secretary at Newark Branch for many, many years. With Newark Branch now disbanded, Worksop Branch attended with the Branch Standard to represent the WFRA to show recognition and give thanks for Margaret's longstanding commitment to the Association.

Thursday 6th June saw the National commemorations for the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings. With a large proportion of members of working age and extremely short notice of the local events, there were still a good number on parade for the service and wreath laying in Memorial Gardens. The beacon lighting that evening was also attended, with Worksop branch taking an active part in the Act of Remembrance on Shireoaks pit top that evening. We could see other beacons in Whitwell and Kiveton Park but the view to the east is obscured by trees. Also on the D-Day anniversary Branch members Nigel Woodcock and Wayne Smith attended the National Memorial Arboretum as part of a coach trip from Hillsborough with the Armed Forces Owls Supporters Club.

Returning to the theme of eating out, branch members travelled to Aston-on-Trent early in June to have lunch with Brigadier Wilkinson. As President of the Branch, Brigadier Wilkinson has been travelling to Worksop for Branch meetings for many years. Lunch in his neck of the woods was a small gesture of thanks.

The branch ended the month on a high attending Worksop Armed Forces event organised by Worksop Branch Royal British Legion at Worksop Rugby Club over the weekend of Saturday and Sunday 29th and 30th June. A display stall was set up with

weapons and equipment from Simon Kirkham's personal collection, not only did we greet lots of visitors; it was a great social occasion and fantastic to see so many familiar faces.

Worksop Branch meetings continue to be held at The Station Hotel in Worksop, 6pm on the last Sunday of every other month. The next meeting will be on Sunday 28th January 2024.

MERCIAN VOLUNTEERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Members of the MVRA attended the Annual picnic at the National Arboretum on June 22. The event was well attended by members of the association and Standard Bearers Steve Waite and Mike Rogers paraded the standards at the service.

THE ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

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

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

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

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

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