



ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

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BIRMINGHAM BRANCH

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The Best of the Best

**The Best Fighters in the RAF
Operate on the Ground**

**The Royal Air Force Regiment.
Ground-based specialists,
protecting RAF assets from
enemy attack.**

NEWSLETTER NO: 214

APRIL 2007

THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 214 APRIL 2007

Dear Readers.

NEW SOLIHULL STAR & GARTER HOME

In last month's newsletter on page 2, I told you all about a new Royal Star & Garter Home that is to be built in Solihull, the only one at the moment, other than the original Home at Richmond. A second new Home is to be built and then the original Home, overlooking the River Thames at Richmond, Surrey, will be relocated to the new homes and by 2009, the present home will be closed down.

Last month, Falklands War veteran Simon Weston OBE who supports the Homes, cut the first sod at the site of the new development. The new £7.5 million will be located in Monkspath Hall Road and is due to open in the summer of 2008. It will provide nursing and therapeutic care for sixty ex-servicemen and women, including a special wing for those with dementia. Simon, who is President of the Charity said:-

"We are very excited to be establishing a new Royal Star & Garter in Solihull where we will bring our special style of care to disabled ex-service men and women from the local area. We also hope to become an integral part of the community. When the Home opens, we will be providing local job opportunities as well as working with community groups and volunteers to help run our full activities programme and fund-raising events". Recruitment for the Solihull home will commence in 2007 and further information and details of vacant positions will be placed on their website nearer the time. The building aims to create a residential "homely" feel and the facilities will include a café, dining room, hair and beauty salon and a therapy room

Our adopted Air Training Corps Squadron continues to go from strength to strength, as the following report shows. We are proud of them.

492 (Solihull) Squadron ATC by the Squadron CO Elliot Hemes

These days it's certainly reassuring to know that young people can build up a solid CV, filled with practical skills such as leadership

abilities and other life skills through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

No one knows this better than the cadets of 492 (Solihull) Squadron Air Training Corps as the two character building schemes describe below.

Duke of Edinburgh Gold Awards

Six of 492 Squadron's cadets were recently awarded the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award (the highest award that can be obtained). Six is the largest number of awards obtained by 492 Squadron in one go since 2003, and contributes to their overall total of 9 Gold Awards earned by the cadets since January 2006.

Only four of the award-winning cadets are pictured in the photograph as, since achieving their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Sgt Iain Hunt and Sgt David Hunt have left the Squadron to attend university, where they were straight away accepted into the University Air Squadron and the Officer Training Corps.

Names of cadets, from left to right

Cpl Ashleigh Kirby

Cdt Daniel Widdop

Sgt Christopher Scholes

Sgt Jessica Dippie



Millennium Volunteers Scheme

With the recent announcement that they have achieved over 20,000 hours for the Millennium Volunteers Scheme, cadets and staff of Solihull 492 Air Training Squadron have plenty of reason to celebrate. The scheme, which was set up to reward volunteers for contributing their time and effort into youth organisations has proved

very popular with 492 Squadron and they have long maintained a consistent position at the top of the leader board.

That said, everyone at 492 was saddened to hear that the Millennium Volunteers Scheme, in its current format is coming to an end on 2nd March 2007. However, their smiles returned when they were officially informed that not only are they top of the leader board for the Warwickshire & Birmingham Wing, they are also top for the entire Air Training Corps. And better still, the top group in the country thanks to the huge amount of hours they've contributed.

It's quite an achievement and everyone at 492 is delighted to see their hard work and commitment to others being so widely recognised. The hours (which are gained in blocks of 100, 200, 500 and 1,000) stood at 20,300 on Wednesday 14th February. And, with the group in 2nd place having around 11,600 hours this close to the end of the scheme, it seems 492 Squadron will remain the top unit in the country. Well done to everyone involved!



Names of cadets from left to right

Flt Sgt Michael Stone

Flt Sgt Konrad Chapman

Flt Sgt Stephan Wolkovicz

5001 (Airfield Construction) Squadron Association Reunion

This Association has requested a visit to the RAF Regiment Museum and in the letter applying for permission for the visit was the following information.

In a joint venture, the "Officer's" and "Branch" Associations of 5001 (Airfield Construction) Squadron, propose to recall the

deployment under "Operation Murex" of November 1958, with a self-financing 50th Anniversary Reunion in Cyprus.

The local date for the celebration will be the Aphrodite Branch, Cyprus, Wings Appeal Garden Party on Wednesday 10th September 2008, at Akrotiri House, RAF Akrotiri, and other Battle of Britain Week activities.

ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM COSFORD

THE NATIONAL COLD WAR EXHIBITION

On Wednesday 7th February, HRH The Princess Royal officially opened The National Cold War Exhibition, a new permanent exhibition hall focusing on the Cold War years. The Rt Hon Baroness Thatcher was one of the VIP's present at this prestigious event, which included guests from the political, corporate and military arenas.

