

THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Q3 2025

Print-friendly Edition

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Leafyard : A GIFT from The Mercian Regiment

Earlier in the year, The Mercian Regiment announced a special gift from us to you and your family - free access to Leafyard, a premium

mental fitness app (normally £160 for a year's membership) designed to help you take charge of your thoughts, build healthier habits, and train your mind to better handle life's challenges.

Following rigorous testing in both veteran and serving communities, it has proven to be a very useful asset for many members of the Regimental Family who have signed up so far! It is proven to improve mental performance, helping veterans, soldiers, and our families feel healthier, happier, and more mentally fit.

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

Serving Personnel & Veterans:

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

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1 MERCIAN B (MALTA) COMPANY COMPLETES RIGOROUS PRE-DEPLOYMENT TRAINING CYCLE

Capt Thornhill, 2IC B (MALTA) Coy

B (MALTA) Company has successfully completed its Pre-Deployment Training Cycle, sharpening operational readiness ahead of our deployment on Operation CABRIT 17. The training focused on combat effectiveness, command and control, and interoperability within a Battlegroup and the context of combined arms manoeuvre.

The cycle began with Exercise IRON CYCLONE, starting with a Battle Craft Syllabus package covering navigation and soldiering skills. Training progressed to Company-level attacks by day and night. This was followed by TRADEWIND, qualifying new Warrior AFV commanders and developing mounted capability. The final phase involved Battlegroup training with intense offensive and defensive actions.

During CMR Ranges, the Company completed a full live-fire progression, including Company attacks in a light role and Platoon-level mounted attacks. Additional training included a section competition and a live-fire bayonet lane.

After the range package the Coy was now qualified to complete the five-day Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise (CALFEX), which focused on tactical offensive and defensive operations, refining coordination with supporting arms.

The final Exercise to validate the Battlegroup was Combined Staff Tactical Training Exercise (CSTTX). This tested the Company in a digitally simulated battlespace, challenging commanders at all levels on planning, decision-making, and adapting to dynamic scenarios.

B (MALTA) Coy now stands fully mission-ready, demonstrating resilience and tactical acumen, looking forward to deploying on Op CABRIT 17.

1 MERCIAN - Ex KUKRI BEACON - FORGING SPIRIT ON SAAREMAA ISLAND, ESTONIA

C (Kohima) Company recently completed Exercise KUKRI BEACON, a demanding 24-hour navigation and endurance challenge conducted

on SAAREMAA, Estonia's largest island. Designed as both a test of resilience and a showcase of multinational cooperation, the exercise brought together the Estonian Defence League and our French partners in a spirit of shared purpose.

The decisive phase of the activity centred on a 50-kilometre patrols competition, tracing routes across the island's southern peninsula and its network of historic lighthouses. These patrols highlighted the strategic importance of Saaremaa as both a natural stronghold and a testing ground for endurance. Mixed teams of MERCIAN soldiers, Estonian reservists, and French counterparts navigated together through coastal forests, marshes, and dunes, strengthening bonds through shared hardship.

KUKRI BEACON not only built physical endurance but reinforced our reputation for adaptability and multinational integration. Working shoulder-to-shoulder with the Estonian Defence League showcased the value of local knowledge and defence resilience. Partnering with the French strengthened our wider NATO ties.

The exercise concluded with a period of reflection and camaraderie, leaving all participants with sharpened skills, stronger friendships, and renewed confidence in our collective ability to operate on Europe's front line.

1 MERCIAN - WELFARE TEAM

As the 1 MERCIAN Battle Group wraps up its six-month adventure on Operation CABRIT in

Estonia, we couldn't be prouder of their grit, professionalism, and good humour through it all. But let's not forget the real heroes back home - you, the families and loved ones who've held the fort with strength, patience, and a whole lot of heart.

While our troops have been doing us proud overseas, we've been busy making sure life back home has been filled with connection, support, and a few well-earned laughs along the way.

Welfare Events - Bringing the Fun (and the Alpacas)

Over the past six months, we've thrown ourselves into organising nine fantastic events - each one designed to bring joy, build friendships, and remind everyone that no one's in this alone. From the fluffy charm of the Alpaca Farm Festival to the sun-soaked Bournemouth Beach Trip, and the adrenaline rush of a Theme Park Day, we've had something for everyone. Other highlights included Big Beeches Day, a Zoo Visit, and more!

These events weren't just about fun (though there was plenty of that!) - they were about creating a community that lifts each other up, shares the highs and lows, and makes the time apart just a little bit easier.

Homecoming Parade - 25 September 2025

What a day! On 25 September, Picton Barracks came alive with joy as 295+ family members gathered to welcome our soldiers home in style. The theme? Fun Fair Extravaganza - and it did not

disappoint! Rides, inflatables, food stalls, and ice cream galore.

Every service child received a special medal for their strength and resilience (because they're heroes too!). The Military Parade kicked off at 1600 hrs, showcasing the pride and tradition of 1 MERCIAN.

While our soldiers will receive their official service medals in 2026, this day was all about celebrating now the return, the relief, and the joy of being together again.

A Final Word from the Welfare Team

To every family member, friend, and loved one - thank you. Your strength, patience, and support have been the heartbeat of this deployment. You've shown what it means to be part of the 1 MERCIAN family: united, resilient, and full of heart.

As we welcome our soldiers home, let's carry forward the spirit of togetherness that's carried us through. Here's to the next chapter!

1 MERCIAN - Ex EAGLE STRIKE

Ex EAGLE STRIKE was a Battlegroup Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise (CALFEX), held in August, which was the culmination of our training pathway in Estonia. EAGLE STRIKE brought together elements from all 1 MERCIAN Battlegroup Sub-Units and was entirely resourced and delivered from within the Battlegroup. This exercise built on a series of Live Fire Tactical Training packages delivered by C Coy and B Squadron KRH, and brought together

specialists from DRAGON Coy, 33 Armoured Engineer Squadron and 5Bty.

EAGLE STRIKE demonstrated the utility of Estonia's Central Training Area for complex live fire training. All though there are some challenges with managing such a large range template, there is more than enough space, with complex terrain to allow for FIWAF and trench fighting.

For many of our soldiers this would have been the first opportunity for them to conduct live fire training in the combined arms environment with IFVs, tanks, artillery, mortars and BATSIMs. This builds confidence and allows for a fully immersive tactical experience. EAGLE STRIKE also allowed vehicle crews to experience artillery inoculation; this involves being subject to an artillery barrage whilst battened down within an Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

EAGLE STRIKE was a truly challenging and rewarding exercise that showcased the Battlegroup's training progression.

4 MERCIAN - HONORARY COLONEL

Colonel Carl Richardson

In July I had the privilege of visiting the 1 MERCIAN led Battlegroup in Estonia during Op CABRIT 16, observing an exercise and spending some time with soldiers from across the Regiment, including those from 4 MERCIAN. Having the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the deployment, training plans and lived experience on the camp in person was incredibly useful, and I know that much valuable

experience has been gained by all who took part in the Operation.