Events included an exclusive flypast by a Meteor and a Vampire, a screening of a Cold War film show and a school lesson on the Cold War, which was broadcast live over the web in real time. The new permanent exhibition hall, set amongst the hangars at Royal Air Force Museum Cosford, tells the story of the Cold War, from national, international, social/political as well as cultural perspectives. It includes static exhibits, interactive kiosks, suspended aircraft, split-level viewing and 'Hot-Spot' theatres.

The dynamic exhibits range from military hardware, to pop-culture icons. Postcards sent across the borders of Berlin. Film posters, album covers and toys, as well as life size Russian dolls are set between tanks, submarine models and aircraft such as The American F-111; The ex-Soviet Bloc MiG21 and Britain's three V-Bombers: Vulcan, Victor and Valiant (together in one building for the first time).

This project has been made possible thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Advantage West Midlands, the European Regional Development Fund, Bridgnorth District Council, the Rural Regeneration Zone, the Ministry of Defence, and the Museum's own fundraising initiatives. The Opening Ceremony was sponsored by BAE Systems.

INCREASED VISITOR FIGURES AT COSFORD

The Museum is pleased to announce that it welcomed over 17,000 visitors within the first week of opening The National Cold War

Exhibition. Says Alex Medhurst, General Manager, Cosford:

"The National Cold War Exhibition is special for the Museum, the local area and the country. It's great to know that it has hit the ground running and is already a huge success".

Annual Ceremony at the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial Runnymede Sunday 13th May 2007

The annual commemorative service at the Air Forces Memorial Runnymede will be held this year on Sunday 13th May 2007 at 1100 hours. Runnymede is six miles east of Windsor and on the second Sunday in May each year, at 11.00 a.m., a Service at the Runnymede Memorial is held.

The Service is to honour the airmen of all the Commonwealth Air Forces who lost their lives while serving at bases in the United Kingdom and North West Europe during World War II and who have no known graves. The next-of-kin and relatives of airmen whose names are engraved on the Memorial and others wishing to pay their respects are invited to attend. Copies of Order of Ceremony will be available at the Memorial.

On the sheer edge of a steep escarpment, overlooking the Thames Valley at Runnymede, stands a long, low red brick building. This is the Royal Air Force World War Two Memorial to those who died in that conflict. When you walk through the entrance, there is a great feeling of peace and serenity as before you, stretches out an expanse of beautifully cut lawn, with standard roses in full bloom together with the song of the birds and the gentle hum of bees. Below, stretches the green meadows of Runnymede where, hundreds of years ago, another tyrant, King John, was brought to heel.

The River Thames, dotted with white pleasure craft, winds its way along the valley and beyond, the green Chiltern Hills rise. The Memorial to those who died whilst serving with the Allied Air Forces, was built in 1953 and overlooks the river Thames on Cooper's hill at Englefield Green, between Windsor and Egham on the A308, 4 miles from Windsor.

This sobering yet beautiful memorial to the men and women of the Allied Air Forces who died during the Second World War, was designed by Sir Edward Maufe RA and unveiled by HM Queen Elizabeth II on 17 October 1953. An

inscription over the entrance to the cloister reads: *'In this cloister are recorded the names of 20,456 airmen who have no known grave. They died for freedom in raid and sortie over the British Isles and the land and seas of northern and western Europe'.*

This was the first new building to be designated Grade I listed status after the war. It is administered by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. From the top of the tower visitors can see Windsor Castle, Runnymede and breathtaking views of seven counties.

Runnymede is a place of great historical significance for it is where in 1215, King John signed the Magna Carta. The effect of Magna Carta over the centuries was to guarantee the liberties of the King's free subjects and to restrict his absolute power.

Between 1215 and 1225, a few clauses that had been directed against King John in person were dropped from it and some other revisions made, in the re-issues granted by his successor Henry III. After a number of further reissues, the text of the charter was copied on to the first English Statute Roll in the reign of Edward I and passed into English Law.

It has since formed the basis of the constitutions and statues of many other countries in the English-speaking world, including the United States of America. It underlines the Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which goes well beyond its original purpose as a definition of the limitations of royal power.

BRANCH SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please remember that your Branch Subscriptions were due on 1st February and also, please remember that this year, your total subscription is £15.00. That is £10.00 Association Subscription and £5.00 Branch Subscription. If you have not yet paid, please make your cheque out to The Birmingham Branch, RAF Regiment Association and send them to **THE BRANCH TREASURER** Tom Magee and **NOT** to me.

To date, only **132** members have paid up, so come on lads, chasing up late payers is a time consuming job and adds to my workload and to the workload of the Branch Treasurer. My sincere thanks to those members who have already paid up and my particular thanks to those of you that included a donation to Branch funds too. There

are too many of you to thank you all individually but we owe you all a great big thank you for your donations will help to keep us solvent this year.