August saw the triumphant return of the Band of the Mercian Regiment to the historic Hyde Park Bandstand in central London, where crowds were treated to a mix of music, ranging from military classics through to Stevie Wonder! Congratulations and thanks to all in the Band who participated, and especially to Major Ian Johnson who pulled everything together. Listening to great music is always a treat, but this event also serves as a wonderful opportunity to showcase the Mercian Regiment to an audience who might not otherwise engage with us.

Finally, I must close with a few words about Lt Col Charlie Whitting, who retired from the Army after a long and distinguished career at the start of September. Lt Col Whitting has been an outstanding source of support to me personally in the role of Honorary Colonel over the past 18 months. I am sure everyone will join me in wishing him all the very best for his future endeavours, and equally welcome Lt Col Andy Lawson into his new role as CO of 4 MERCIAN.

Stand Firm Strike Hard

4 MERCIAN - Ex SAVA STAR

Maj Watts, OC C (KOHIMA) Coy

On the 15 September the road party left for Croatia to start the deployment of 4 MERCIAN Ex SAVA STAR. On the 20 September the 4 MERCIAN main body started their deployment to Gašinic in Croatia via Stansted for the unit ATE

(Annual training exercise). The battalion was met by the Defence Attaché Lt Colonel Andrew Higgins at Zagreb airport, and given a quick brief before progressing onto Gašinic camp, and training area.

Training started with some RSOL. On the following day our Croatian partners organised a day to study the Battle for Vukovar that took place during the Croatian Homeland War in 1991. The day started with a visit to their main museum. The troops received a powerful and insightful brief from a serving officer in the Croatian Army who had fought in the Battle of Vukovar in 1991. After this troops were able to walk around the museum and got hands on with some of the kit from the battle such as mines and personal weapons. The day also included a sombre visit to the Cemetery of Commemoration for those who lost their lives during the battle of Vukovar in 1991. Graves ranged of civilian aged from just a few months old to a lady of over 104 years of age. Lt Col Lawson and Major Vlatko Borilović placed a candle of remembrance during the visit as a meaningful sign of respect and partnership with our Croatian allies.

The interoperability training started with lessons for both British and Croatian's Forces. The Croatian Battalion is an armoured unit (The 'Kune' Battalion which is translated as The 'Martens'), perhaps unsurprisingly they seemed particularly interested in our Javelin anti-tank capability. The Croatian tank crews were deeply surprised that the Javelin sight could identify their M84 tanks through a heavy smoke screen, causing much tactical rethinking on their part!

Other lessons included introduction to CQB, trench clearing, and FIWAF and Raid operations.

This was a great beginning to the exercise and a chance for commanders at all levels to start building firm working relationships, as well as explore differences in our training and practices that sparked much thought on how we can work more closely together in the future.

Also, during this initial training, the JOC (Joint Operations Centre) started a planning process for a battalion attack to take place during the second week whilst a high level Croatian and British Distinguished Visitor's Day was planned to take place. The respective planning staff started using their own national planning processes, 7 questions for the British and MDMP (Military Decision Making Process) for the Croatians. Capt Sam Mann made a notable contribution in helping our Croatian partners understand the 7 Questions process. Following the end of the Mission Analysis there was a decision to integrate the teams and use the MDMP process for the rest of the planning process. During the planning process the team presented their outputs to CO 4 MERCIAN as the BG Comd. The final output saw a full set of battle group orders delivered for the battalion deliberate attack.

While the JOC staff planned the attack the exercising UK company deployed onto the training area under Major Lloyd Watts to conduct company level operations in preparation for the battalion attack. The company conducted a number of operations including standing patrols, clearance patrols, platoon attacks, an ambush, a

company raid, and deliberate attack. This marked the first occasion in recent times for 4 MERCIAN that soldiers were able to operate at company level, with individual soldiering skills as well as commanders from the lowest level right up to company commander being tested to develop them professionally, an excellent opportunity that was relished by all. CSgt Cornbill and CSgt Leverton, who were extremely popular instructors amongst the Croatian soldiers, continued throughout this phase to provide additional training to the Croatian platoons to help develop their skills in preparation for the company final attack. Overall, the exercise proved to be highly challenging for our soldiers covering arduous terrain and dense forestry blocks not ordinarily found in UK training areas, but equally this proved highly rewarding for them.

The Distinguished Visitor's Day included a final 2 company, battalion level attack which saw a culmination of UK and Croatian forces being integrated together. Visitors from the Croatian army included Colonel General Tihomir Kundid (Croatian CGS) and Defence Minister Ivan Anušić. Whilst visitors from the British Army included Director Res (DRes) Maj Gen Lord Lancaster TD, VR, PC, and Hon Col Carl Richardson.

We were fortunate that the battalion also had visits from Colonel of the Regiment Lt Gen Sir Ian Cave CB who was on hand and delighted to be able to promote 3 of Private soldiers to the rank of Lance Corporal. Congratulations LCpls Spalding, Bunn and Apergis! Commander 12X Armd Bde Brig Luke MBE also visited to see

troops in the field and highlighted the importance of the Reserves role moving forward as we increase our lethality and operability.

There was a final opportunity for troops to enjoy some much needed and well deserved down time at the end of the ATE, with soldiers engaging in a friendly football match with the Croatians as well as a day of R&R to the local town of Osijek.

The battalion thanks Major Paul Muckle, Capt Marc Giles, and in particular WO2 Dearden for their efforts in planning and executing a successful ATE. Overall, the battalion had a valuable training experience with some enjoyable cultural activity.

4 MERCIAN B (MALTA) COMPANY

Maj Rose, OC

B (Malta) Company has been busy as it prepared to deploy to Croatia with AT, cohesion, courses and promotions. Sgt Wood instructed in California where Ptes Molyneux, Mealor and O'Gara gained their Summer Mountain Foundation qualifications. Much thanks must go to Cpl Wilson for, at very short notice, providing MT support.

The company squeezed in a cohesion day visiting the Regimental Headquarters outstation in Chester, ascending Chester Cathedral, and clay-pigeon shooting.

Congratulations go to LCpl McFadden who excelled on his PTI Cadre (coming 1st on the 2km run out of 60 Army-wide students) and to Ptes

Apergis, Forshaw, Francis, Russon and Spalding who all passed a Bn promotions board to LCpl.

We welcome back Ptes Skidmore & Forshaw from their mobilisations on Op CABRIT and welcome in CSgt Arbuthnot as SPSI in Widnes. We say farewell to CSgt Cotterill as PSI Widnes and wish him all the best in civvy street.

4 MERCIAN C (KOHIMA) COMPANY

Major Watts, OC

July saw C Coy host the Battalion training weekend at our Bulwell ARC where soldiers undertook training on the 'Interim Combined Arms Virtual Simulation' (ICAVS) platform. A computer generated setting that allowed soldiers to train together in a mix of different environments without the need of a physical training area. The system was excellent for soldiers to develop their communication skills as well as work on a much bigger scale than they are normally accustomed to.

July also saw 2Lt's Izzy Spary and Michael Olafisoye carry the 4th Battalion's Colours to this year's Annual Crich Pilgrimage. A duty they carried out exceptionally well, despite the rather windy weather conditions. Sadly, 2Lt Spary also departed the company in early Aug to start her new career in the regular army as a professionally qualified vet within the Vet Corps. We wish her all the best for the future.

August saw members of the Company undertake the normal annual adventurous training package, with hill walking in the lake district, mountain biking in Ullswater as well as a 'Via

Ferrata' at Honister Slate Mine. Soldiers enjoyed the extra days on AT this year and the fabulous weather conditions.

August also saw CSgt Ian Brown, our QPSI, hang up his boots for the last time and retire after 19 years of loyal service with the Company. A farewell social was held in Nottingham to wish him the best for his retirement as well as thank him for all he has done. He will be greatly missed. The Company looks forward to the arrival of WO1 Dominic Kalisa who will take over the QPSI role in late Sep, he has some big shoes to fill!

Soldier development has once again been a focus for the Company with notably Pte Whiteley passing the Basic Assault Pioneer Course and Pte Tiluhan who passed his basic training 2 week Battlecamp to become C Company's latest trained soldier. Sgt Tom Reah has been awarded a Lord Lieutenants Award for Meritorious Service, a great honour and wonderful to see him being recognised. As we move into September our focus continues to be on preparation ahead of members of the company deploying, along with the rest of the Battalion, on Exercise SAVA STAR to Croatia.

4 MERCIAN D (DRAGON) COMPANY

Maj Peacock, OC

July and August are traditionally the quiet periods of the training year, and while the permanent staff got some well deserved leave, Reservists from D Coy went mountain biking in Capel Curig. Well organised by 2Lt Hardy, this involved three groups of varying ability riding

terrain at Coedy Brenin. Accommodated at Capel Curig, the weekend saw riders push their limits and use their ingenuity to conduct some running repairs out on the tracks. A special thanks to the instructors who volunteered their time to come and ride with D Company.

4 MERCIAN HQ (EAGLE) COMPANY

Company Overview

Maj Johnston MBE

Worcester ARC said farewell to 2Lt Boyer on the first Tuesday of September 2025. 2Lt Boyer who is a 23-year-old from Great Malvern, has spent five years with the battalion, joining in August 2020.

In his five years 2Lt Boyer has completed Phase 1 and CIC soldier training, Sandhurst CCS and PCBC (R) and exercised abroad in Spain and Morocco. He now looks forward to his regular Career starting at Sandhurst CC253.

My time with 4 MERCIAN

2Lt Boyer

I joined 4 MERCIAN in August 2020 after failing AOSB Mainboard with aspirations of doing a gap year commission. Even though I was a young 18-year-old who knew nothing about the army I was welcomed with open arms by Major Johnston and HQ Company who said they would develop me to give AOSB another go. This would end up being the best thing that has ever happened to me.

I completed my phase 1 soldier training at ATR Winchester before starting my studies in History at the University of Exeter. The battalion fully supported me whilst I was at university, allowing me to complete Mod B whilst attached to Exeter University OTC. After first year, I completed my CIC and went on to attach to 6 Rifles, allowing me to conduct infantry training and further develop myself despite being over 100 miles away from 4 Mercian. I then passed AOSB on my second attempt in December 2022.

In 2023 I completed the RMAS short course and became platoon commander of Kidderminster Anti-Tank Platoon and later Worcester Rifle Platoon. In 2024 I passed PCBC (R) after graduating at university. Following this I later went overseas to Morocco and Spain whilst still attached to 6 Rifles and spent some time on exercise Iron Cyclone with 1 Mercian. From January to June 2025, I went travelling to Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Texas, to get some non-military development before joining the regular army in September 2025.

I have had the best time with 4 MERCIAN, and I owe the battalion and its soldiers an immeasurable debt for seeing the potential in me and helping to develop me into a future regular army officer.

Adventure Training in Wales

2Lt Lynch

This weekend HQ (Eagle) Company undertook their annual Adventure Training package in Wales. Based out of a campsite near the town of

Dolgellau, the Company took on the Cadair Idris ascent, walking the Minffordd Path to the summit and completing a circular route back to the bottom. The route provided a great challenge and something different to the usual training rhythm, as well as plenty of photo ops!

The troops also took the time to enjoy a BBQ on Saturday evening courtesy of our very own Chef, and had a great time catching up and getting to know many of the new faces who have recently joined us from across our catchment area. The trip finished on a high with a trip to nearby Barmouth for a walk on the beach and cafe lunch before heading for home. Whilst the army offers a range of AT opportunities across the world, year-round, the Company AT weekend is always a hit and reinforces our enduring family bond as a county unit.

Regimental Signals Detachment Commanders Course

LCpl Ramsden

Over the past two weeks I took the next step in my CIS platoon career path and attended the Regimental Signals Detachment Commander course. The course is designed to challenge those with the RS qualification and improve their knowledge of the organic CIS role as well as develop them into commanders within that. The course consisted of a package of pre-learning, covering everything from setup and use of the Bowman radio systems to online skills.

On arrival, the course consisted of a taught phase in classroom, covering a range of advanced CIS topics as well as how to set up,

operate and relocate a Command Post as required in the field. There was additionally a dive into the orders process and a test phase on the new skills learned across the board.

The course culminated in a short field exercise where we put our new skills to the test, delivering the orders and then executing a CP setup tasking, as well as managing the day-to-day running of the CP in order to effectively track the battle and communicate between callsigns.

Overall, the course was a good challenge and a useful step to the next phase of my career as I look to take on greater responsibility within my unit and I would recommend it to anyone who is interested to give it a go.

Wolverhampton Recruits

2Lt Lynch

Over the past few months, we in Wolverhampton Platoon have seen a boom of recruits coming in to get a taste of the Army Reserve and take on the challenge for themselves, so much so that the recruits are beginning to outnumber trained personnel in the location! It is great to see so many new faces interested in joining up and even better is the willingness they demonstrate to muck in with their future platoon and take part in training and discussion wherever they can.

Despite being at various stages of the training process, and coming from a wide variety of interesting backgrounds, civilian lives etc, the Wolves recruits have formed their own bonds and indeed their own culture of helping each other through and keeping each other

accountable to their goals in what can otherwise be a long and difficult training pipeline. This is a testament to their character as future soldiers and the character of the trained members of the platoon who are always willing to support and mentor where necessary to get the best from each member.

This wave of fresh faces is in no small part due to the stellar efforts of the recruiting team at Wolves, in particular the support of CSgt Wheeler of the Regimental Band, and Pte Gribble of Wolves Platoon who acts as the day-to-day mentor and go-between for all our recruits and often acts above his rank to deliver early aspects of training and support the recruits through their courses in any way he can. I hope to keep this upward trend for the future so that we in Wolves can continue to push our recruiting goals and, most importantly, grow the 4 MERCIAN community.

VJ80

2Lt Boyer

Friday the fifteenth of August 2025 marked the 80 year anniversary of victory over Japan which Imperial Japan surrendered in the Second World War. This marked the end of the bloodiest conflict in human history. The Worcestershire Regiment, one of the Mercian antecedent regiments, saw heavy fighting against the Japanese in Burma, pushing back the Japanese advance towards India.