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

I have a list of members of other branches and other readers who have asked to receive Birmingham Branch newsletters. The Subscription for this service is £6.00 per year. I said in last month's newsletter that I would remove names and addresses from the Circulation List at the end of last month. Well I didn't have to, as every subscriber has now paid up. So the subscribers to the Birmingham Branch newsletters have put to shame, over fifty of our members who have not yet paid their subscriptions. Well done to them all and my thanks for your prompt payments.

NEWS OF THE RAF REGIMENT



FROM THE RAF REGIMENT SECRETARY

General: The following Parish Notices are provided for your information and interest.

Death Notices:

COMINA. Former Sqn Ldr Peter Comina died Fri 2 Mar 07. He was diagnosed in late Apr 06 with a brain tumour and was casevac'd back from Cyprus at that time for a life-saving operation. Sadly though, the condition was terminal and he returned to Cyprus to see out his final days with his family.

The funeral was held at the Roman Catholic Church in Espiskopi at 1000 on Fri 9 Mar. He leaves behind his wife, Beverly and two sons, Daniel and Ian. His wife may be contacted at: Gp Capt (Retd) B Comina, c/o DETPM, HQ BF Cyprus, BFPO 53.

KAVANAGH. Former WO John Kavanagh died of a suspected heart attack on 6 Mar 06. No further details are known at this time.

BOWMAN David. Former LAC Gnr, David Bowman died recently, aged 76, and the funeral was held on 9 Mar 07. The Assoc's Chaplain, Rev Willie Downie officiated. David Bowman retired from the RAF (ex-15 Sqn RAF Regt) in Oct 53 and went on to be a sgt in the Royal Artillery (TA).

He was also a noted poet with published poems, winning the award of best poem of the year from the National Library Of Poetry in 1996. Pre-deceased by his wife, Christine, in 2002. Survived by son Davis and daughter Jill. Family contact address is: Mrs Jill Kelly, 3 Denholm Terrace, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire, ML3 3RX. No further details are known. Our condolences are extended to the family.

Annual Re-Dedication of the RAF Regt Chapel – Sun 13 May 07

The annual re-dedication of the RAF Regt Chapel at St Anne's Church, Catterick Village, will take place on Sun 13 May 07. The pattern of previous years will be followed with the rededication forming part of the regular service that will commence at 10.45 am.

Association Standard bearers should assemble at the Church by 10.15 am for briefing etc. Subject to the approval of CO 5 Regt RA, there will be a march-past in front of the RHQ in Marne Barracks (Formerly SHQ RAF Catterick). The reviewing officer will be Wg Cdr Frank Clifford, who recently was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in Kandahar.

A short memorial service - conducted by the Association Chaplain, the Rev Willie Downie - will then be held at the trees planted to commemorate the gnr's killed in Holland by the IRA in the 1980s. The event will then finish with a social gathering in the NAAFI (formerly the Centurion Club) and, hopefully, a short address by the CG.

Those requiring vehicle access to Marne Barracks and those requiring a buffet lunch (cost in the region of £5), should contact the Catterick Branch Secretary, Derek James, at (BT) 01848 832025, Email: <dtjames@tiscali.co.uk>. Further details will be published by the RAF Regt Assoc and in these Corps Parish Notices.

63 Sqn 'Black Eagle' Reunion - 26 May 07:

Arrangements for the first 63 Sqn 'Black Eagle' Reunion are well advanced. It will be held at the Union Jack Club in London on Sat 26 May, starting in the late afternoon with a meet-and-greet. A formal dinner will be held there from 1900-2300 and the cost, including the 4-course meal, should not exceed £33.50.

Accommodation will be the individuals responsibility, but accommodation at the UJ Club may be reserved on (BT) 0202 792 84814 or via Email on the website at www.ujclub.co.uk.

Please contact the organiser - FS Alan Wanbon, FS GDT at RAF Honington, tel (BT) 01359 237607 and Email at wanbons@aol.com - for more details and the 'admin order'.

Falklands 25th Anniversary - 17 June 07:

The principle celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Falklands Conflict in 1982 will be held in London at Horse Guards parade on Sun 17 Jun 07. Priority for participation in a march-past and Drumhead Service will be given to actual Falklands Conflict veterans' (ie holders of the South Atlantic Medal 1982) and the relatives of those who did not survive. More details and applications for attendance are available from the MOD Veterans' Agency or the SAMA 82 websites (www.falklands25.com). This will be a major media event and the Corps will be participating through the representation of the Regt units who participated in the conflict.

Details will also be found in the next Centurion journal and in the RAF Regt Assoc's recently issued 'The Flash' magazine. However, to avoid unnecessary work, please do not apply unless you meet the criteria for attendance.

Successful applicants will be notified by 30 Apr 07. However, please note that, on the day, QCS will be mounting guard at Buckingham Palace. While participation in the events on Horse Guards Parade may not be open to everyone, there will be ample opportunity for the Regt Family to show support on the streets of London and at the Palace.