The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regimental association held an excellent memorial service at the Worcestershire

Regimental Stone, in Gheluvelt park, Worcester. I was fortunate enough to represent the Mercian Regiment at the service, where I read John 15:1-17, a profound chapter reminding us that 'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends' such as those in the Second World War who gave their tomorrow for our today.

THE BAND OF THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

Hill tops, Churches, Concerts, Training, Awards, Bandstands - a busy summer season!

At the annual Regimental Crich Pilgrimage the band performed alongside members of The Derbyshire ACF Band. Together we provided the musical accompaniment for the parading cadets, the procession of the dignitaries, the march on and forming up of the Colours, and the service itself. The Last Post was sounded by Cpl Wendy Robert as the regimental family gathered to remember the sacrifices made by our soldiers past and present.

On the 14th of September, the band led a contingent of Sikh service personnel for the commemoration of the Battle of Saraghari. The day's events centred around the Saraghari Memorial in Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara. The memorial commemorates the last stand of 21 Sikh soldiers from the 36th Sikh Regiment of the Bengal Infantry, in 1897, against an estimated 12,000 to 24,000 enemy tribesmen at Fort Gulistan, and features a bronze statue of their leader, Havildar Ishar Singh. The event was attended by local dignitaries, religious leaders and the local

community, and featured both traditional British marches played by the band, and moving traditional Sikh religious music performed by young musicians from the region.

Throughout the season, the Saxophone Quartet has also been out and about supporting local units for evening events and regimental dinners. On the 7th of September the 4 Mercian Officers' Mess 'lunched out' the Commanding Officer, Lt Col. Charlie Whitting. The music included 'Farewell to Lt Col Whitting', a newly arranged 'Fanfare' by Captain Johnson, the Director of Music. This piece featured music depicting specific periods of the CO's career including regimental music from his first and last regiments and times spent in various postings such as Germany, Baghdad & Cyprus. The CO was clearly moved by the presentation and it was not only a fitting send off, following a very successful career, but also a personal thank you, in recognition of the support he had given the band during his tenure.

Annual Training Exercise - ATX25

This year's ATX focussed on delivering two public 'live firing' (to use a military analogy) events, each preceded, by a week of concentrated rehearsals, career briefings, individual music education and study in preparation for Career Employment Qualifications (CEQs).

The first week was held in RAF Cosford, with kind permission of the Camp Commandant and the RAF Volunteer Band, whose excellent facilities provided the perfect base for our busy schedule.

This first week also afforded the newly formed 'pop group' – 10 Lenses, an opportunity to hone their music programme and stagecraft. We also hosted a number of fellow reservist musicians from other bands in order to support them in the attainment of their annual bounty.

A Shrewsbury Serenade – Week one culminated in an evening concert hosted in the beautiful setting of St Chad's church in Shrewsbury. This was a free to enter concert and was very well-attended by both members of the public and friends and family of the band. An eclectic programme included a classical waltz, a traditional overture, music from the big screen and even a tribute to local Midland's legend, Ozzy Osbourne who had recently passed away. Judging by the response of the audience there was something to delight everyone. The event was also attended by representatives from the Army Benevolent Fund who were there to raise awareness of their presence within the local community.

Week 2 saw the band deploy south to Woolwich, where we were hosted by the RCAM Orchestra in their facilities Woolwich Barracks. Here we further honed our skills and prepared for our final event of the exercise. The Band Sergeant Major, WO1 Andy Prescott organised an excellent team-building event that tested the teams orienteering skills around the famous landmarks in Woolwich, Greenwich and the centre of London. It was great to see the band members bonding outside of the comfort zone of the practice room, and taking up the challenge with gusto!

Hyde Park Finale – The band's final fling was played out on the famous bandstand in Hyde Park, performing at another free to attend event. The Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens host a series of bandstand concerts and our Honorary Colonel, Col Carl Richardson, a trustee of the Friends, was the catalyst for our involvement. This link afforded the band an opportunity to prepare for and perform at an iconic, outdoor venue. It was a beautiful summer's day and we were accompanied by an enthusiastic audience and members of the wider regimental family. Another eclectic performance including the best of music from the stage and pop culture, including music by George Gershwin & Stevie Wonder, and jazz from the pens of Dave Brubeck & Chuck Mangione. The latter had recently passed away in July providing a poignant moment of reflection, when the band performed The Land of Make Believe being excellently with an excellent solo rendition, on Flugel Horn, by the new band PSI, CSgt Jason Pickin.

All in all, the perfect way to end our ATX and carry forward all that knowledge and experience into the Autumn and Winter seasons.

Ex Sava Star

On the 20th of September 4 members of the band and a guest musician from 4 LANCs departed, alongside their colleagues from the 4th Battalion, to Croatia for Ex SAVA STAR. Their objective was to provide musical support to the battalion and also lead on a public engagement event with their musical counterparts from the Croatian Armed Forces (CAF).

The small ensemble comprised the Director of Music, Capt Ian Johnson, The Band Sergeant Major (BSM), WO1 Andrew Prescott, LCpl Michelle Pithers, Musns Nicky Letts, and Michael (Bob) Hope from 4 LANCs. The team had already prepared most of the performance output options during the ATX and were able to further extend that capability with the addition of Musn Hope, a hugely talented musician. The aim was to provide a multi-capability ensemble ready to react to and perform in a variety of settings in support of the unit and the British Embassy. We arrived with the capability to provide a Saxophone Quartet, a Jazz Duo, and a Semi-acoustic pop trio as the main outputs. The main event was a joint performance with the CAF Jazz Orchestra. The venue was the recently completed, Franjo Kresna Concert Hall, a beautiful performance space at the Culture Centre in the city of Osijek. The CAF Orchestra are a high-energy, hugely talented ensemble. They perform music from across the Big Band spectrum, from Tom Jones to Frank Sinatra and Velasquez to Ellington. It was a delight to see the saxophonists welcomed into the fold and perform such high-quality music to the delight of the 400+ audience. In attendance were the British Ambassador, His Excellency Javed Patel, and a number of Senior Officers from the CAF. In the midst of the concert the Saxophone Quartet performed their own pieces, bringing a touch of Britishness to the evening's proceedings, with a moving arrangement of John Newton's Amazing Grace and Freddie Mercury's Bohemian Rhapsody. Their performance was very warmly received and proved to be just the right complementary contrast for the concert. The

concert concluded with a real party atmosphere and it really was an all-singing, all dancing affair!! In the immortal words of Bob Hope – "Thanks for the memories."

Personnel News

Congratulations to Musicians Ernest Appleby (Clarinet) and Jordan Kinsey (Tenor Trombone) on the successful completion of their Career Employment Qualification (CEQ) Level 1 exams. This is the highest level to which the Army tests its musicians and is no mean feat. A special mention to Musn Kinsey, who achieved a 'with merit' for his performance. Well done both!

During the ATX, the Band Sergeant Major presents the Musician of the Year Award to a band member in the rank of musician who has had an exceptional year. This year's award was presented to Musician Jordan Kinsey, who has shown outstanding determination, commitment and esprit de Corps. Congratulations Musician Kinsey.

Musician Andy Elwood (Tenor Trombone) represented the Army Orienteering Team in one of the World's toughest races in Finland. He trained and competed within the Army Team in Finland proving once again his very high fitness levels and strong team ethic.

This quarter, Musns Nicky Letts (Saxophone), Lewis Kirk (Cornet) and Musn Andy Elwood joined The Band of the Fusiliers Regiment on their ATX, performing at the Nijmegen Marches in the Netherlands and Musician Callum Potts (Flute) has just returned from his ATX with The Waterloo Band and Bugles of the Rifles taking

part in engagements at The Tank Museum and on Swanage Bandstand.

A warm welcome to new recruit Musician Beth Fisher-Dewhurst, a talented saxophonist, and congratulations to Colour Sergeant Pickin on his taking up the post of the Band's PSI (FTRS).

Upcoming engagements to see the Band

- 9th November – Remembrance Sunday. Birmingham City Centre.
- 6th December – Band Christmas Concert. Details to follow on MERCIAN CONNECT.

DERBYSHIRE ARMY CADET FORCE

Annual Camp 2025

The pinnacle event of the training year, with 348 cadets and 89 adult volunteers at Otterburn Camp, Northumberland.

A 7-day programme provided challenging Army Cadet Syllabus training and testing, competitions and unique military themed experiences that only the MOD sponsored Cadet Forces can offer young people.

Under Derbyshire ACF's new senior leadership, it was an extremely successful and well-orchestrated camp - largely due to excellent command and control at County Headquarters, with an Operations Room aligned to the G1 to G9 framework and daily Orders Group meetings that wouldn't have been out of place on a Regular/Reserve exercise.

We enjoyed hosting guests including The Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire, Brigadier Gary McDade - Deputy Commander Cadets, Lt Col J Turner - JMC HQ Centre Deputy Commander and Major M Parr - Officer Commanding Cadet Training Team. Throughout the week, we were supported by Mercian-badged Cadet Training Team personnel – in the field and on ranges.

The county final parade was on the 80th anniversary of VJ Day and a service of remembrance was held. Afterwards, cadet and adult volunteer achievements were celebrated with badges, certificates and rank promotions. This year's Champion Company is D Company, and the Lucas Tooth Shield for Best Detachment went to Long Eaton, C Company.

Cadet Regimental Sergeant Major

In July, Cdt Hannah Breheny of A Company's Ashbourne detachment was appointed Cdt RSM.

I have been a proud member of the Army Cadet Force for over 4 years and I have continually developed as a cadet, a teacher, and a leader. Throughout my cadet journey, I have taken part in numerous challenging and rewarding events that have shaped me both personally and professionally. Notable among these are:

- Cadet Cambrian Patrol - which enhanced my team-building and problem-solving skills under pressure;
- Cadet Infantry Battle Camp - which tested my endurance and significantly improved my fieldcraft and confidence;

- Master Cadet- a culmination of my years of cadet experience, leadership, and training;
- Cadet Centre for Adventurous Training Rock Climbing course- an incredible opportunity to learn new skills outside of my comfort zone;
- CCAT Solent Challenger- where I crossed the English Channel, visited France and British islands – an unforgettable experience that broadened my horizons.

Now, as the Cadet Regimental Sergeant Major of Derbyshire ACF, my goal is to unify our county like never before. From the moment I was appointed, my mission has been to play an active, supportive part in the careers of every cadet. I aim to ensure that the voices of cadets across the county are heard at the highest level, and that all cadets feel empowered, valued, and truly part of how Derbyshire ACF is shaped.”

MUSEUM OF THE MERCIAN REGIMENT (WFR COLLECTION)

This summer has been a busy one here at the museum. In May we were awarded a grant of £25,000 by Museum Development Midlands, with the funding coming from Department of Culture & Media in the government.

The grant is funding the following VE & VJ Day activities:

- Pop up exhibitions at Wollaton Hall & Nottingham Library

- Digitalisation of WW2 material from the museum archive
- A WW2 webpage that will allow access to the above material. Examples include audio histories, personal letters and letters home from Foresters who were POWs during the war
- Employment of an Education Freelancer to work and engage with local schools.

On top of the above the Curator has installed a new display which reunites the uniforms of 3 Officers of the 95th (Derbyshire) Regiment of Foot who were all present at the Battle of Alma in 1854. The National Army Museum has loaned the uniform of Lt Robert Polhill, who was killed in action on the day of the Battle, sits alongside Lt Carmichael and Adjutant Captain Alexander MacDonald.

Visit The Commandery this Armistice for an opportunity to view the rare Fabergé ‘The Pear Blossom’

Members of the public are invited to visit The Commandery on Sunday 9 November, 11.30am – 4pm, for a unique opportunity to view the rare piece of Fabergé ‘The Pear Blossom’ gifted to The Queen’s Own Worcestershire Hussars in 1904.

On display for one day only, as part of the city’s Armistice commemorations, all money from tickets sales on the day will be donated by Worcester City Council to support the fundraising campaign for The Worcestershire Soldier at The Commandery project. ‘The Pear

Blossom’ was last on display in the city to the public over 30 years ago.

Whilst the Jewel is on display visitors can enjoy a short, free talk about the Fabergé Jewel on the hour from 12pm onwards as well as the opportunity to view plans for the new Worcestershire Soldier exhibition.

No booking is required, just drop in (last entry 3pm). Visitors are welcome to explore the rest of The Commandery on the day. Tickets are Adults- £9, Children under 5 – FREE, Children 5 – 16yrs- £4.10, Family ticket (up to 2 adults & 3 children)- £23*. All monies raised through ticket sales on the day will be donated to The Worcestershire Soldier Gallery at The Commandery project. Please note, there are no pricing concessions on the day as this is fund raising activity.

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.

WOLVERHAMPTON BRANCH (STAFFORDS) MERCIAN REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION (MRA)

[The branch continues to work hard in delivering support to the branch members and wider veterans’ community](#)

The Wolverhampton Branch (Staffords) of the Mercian Regimental Association (MRA) have had a hectic summer once again. Again, the volunteers we have within the branch and support from across the wider community has seen the branch support many events which have included deployment of the Air Soft Range, Attendance at local civic events, and deployment of the standard at several events across the County.

The branch also continues to be extremely well supported by The Wolverhampton Mayor, Sureena Brackenridge MP, and local businesses across Wolverhampton. The single biggest achievement over the summer has been the purchase and launch of a branch Minibus in support of our charity work. This was made possible mainly by the award of funding from the National Lottery Community fund and by the dedicated effort of branch members in their fund-raising efforts.

Appointment to Vice President

I reported in the last newsletter that Gordon Partridge stepped down as the branch Vice President. Steve (Yasa) Yates has volunteered take over as the branch Vice President and Gordon handed over to him officially at the May 2025 branch meeting. We look forward to having the knowledge, expertise and experience that Steve will bring to this role and once again thank Gordon for the many years of loyal service he has given to the branch in his various roles.