II Sqn RAF Regt 85th Anniversary Celebration - 21 Jun 07:

II Sqn RAF Regt will celebrate its 85th Anniversary of its formation in 1922 on Thur 21 Jun at RAF Honington. Further details will be announced in due course.

National Veterans' Day and RAF Regt Memorial Re-Dedication - 27/28 Jun 07:

National Veterans' Day will be celebrated in 2007 on Wed 27 Jun. The Corps' focus, however, will be at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) at Alrewas in Staffordshire on the following day, Thu 28 Jun. The Corps will re-dedicate the RAF Regt Memorial with a Service in the NMA Chapel, followed by a simple re-dedication service at the Memorial itself. The CG, a QCS contingent and a trumpeter from the RAF Regiment Band will participate.

Refreshments should be available from 1000 and a formal Service of Remembrance will commence in the Chapel at 1100. This will be

followed with the re-dedication of the RAF Regiment Memorial. Lunch will be available afterwards on a pay-as-you-dine basis in the Arbor Restaurant.

USAF-RAF Regt Reunion in 2008:

In preparation for a visit by some 40 former USAF SP/SF personnel to the UK over the period 25-28 Sep 08, the organiser - Richard Avens - is seeking to identify former or serving RAF Regt offrs who served with the following offrs:

- John Novak (Catterick, 1976 - 78)
- Glen Tegtmeyer (Hullavington, 5 Wg, 1987 - 89)
- Mike Casey (HQSTC 1993 - 94)
- Dave Kent (Honington 1997 - 99)

Please contact Richard Avens direct at: richardavens@talk21.com on this subject, and for more details of the event.

Corps Diary Dates: (Updated - not exhaustive - contributions welcome)

- 11 May 07 - RAF Regt Offrs' Dinner Club Reception - London. 13 May 07 - Re-dedication of RAF Regt Chapel - St Anne's Church, Catterick.
- 26 May 07 - 63 Sqn RAF Regt 'Black Eagle' Reunion - Union Jack Club, London.
- 14 Jun 07 - Falklands 25th Anniversary Commemoration - Falkland Islands
- 17 Jun 07 - Falklands 25th Anniversary Commemoration - London, Horse Guards Parade.
- 1 Jun 07 - Centurion journal No23 Contributions Due Date.
- 27 Jun 07 - National Veterans' Day - nation wide and at National Memorial Arboretum.
- 28 Jun 07 - Corps 65th Anniversary Commemoration - National Memorial Arboretum.
- 21-23 Sep 07 - WOs & SNCOs Assoc Reunion weekend (Note. Date amended from earlier Notice).
- 6-7 Oct 07 - RAF Regt Assoc Reunion Weekend and AGM - Blackpool.
- 13-14 Oct 07 - RAF Armoured Car Company Assoc Autumn Reunion - Derby.
- tbd Nov 07 - Falklands 25th Anniversary Pilgrimage - Falkland Islands.

- 09 Nov 07 - RAF Regt Offrs Dinner Club Annual Dinner - Derby.
- 11 Nov 07 - Armistice and Remembrance Day Sunday - nationwide.
- 01 Dec 07 - Centurion journal No24 Contributions Due Date.

FROM THE BRANCH SECRETARY

The centrepiece of this year's event to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict will be a march-past by veterans. It will be a high-impact visual event on Horse Guards Parade and will include a traditional Drumhead Service. This will be followed by a parade of veterans and their modern-day counterparts up the Mall to Buckingham Palace to witness a fly-past of aircraft from the Falklands era as well as some of those flown by the same squadrons of today.

Space in the audience at Horse Guards Parade will be limited, and it is hoped that as many as possible of the campaign's veterans will be able to attend. Organisers and veterans' groups – including the South Atlantic Medal Association – are keen for as many personnel who served in the RAF in the campaign to take part.

On Patrol with the RAF Regiment in Kandahar

The RAF Regiment is able to mount vehicle patrols with a formidable array of weaponry at its disposal

The force protection element at Kandahar in Afghanistan is highly-sophisticated and on a massive scale. Wing Commander Andy Knowles who commands 3 Force Protection Wing from RAF Marham, has the responsibility of maintaining the security. His troops do more than merely guard the perimeter wire.

In the past the base has regularly been targeted by mortars and rockets that can be fired from more than eight-kilometres away. So the Wing aims to "sanitise" the area around the outside of this huge base, which is home to 12,000 personnel from the UK, Canada, USA, Netherlands, Estonia, Denmark and Romania.

Wing Commander Knowles said: "The force protection operation at Kandahar is probably the biggest and most sophisticated of any air base in the world". As well as the Marham headquarters, Honington-based 2 Squadron, RAF Regiment has also been deployed. Communication in the field is vital for the Regiment to patrol its area of responsibility and the protection has had a big impact, with a marked

reduction in the number of mortar attacks. The Squadron has an area of 400 square kilometres to look after.