Cyprus Remembrance Day at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA)

Gordon Partridge leads branch members at the Cyprus Remembrance Day at the NMA for those who died during the 1955-1959 Cyprus Emergency

Donation made by Cosmo Wolverhampton

The branch has been nominated by Wolverhampton MP Sureena Brackenridge to Cosmo Bentley Bridge to be a recipient of Cosmo's annual donation to charity. The branch President attended a presentation ceremony at Cosmo, Bentley Bridge in July 25 to receive a donation of £450, which has been used for the good and benefit of branch members and local veterans. We are extremely grateful to Cosmo for their generous donation and for Sureena for nominating us.

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.

Branch Attend the Remembrance of Saraghari in Wednesfield

Three years ago, the Sikh Community of Wednesfield commissioned a Statue to be erected near to Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Wednesfield. The Statue is in memory of those Sikh Soldiers from the 36th Sikh Regiment who fought to the very end in one of the most famous

last stand battles – the battle of Saraghari. The last stand took place at a small outpost called Saraghari in the year 1897. The Branch President laid a Wreath on behalf of the branch.

CHESHIRE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

May Reunion

Joe Murphy

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more. And this year it was great to see some younger faces making the effort to attend and of course, we had the stalwarts of many years.

This is now an event that is sanctioned by the CRA but run entirely by volunteers and it is those same people who keep it going. Dave Ingram, Chris Tunney, Clive Wilding, Ian Murphy, Vic Evans, Dave Evans, Ronnie Warren, Simon Woodcock, Nick East, Mick Chatterton, Colin Clegg and our American volunteer from the Museum, Rachel. If have missed anyone out, I sincerely apologise.

I would like to thank Amanda Wohlleben, Allan Grundy, Simon Woodcock and Dave Willis for donating some cracking raffle prizes too. The raffle run by Clive Wilding raised a sum of £509. Vic, Ian and Dave raised £169.2 from the bratty stand making a total of £678.20. This sum was donated to the Museum. A fantastic sum raised by your generosity which is very much appreciated by all at the Museum.

The Garage Bar run by Dave and Bob raised £205 and this money was donated to the 22nd Riders Fund. NONE of the donation would have been

possible if we had to pay the bar staff ED Pay. It used to be £50 per person per day. This money will no doubt assist in their work in maintaining our fallen memorials and wreaths. The team are already planning for 2026 and the provisional date being looked at is Saturday 9th May.

And finally, I would like to thank everyone for your continued support at this event and others. I hope to see more of you at the Meeanee Reunion in February, details are still to be confirmed but the date is the 21st February 2026. Venue TBC.

CRA Service of Remembrance

Sunday 31st August 2025, saw 80+ members of the CRA gather at the National Memorial Arboretum for the annual Service of Remembrance. Included in the numbers were 3 former Colonels of The Regiment and all 3 played a part in the service.

Prior to the service Mrs Mary Cooke, widow of the late Sgt Percy Cooke (Ex 6th Bn The Cheshire Regiment) presented her late husband's medals to Maj Gen (Ret'd) Dr Andrew Sharpe CBE for display in Cheshire Military Museum.

The Service was conducted by the Reverend Vic Van Den Bergh, Honorary Chaplain to the NMA, and once again his humour was much appreciated making the congregation laugh on numerous occasions.

During the service Lessons were read by Brig (Ret'd) James Percival OBE and Maj Gen (Ret'd) Keith Skempton CBE DL before we were

reminded of the actions of The 1st Bn at Mons in 1914 by Maj Gen (Ret'd) Dr Andrew Sharpe CBE.

The standard was paraded, once again, by Dave Willis from Stockport Branch.

Music was provided for the service by ex musicians of The Regimental Band, and friends, led by ex Band Master Maj (Ret'd) Eddie Pickering MBE. It is always so much nicer having live music. Steve Beswick played the Last Post and Reveille as part of the Remembrance Acts.

Following the conclusion of the main service the congregation moved to the NI Copse for a short wreath laying service in memory of the 9 members of the Regiment who lost their lives in Northern Ireland during Op Banner. Wreaths were laid by Col (Ret'd) Tony Gauvain and Mrs Amanda Wohleben, whose husband, Stefan Wohleben, was responsible for raising funds as well as designing and installing the 10 memorial plaques in the Copse.

A great day was had by all those attended with many laughs, and a few tears, during the 2 services. The next annual service will be held on 6th September 2026 commencing at 12.30 Hrs.

Thank you to all that attended and made it such a memorable day and let's see if we can increase the numbers yet again for next year.

Acorn Camping Reunion

Well, it's been 5 years since we started this event, the field turned out to be too small, so we were given a larger field courtesy of Alvanley Agricultural Services, Frodsham. Acorn Camping

Reunion Weekend is a great cheap event at only £10.00 per night with BBQ, these funds also cover the cost of Portaloos, Generator and food for the BBQ. This year's event saw our first Hog Roast.

It was a great weekend, set up on 21 August, with pints in The White Lion, next to the campsite. After stories on the Friday, Saturday saw a Hog Roast and a Tea Party for those of more delicate constitution. On the Sunday, we attended the local church and laid a wreath with the Last Post played at 11.00.

With a large campfire, this event hosts 22nd veterans and their immediate family. It is a great time and a chance to swap memories in the comfort of those of like mind.

Upcoming Events

- 25 October East Cheshire Reunion – Stockport
- 6 November Field of Remembrance – Westminster Abbey
- 9 November Remembrance Sunday
- 5 December Droppin Well Memorial Service – Chester Cathedral
- 7 December TBC Droppin Well Memorial Service – Ballykelly
- TBC Christmas Drinks – Town Crier
- 31 January CRA Committee Meeting
- 21 February CRA AGM
- 21 February CRA Meeanee Reunion

**WORCESTERSHIRE & SHERWOOD
FORESTERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION**

If anyone wishes to join a branch, they should contact the Assistant Regimental Secretary who will put them in touch with the relevant branch.
E-Mail: RHQ@mercianregiment.co.uk

Chesterfield Branch

Johnno Johnson, Chair

Chesterfield Branch visited the 20th Anniversary of The Victory Show held in Leicester over the weekend of 29th-31st August. Members thoroughly enjoyed the event and there were plenty of re-enactment and old vehicles and Weapons of the British, American and German. The day culminated in two mock battles and it rounded off a very enjoyable day. We would certainly recommend it for a visit.

We held our Alma Day Social event on 20th April (Alma Day) which was attended by 70 family and friends with live entertainment, raffles and Auctions. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening entertainment and the buffet, provided by Crich Tea Rooms.

We also visited Worksop Armed Forces Event which again was enjoyed by members, and it was pleasant to meet up with our Association Friends from Worksop.

We are going to start a Family and Friends of the Regiment as we are still having families and friends wishing to join our Branch and had 7 in the last week.

We are now looking forward and planning Our Remembrance Service to be held at Crich Memorial Tower on Tuesday 11th November.

Derby Branch

Alan Derbyshire, Chair

The Derby Branch continues to thrive, and it must be said our "new" younger members have helped in this, always willing to help and take on responsibilities.

Crich Pilgrimage saw Cadet Sgt Harry Parker parading our WFRA Standard, and we thank him for this. Regretfully Gordon Carran who parades our Foresters Standard was ill, so was unable to attend. Gordon has since, and with deep regret, given up the post, which he has with great dedication conducted for many years.