Augmented

The Squadron is also augmented by Regiment Gunners from Marham's 2620 Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment. SAC Nathan Betts aged 29 said: "The toughest thing has been the weather – we came out here expecting to have good weather but sometimes the nights have been really, really cold. And we've had lots of rain which turns everything to mud. But, on the other hand, the accommodation has been better than I expected, with proper beds instead of camp beds. And the food here is great".

Squadron Leader Steve Carter who is the second in command of force protection said: "Seeing the work we've done here makes me proud to be a member of the RAF Regiment".

VETERAN'S AWARENESS WEEK WEYMOUTH SATURDAY 9TH TO FRIDAY 15TH JUNE 2007

Incorporating the Weymouth & Portland Annual Military & Veterans Festival

The 2007 Veterans Awareness Week will be held from Saturday 9th until Friday 15th June 2007 and will include the Annual Weymouth & Portland Military & Veterans Festival.

Other highlights include on the Sunday, a full scale Remembrance Service and Parade, with over 2,500 veterans, marching bands, a military vehicle convoy with over 90 military and historic vehicles and free band performances. The Festival also includes Aerial Displays, Old Time Music Hall and a Veterans Rendezvous.

At 11.00 am on Sunday 10th June 2007 a Service of Remembrance will take place at the Weymouth Cenotaph to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Falkland Islands Campaign. This will be followed by a parade of all Veterans along the Weymouth Seafront to commemorate all those involved with the conflict 25 years ago.



Veterans have made and continue to make a major contribution to our Nation and the Weymouth & Portland Awareness Week will provide a focus on the tireless work carried out by many Veteran Associations and individuals.

With a host of displays and information available during the week, veterans will be able to discover and receive the support available through the various agencies and charity organisations. And visitors to the events will be able to appreciate and support the important role played by the veterans and the service associations.

With many uniquely nostalgic, social and commemorative experiences; Weymouth & Portland is the ideal destination for one of Britain's largest Veterans Festivals.

TOWER OF LONDON PARADE

SUNDAY 20TH MAY 2007 AT 10.00 A.M.

The Uxbridge Branch would like to invite some of your members and their ladies to join us at the Tower of London on Sunday 20TH May 2007 to enjoy a truly wonderful day out. Standards will be paraded, so please let us know in advance if you wish yours to be on parade.

We gather outside the Tower at 10.00 a.m. before gaining access at 10.30 a.m., after which our church Parade follows, starting from outside the Yeoman's Club to the Chapel Royal.

Members not wishing to march will preamble to the Chapel together with our lady guests. We are also hoping to visit the Yeoman's Club as in previous years. Since this event is limited, may we suggest that you apply for tickets in multiples of 2, 4, 6 or 8 guests per branch. If you need more tickets, we will do our best to accommodate everyone.

As the rules for this event seem to change every year, may we please ask for a list of those attending to be supplied to the Uxbridge Branch as soon as possible, so that for forwarding to the Tower Security, we can collate a full list of members attending.

If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. We would appreciate your reply as soon as possible. Yours faithfully. Sam Naylor, Uxbridge Branch Secretary.

If you would like to visit the Tower and join in the parade and service, let me know so that I can give Sam a list of members attending.

BRANCH SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Fred and Edith Ringham organise lunchtime socials at 12.00 noon approximately at the Windermere Club. These events are very popular each month as many of our members appreciate the benefits of meeting in the daylight hours. The Windermere Club is located in Wake Green Road, Moseley, Birmingham, at the corner of Wake Green Road and Windermere Road.

It is on several bus routes including the Numbers 1 and 1A bus, which will drop you right outside the Club and should be fairly easy to get to for those of our members who live within the Birmingham conurbation. If you would like to know more about them, give Fred and Edith a call on 0121 430 4833 and come along for a good old natter, swing the lamps, have a few drinks and hopefully, get the missus to drive you home.

NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM UPDATE

A Babylonian Weeping Willow Tree has been planted outside the Visitor Centre to commemorate British servicemen and women killed in Iraq. For each life lost, a white ribbon is tied to the tree. These are called Cotton Candles. Up to 9th March, there are one hundred and thirty-five ribbons and they make a very moving sight.

The National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas has opened a charity shop within the Visitor Centre and they are asking for your support. Do you have any bric-a-brac, unwanted gifts and books you can donate to help them raise much needed funds to continue the development of the site and the work of the charity?

If you have items you wish to donate please deliver them to Marianne Yates, the Shop Manager and help to support the National

Memorial Arboretum. A good opportunity will be Thursday 28th June when we will all be there to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the Corps.

So see what you call all do for if we all take just one item along to give to Marianne Yates, then the charity should really benefit.

ARMED FORCES MEMORIAL (AFM) UPDATE

To commemorate the creation of this historic monument, BBC 1 will be airing an hour-long documentary next November, charting the construction process and exploring some of the personal stories of the individuals it remembers,

The producers would love to hear from anyone who would like to share the story of a friend or loved one killed in the line of duty during the last sixty years. If you would like to contribute a story, send it in a short letter, including a contact telephone number, to Colette Hooper, Assistant Producer, In Living Memory, Reef Television, 8 Upper St Martin's Lane, London, WC2H 9DL, or by e-mail to <inlivingmemory@reeftv.com>.