The Branch sponsored two cadets from Derbyshire ACF for their annual camp.

VJ Day was commemorated with a ceremony organised by Gordon Carran at the grave of Lt Col Lilly, Commanding Officer of the 1/5th Foresters, who during their captivity was renowned for his steadfast objections to the Japanese, saving many lives.

Our Annual Dinner this year was held on 20th September, Alma Day. The three-course meal was of the high standard that we have come to expect of the Grange Banqueting Suite. The generosity of our members never ceases to amaze, with numerous raffle prizes on offer, with the monies raised being £400. It was noted, and to the amusement (all in good spirit) of certain members, that the Chairman failed to win a prize, which is most unusual. There is always next year! Our thanks go to Mick Doyle, John Higginbottom, Kirstie Parker, Bethany Robinson,

Evangeline Disney-Smith, and Debbie Orr for their help in ensuring the dinner went smoothly, and of course, all those who attended the dinner, making it such a success.

Our branch press-ganged Secretary, Daniel Parr (Danny), took part in this year's Imperial HAM at Bisley in July. After assisting with Range Officer duties for the first two days during the exceptional July heat wave, Danny competed on the Sunday in four matches including, Rapid, Snaps, Double Snaps and Deliberate matches for Veteran Service Rifle class. He was pleased with his results in the Deliberate and Rapid matches where he came second in both matches. Better luck next year with the Snaps and Double Snaps matches where Danny has not mentioned his score!

The Derby Branch always gives a warm welcome to serving and former members of the Mercian Regiment and the antecedent regiments, and other arms.

Worcester Branch

Nigel Fish, Chair

In April, contact was made by Stephen Benson of the Cheshire Roll of Honour as they had come across a memorial at Bazentin le Petit to a Captain Houston Stewart Hamilton Wallace 10th Bn The Worcestershire Regiment, who was killed in action on the 22nd July 1916. Capt Wallace's Aunt Beatrice, who like so many family members of soldiers that were registered as missing, made pilgrimages to the battlefields to try to find any information and visit their last known location. Beatrice Heap paid for the memorial and upon

completion handed it over to the IWGC with a sizable donation for its upkeep. After 1930 no family could be traced.

Stephen Benson had come across this memorial during a battlefield walk and found it in a bad state of disrepair. After doing some research he found out that Capt Wallace came from a wealthy family on the Wirral and is commemorated on a WWI Memorial there. Stephen Benson and the Cheshire Roll of Honour decided to do something about it. The oak Calvary was taken to Cheshire where it was repaired. The groundwork at Bazentin was carried out by Stephen's associates with help from the Western Front Association with donations from various sources.

Stephen had some important news for me. Through CWGC database he came across a letter from Capt Wallace's Aunt to the IWGC saying that the 10th Bn CO told her that her nephew was buried with two brother officers that were killed on the same day. One was named Fish. Stephen Benson did some further research to find out that Wallace was indeed buried with a Capt WF Tree and a 2Lt Jack Fish, whose body was discovered in 1927.

On Sunday 20th July, five of us from the branch, Major (Retd) Richard Fox, Gerald 'Nobby' Clarke, Rob Atkinson, Alan 'Kipper' Fish and myself left via Newhaven for the Somme in France. The following day we met at the Marie in Bazentin le petit. Rob Atkinson marched behind The Somme Battlefield Pipe Band with the Local Legion Standard, French Parachute veterans, French and WWI Worcester soldier re-enactors and French Dignitaries. Also in attendance was President

Macron's Sous Prefect and the Mayor of Bazentin, CWGC Rep and others. Richard Fox Laid a wreath on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Nobby had the Mayor of Worcester's wreath and Rob had the Branch / Association wreath. Kipper had the Worcestershire Regiments Standard. Rob also had the honour of reciting the Exhortation during the service. We of course took the British weather with us as it started to rain!

After that service it was back up the lane to rededicate a memorial to 9 brave men of the RE who were KIA. This memorial had been sited between two lanes that farm traffic kept hitting, so it had been moved back a few meters by the people who done the Wallace renovations. Rob also delivered the Exhortation during that short service. Afterwards we were glad to get in the dry of the town hall for refreshments. We had a chance to meet people and chat with the French Veterans.

Later in the evening we met with the Cheshire group for a very good meal at Poppies restaurant a few minutes from our hotel before looking around Pozieres Cemetery putting down some crosses to some Worcesters and some Sherwood Foresters we came across. Then it was onto the Australian Memorial just up the road for a ceremony starting at 2300 hours. It was to commemorate an attack on the strongly held German Gibraltar Blockhouse by the Australian forces that happened on the 23rd July 1916 at 0030 hours. It was a moving ceremony where faces of WWI Australian soldiers were shone onto the Obelisk. We were glad to crawl into bed gone 1am!

The following day we set out to visit the grave of 2Lt Jack Fish after a bit of searching and stopping at the NZ Memorial and a cemetery, we found the grave in the AIF Grass Lane Cemetery. We went onto the South African Memorial and Museum at Delville Wood. Then lunch and onto the Welsh Cemetery and Dragon at Mametz Wood. Then onto Lochnagar Crater. Coming across a newish VC memorial on the way. For our last day we visited Thiepval Memorial to the missing and found the names of Capt Wallace and Capt Tree, we also visited the museum there. Then we went onto the Ulster Tower before finishing up at Beaumont Hamel to see the Caribou statue at the Newfoundland Memorial and Visitor Centre. Then headed for Dieppe before catching the ferry home arriving home.

It was a very hot day on the 15th August for the VJ Day 80th anniversary of the end of WWII. We had a good turn out with quite a few members of the public turning up. The proceedings started with the salute to the Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Beatrice Grant, incorporating the National 2 minute silence. This was followed by a welcome and address by President of Worcester Branch, Lt Col (Retd) Mark Jackson OBE. He spoke of the 2nd and 7th Bn's The Worcestershire Regiment and of some relatives that were present that had family serving in the Far East. The harsh ordeal of jungle warfare and savagery of the fighting at Kohima and Imphal and the Allies including the 2nd and 7th Worcesters chasing the Japanese back through Burma. He spoke of his father's service in this conflict.

The religious part of the ceremony was led by the Reverend Lyndsey Coulthard of nearby St Stephens with the reading delivered by 2Lt Alex Boyer of 4 Mercian The Mercian Regiment. After the service the Mayor of Worcester, Cllr Dr Matt Lamb delivered a speech on the importance of the City of Worcester Remembering VJ Day. Also present was the High Sheriff of Worcestershire, Ian Smith, Chair of the County Council, Cllr Louis Stephen, the Armed Forces Champion for Worcester, Cllr Pat Agar, Sgt Brian Tompkins of West Mercia Police and Mrs Rosemary Campbell and Liz Smith from the Worcester Twinning Association. The Mercian Regimental Mascot Pte Derby alongside the Ram Major and Ram Orderly. As were Parade Marshalls, John Walters and Rob Atkinson. A big well done to the Standard Bearers who were in the direct sunshine for coping so well and to all the Volunteers that made the day possible. Afterwards, those that braved the heat were treated to some songs from the 40s by the Trench Choir from Malvern who performed so well in the heat.