VETERAN'S AWARENESS WEEK

The week beginning Saturday 23rd June 2007 is going to be a very special week at the NMA, as there are going to be several veterans functions that week. To mark its importance, the NMA has called the week "Veterans Awareness Week". The events taking place both in the day and in the evening that week are as follows.

Saturday 23rd June – "For the Troops"

From 7.00 p.m. Tickets £5.00 each.

Forces Sweethearts "The Swing Cats" with the West Midlands Police Band and the wonderful Netherstowe School Swing Band, present an evening of nostalgia and Proms music to sing along with. To book, call 01283 792333.

Sunday 24th June – National Service Veterans Association Service and Parade.

Starts at 1.00 p.m. with the Light Infantry Band, one of the most respected and professional military bands.

Monday 25th June – Navy Theme Day/Merchant Navy Day

10.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. A Service of Remembrance will take place at 11.00 a.m. at the newly planted Antelope Azalea Garden to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Falklands Islands Campaign. At 12.00 mid-day,

there will be a flypast of a Royal Navy Historic Flight.

Tuesday 26th June – "Questions, Answers, Share my Experiences"

An event from 10.00 a.m. until 3.00 p.m. There will be a talk by author Geoffrey Blore. In 1941, Dicky Blore was evacuated from his working class home in a district of Birmingham and together with hundreds of others, was transported to, what was for them, a new world – rural England.

For Dicky, it was to the village of Yoxall in Staffordshire. There will be two other speakers and three book signing sessions.

Wednesday 27th June – Veterans Day

There will be a Service at 11.00 a.m., a show from 12.00 mid-day and a parade at 2.00 p.m.. Learn how to march/drill, salute, how to address an officer! Visit a field kitchen for lunch. There will be a Fashion Show with vintage wartime costumes, all free of charge.

Visit the Staffordshire Regiment Museum at Whittington Barracks, Lichfield, for "The Trenches Experience" and tea in the Anderson Shelter. Shuttle buses will provide transport to the Museum. The Museum is nine and a half miles from the Arboretum.

Staffordshire Regiment Museum

The collection tells the story of the Regiment and its forbears from its formation in Lichfield in 1705. It includes uniforms, equipment, medals (8 of the Regiment's 13 VCs are on display), badges and regimental memorabilia. There are special sections covering Militia & Volunteers, the Zulu War, both World Wars and the Gulf War.

There is a children's hands-on area and outside there are armoured vehicles, two Anderson Shelters and a long section of WW1 trench. The Regimental archive and library are on-site and may be viewed by appointment. There is normally a charge to visit the Museum but on this occasion, it will be free.

Thursday 28th June – RAF Theme Day

The 65th Anniversary of the RAF Regiment's foundation will be celebrated with a Service of Remembrance and a Re-Dedication of the RAF Regiment Memorial.

As the RAF Regiment is so heavily committed in the world's trouble spots, there will be a minimal number of serving members attending, possibly a Route Lining Party from

QCS and a bugler for the Chapel and the Memorial. The format will be:-

- 10.00 a.m.** Gather in Visitor Centre
- 10.50 a.m.** Move to Millennium Chapel
- 10.55 a.m.** Daily Homage Followed by Service
- 11.30 a.m.** Move to Memorial Garden
- 11.45 a.m.** Rededicate Memorial
- 12.15 p.m.** Lunch in Arbor Restaurant
- 2.00 p.m.** Disperse

There will be an air display. It is hoped that it will be a flypast of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

WHO'S GOING TO ATTEND

For various reasons, the National Secretary Bill Espie needs to know how many members from each branch will be attending.

The Chapel for instance, only holds one hundred so a number of seats in the Chapel will have to be allocated to each branch. Then there is catering for which he is hoping to get a grant. So if you are going to be there **LET ME KNOW ASAP.**

Later, Beating Retreat – at 6.30 p.m. Followed by Dinner (HMS Raleigh Catering Division) with after-dinner speaker Lieutenant Colonel Gerome Church – BLESMA. Tickets £25.00 each. To book call 01283 792333.

Friday 29th June – Army Theme Day

Tea Dance at £2.50 each which will include a cup of tea and a slice of cake, 1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. with the Henley Farrell Big Band.

Future Events at the NMA

MAY

Tuesday 1st May 2007

Royal Engineers Service of Dedication for the Corps of Royal Engineers Memorial at 11.00 a.m. on-site. For further information contact Royal Engineers Association on 01634 847005.

Saturday 12th May 2007

Air Formation Signals Association at 11.30 a.m. in the Millennium Chapel. A Service and dedication of a new Association standard and a new tree in the Air Formation Crescent. For further information contact Dr. A. Vickers on 01704 507918.

Tuesday 15th May 2007

The British Nuclear Tests Veterans Association. At 2.00 p.m. in the Millennium Chapel.

A Service to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of First Hydrogen Bomb at

Christmas Island. For further information contact Bob Smith on 01360 311300.

Wednesday 23rd May 2007

Royal Naval Association (Uttoxeter and District) at 12.00 noon in the Millennium Chapel for a Commemoration of all personnel of Uttoxeter & District branch who served in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Merchant Navy. For further information contact Mr. David Emery on 01782 397746.

JUNE

Saturday 2nd June 2007

Royal Military Police at 10.45 a.m. in the Millennium Chapel. For the Annual Service of Remembrance. For further information contact Mr. Norman Harvey on 01332 381306.

Tuesday 5th June 2007-02-06

Royal Tank Regiment Annual Service of Remembrance at 12.30 p.m. on-site at plot. For further information contact Mr. Brian Rogers. On 07740 631426.

Wednesday 6th June 2007

Service of Remembrance for the 63rd Anniversary of D-Day at a time to be confirmed. For further information contact NMA on 01283 792333.

Friday 8th June 2007

HMS Glorious, Ardent and Acasta (GLARAC) Association on-site at a time to be advised, for the Annual service of remembrance for the incident in 1940. For further information contact Mr. David Emery on 01782 397746.

Sunday 10th June 2007

Irish Guards

The Irish Guards Annual Service of Remembrance, with pipe band and regimental mascot. At a time to be confirmed. For further information contact Mr. Paddy McGowan. On 0121 243 5973.

Chindits

The Chindits Service of Dedication for memorial obelisk at 11.30 a.m. on-site. For further information contact NMA on 01283 792333.

Saturday 23rd June 2007

Service of Dedication for new RAF Police Association Memorial at a time to be confirmed. For further information contact 01283 792333.

Sunday 24th June 2007

National Service Veterans' Association. Time to be confirmed. Annual Service of

Remembrance. For further information contact NMA on 01283 792333.

Wednesday 27th June 2007

National Veterans' Awareness Day at a time to be confirmed. For further information contact NMA on 01283 792333.

Thursday 28th June 2007

RAF Regiment 65th Anniversary. For further information contact RAF Regiment Secretary on 01359 237824 or by e-mail on <rafregtsecretary@honington.raf.mod.uk>.

Saturday 30th June

Civil Defence Association. At 10.50 a.m. in the Millennium Chapel for the Annual service of remembrance and wreath laying. For further information contact 01629 55738.

JULY

Wednesday 4th July 2007

Army Benevolent Fund at a time to be notified in the Millennium Chapel the Annual service of Remembrance. For further information contact Fay Ponikowski on 020 7591 2052.

Thursday 5th July 2007

British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association (BLESMA) at 11.30 a.m. on-site. A Service for the Dedication of a new standard, alterations to plot, and commemoration of 75th anniversary of the Association. For further information contact Peter Shields on 01469 532176. Or by e-mail on <awone@blesma.org>.

Saturday 7th July 2007

Royal Artillery Association at 10.30 a.m. in the Millennium Chapel, the Annual Service of Commemoration, followed by laying of wreaths at RA plot. Lancashire Artillery Band and standards in attendance. For further information contact Lt. Col. Ian Vere Nicoll on 01980 845698.

Saturday 14th July 2007

The Western Front Association at 7.00 p.m. in the Conference room in the Visitor Centre for the Annual lecture. For further information contact Mr. F. Walmsley.

Sunday, 22nd July 2007

The International Military Music Society at 2.30 p.m. in the Millennium Chapel for a Service of dedication. For further information contact Mr. Stuart Gray on 01424 773936 or by e-mail on graystuart@supanet.com.

Friday 27th July 2007

The British Korean Veterans's Association (BKVA) time and details later.

AUGUST

No Armed Forces dates.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 1st September 2007

The Brotherhood of Veterans of the Greek Campaign (1940-41) at 12.00 noon on-site for the Annual service of remembrance. For further information contact Mr. Frank Gill on 0151 924 2712.

Saturday 9th September 2007

Baker Troop 45 Commando Royal Marines (1955-57) at 1.00 p.m. on-site for the Dedication of memorial plinth in Marines Grove as part of reunion weekend. For further information contact Dave Bell on 01785 662862.

Saturday 22nd September 2007

Northern Ireland Veterans' Association in the Millennium Chapel for the Annual Service of Remembrance. For further information contact Dave Parkinson (Chairman) on 01772 784931.

Sunday 30th September 2007

88 Squadron Association at 11.00 a.m. in the Millennium Chapel for a Remembrance service as part of a reunion weekend. For further information contact Barry Collins on 01302 851245.

OCTOBER

Tuesday 23rd October 2007

Toc H - "Tea and Cake Campaign" Event to dedicate alterations to plot. For further information contact Ray Elks (ToCH Regional Development Officer, West Midlands) on 07917 686851.