The branch has been enjoying monthly coffee mornings at the refurbished old Sgts Mess Norton Barracks and for the last few months we have all been out in the sunshine joining all the tables together.

Worksop Branch

Lindsey McGuire, Secretary

After a very busy few weeks in the spring and early summer, Worksop Branch activities were a little quieter for a while. A group from the Branch

met as usual, in The Comrades Club before heading up the hill to see many familiar faces at Crich Pilgrimage this year. A few of us decided to go up the tower before the services, for some it was the first time in a good few years.

A week later, our strong links with Worksop Branch Royal British Legion were demonstrated by the presence of the Branch Standard at the Installation of the RBL Branch Chaplain, with tea and cake served after the service.

In August, local VJ80 commemorations were well attended with Worksop Branch Standard and a number of members attending the service in Memorial Gardens and the 'picnic' in the Old Market Place afterwards.

In August, a number of our Regimental family marked the sad passing of Worksop Branch Welfare Officer, Stuart Gullen by raising a glass beside the fire at our annual social at Worksop Rugby Club. The evening became much more light-hearted after that as we took turns round the field on Rob's vintage 'pedal and pop' moped!

Worksop Branch received a personal invitation from Tony Eaton to the annual Civic Service where the Branch Standard was paraded again as the community came together to mark Tony's year as Chair of Bassetlaw District Council. This time we were treated to afternoon tea in the Town Hall afterwards.

Most recently members of the Branch were invited to a local range for a 3-stage shooting competition. Activities included weapon familiarisation then a practice round ahead of

the scoring rounds. Shooting included practical mini rifle at 20 yards, precision .22 rifle at 30 yards and practical shot gun with falling plates. There was a fabulous range stew at lunch time served in mess tins from a Norwegian for a somewhat authentic experience. Definitely the best range stew we ever had.

Prizes were awarded, without bribes, for Best Shotgun Score (Lee Simcox), Best Sniper Shot (Elizabeth Simcox), Best Overall Male (Steve Jones) and Best Overall Female (Lindsey McGuire). The weather was kind and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day.

Worksop Branch meetings continue to be held at The Station Hotel in Worksop, 6pm on the last Sunday of every other month. Upcoming meetings: Sunday 30th November 2025, Sunday 25th January 2026.

MERCIAN VOLUNTEERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

28th June - Armed Forces Day 2025

On Saturday June 28th members of the association joined members of the MVRA and MRA attended Armed Forces Day in Stockport in conjunction with 4 Mercian.

Standard Bearers of the Association led the parade, which went from St. Peters Square to the Market Place, with the salute being taken by The Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester Mrs Diane Hawkins JP LLB.

On the Association's stand there was a display of weapons including an SLR, kindly donated by

The Cheshire Military Museum in Chester, and Mike Rogers kindly agreed to dress in Combat Uniform, complete with 58 Pattern webbing and PRC 349 Clansman to demonstrate the difference in equipment between the 1980's and today's soldier.

A Raffle also took place in aid of The Cheshire Military Museum, prizes being donated not only from the Association, but additionally from members and local business. The Star prize was a spa break at Mottram Hall, as well as Grandstand and paddock tickets for 2 at Haydock Park and other prizes.

As always, there were lots of people in the Market Square, not only visiting the stand, but also the plethora of military vehicles, that were on display, and the Association managed to raise £400 which will be donated towards the continued running of the museum.

The Association wants to thank all those members that gave up their spare time to man the stand, and to the people of Stockport, for their continued support.

6th July - Crich Memorial

The Annual Crich Service took place on Sunday 6th July, and was again a very well attended occasion, with representatives from both the military and Civic communities, including from Stockport our own Deputy Mayor Cllr Gary Lawson.

Members of the Association were in attendance and listened to an inspirational speech by the outgoing Colonel of The Regiment which focused

on the importance of remembering the stories and sacrifices, of all the antecedent regiments that make up The Mercian Regiment.

Mr Peter Gresty, laid a wreath on behalf of the Association, and Cadet Cpl. L – Dolphin-Yates from Chesterfield Detachment carried the branch MRA standard, and The Association wishes to express its thanks to him, for doing such an excellent job.

We would also like to express our thanks to The Comrades Club in Crich, for the buffet laid on, and for their warm hospitality, and last but not least a special thanks to Ms Cindy Clarke of RHQ for organising the Service on the day, and ensuring the event went smoothly

24th July Tallinn Estonia

On The 24th July Mike Rogers Communications Lead for the Association got married to Ene Merle Laur at the Registry office in Tallinn, surrounded by family and Friends.

The Association extends its warmest wishes to the couple, for a happy life together.

15th to 17th August - VJ Day Commemorations

On the 15th August members of the association took part in a service at St Mary's Church Stockport to commemorate the end of the war with Japan, and the official end to World War 2 which took place on that date in 1945.

This was followed up by a concert, held at Romiley Forum 2 days later in association with Stockport Armed Forces, and the Normandy Veterans Association, in the presence of the

Mayor of Stockport, local Dignitaries, and surviving members and families.

14th September – Mayors Annual Service

On Sunday the 14th September members of the association attended the Annual Civic Service, Dave Willis and Mike Rogers carrying the association standards.

The Service is a celebration of the charity work done in Stockport, and in the presence of the Mayor, which this year is Cllr. Kerry Waters.

ARMED FORCES PENSION SCHEMES (AFPS)- DEFERRED PENSIONS

Overview and History

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

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

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

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

AFPS 75

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

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

AFPS 05

AFPS 05 was introduced in 2005 and for those joining or rejoining the Regular Armed Forces from 6 April 2005. Serving members of AFPS 75

were given the opportunity to transfer to AFPS 05 by 6 April 2006.

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

RFPS 05

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

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

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

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

- In the opinion of Veterans UK (who has received evidence from a medical practitioner or other specialists) that the deferred member has suffered a permanent break down in health which has left them unable to work full-time, in any capacity, and this condition will continue until deferred pension age (age 65).
- He is not an active member of another occupational pension scheme

- Early payment of the pension may be subject to review and stopped if it is considered that the criterion for payment was no longer met.

Early Payment of Deferred Pensions with Actuarial Reduction

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

- AFPS 75 member- the proportion of the deferred pension payable at age 65 may be claimed from age 60;
- AFPS 75 Pension Credit Member (PCM)* – If this pension is the result of a Pension Sharing Order (PSO) and the PSO has taken effect then the PCM can opt to claim it from age 55
- AFPS 05- from age 55. Such a claim will not affect any EDP payments which are being paid.
- AFPS 05 PCM* – If this pension is a result of a Pension Sharing Order (PSO) and the PSO has taken effect then the PCM can opt to claim it from age 55
- Reserve Forces Pension Scheme (RFPS) from age 55
- RFPS 05 PCM* - If this pension is a result of a Pension Sharing Order(PSO) and the PSO has taken effect then the PCM can opt to claim it from age 55

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

Reduced life expectancy

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

What do I do next?

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