CORRESPONDENCE

BRIAN WAKEFIELD OF BIRMINGHAM

Dear Malcolm. I write briefly in response to your opening remarks in the Editorial Comment of your February newsletter. Please do not cease to express your views and opinions on matters of the day, political or otherwise, because I am sure that you are giving honest views and opinions.

For many years now, in this country of ours, there has been a dearth of honesty with the electorate being fed on a diet of lies, half-truths and answers to questions that have not been asked. It is sad that we have to accept that our country is in a very poor state in many ways. The genuine concerns of the majority of the population are ignored and our interests brushed aside.

Some months ago, a statement by the Home Secretary John Reid gave us permission to talk about immigration (he said we should be allowed to talk about immigration without being branded racist). What sort of country are we living in when people feel gagged by the fear of being labelled?

I feel that I have played a part in bringing about the demise of our country by failing to be honest and forthright and lobbying politicians when necessary. It is no comfort to know that I am not alone in this failing.

I do hope that your Editorials will continue to cover a wide range of subjects, be provocative and above all honest. Many thanks. Brian.

As you will now by now Brian, I do not have an Editorial Column any more but if you feel like writing to me to express your views, then by all means do so. My second letter is from Cyril Richards about his time at RAF Guterloh in its early days.

CYRIL RICHARDS OF WALSALL, WEST MIDLANDS

Dear Malcolm. Reading the article in last month's newsletter by Squadron Leader "Mick" Warren about Gutersloh, brought a few memories back to me as in June 1945, I was at Gutersloh with 2579 Squadron. My story, as I remember it, was that I was in the advance party and on arriving at Gutersloh, we were billeted in the homes of the local residents, as the airfield was still occupied by the Americans so we were told. The house that four other lads and I were billeted in, was just as the owner had left it. Sheets on the beds, sheer luxury. There was soap and towels in the bathroom and pots and pans in the kitchen.

I'm sorry to say that this wonderful life only lasted four days for when the rest of the Squadron arrived, we were all billeted on the airfield. I must say that the barracks we occupied were great and very clean. It was rumoured that the women of the German air force had occupied them. Perhaps that's why they were so clean.

After about another four weeks, the Squadron was posted to Eindhoven. Why the Squadron was sent to Gutersloh for such a short time, only the powers above knew. Anyway, while at Guterloh, I cannot remember doing any guard duties etc. at all. All I remember is just lounging about and enjoying the lovely sunshine. The hardest work I remember was helping to

make the football pitch playable as it was overgrown and full of weeds.

I certainly enjoyed my short stay at Gutersloh. I wish I could remember where our barracks were because I can't remember seeing any of the hangars or 'planes that Squadron Leader Warren wrote about. I suppose if the barracks were occupied by German women, they could have been located on the outer perimeter and well away from the hangars. That's my story of what I can remember about Gutersloh in June 1945. Sometimes I look at the photographs of those days at Gutersloh and remember the happy days with the lads sixty-two years ago. Yours sincerely, Cyril.

That will probably stir some more memories Cyril. My third letter is from Francis Bull who is a longstanding member of the Birmingham Branch, having joined the Branch in July 1991. Francis joined the Royal Air Force as a Ground Gunner in 1941 and served throughout the Second World War until his demob. in 1946. Francis is not well as you will gather from his letter and our best wishes go to him for a full recovery.

During his service with 2788 Squadron, RAF Regiment, his Squadron and 2771 Squadron were put into the line at the Battle of Monte Cassino under the command of the Army.

FRANCIS BULL OF CARDIFF

Dear Malcolm. Today is Sunday and it is the day I was told of the passing of Alf Blackett who lived in Austria. He served at the Battle of Cassino. I also learned that Ken Langley was seriously ill in hospital. It is now 01.45 hours in the early hours of Monday morning, this is when I feel more alert and have much to think about.

My daughter Stephanie suggested that I use these times to write down any thoughts whenever I feel able to so here goes.

In the early days, shortly after founding the Comrades Association there was a division, thankfully now we have all become one again and we have branches all round the UK, so the real objective of Vic Bibby has been realised.

I belonged to both associations and over the years, it has enable me to renew acquaintance with many of my wartime pals. Sadly, at least twenty of them have gone to higher glory.

Last year, a new society, The Monte Cassino Society, was formed and through this Society that I joined, an ex-Corporal Ted Beale

contacted me. He is now a Vicar in the parish of Milton Keynes and on 7th February he visited me. We had not seen each other since the Battle of Cassino.

To my knowledge, in the Birmingham Branch there are six other ex-members of 2788 Squadron. Ken Martin, Ben Spreadbury, Albert Worton, Ken Langley, Jack Stapleton and myself and we are in touch on a weekly basis. To coin a phrase we are "Brothers in Arms - Comradeship".

Squadron Leader Tucker produced a masterpiece about the Regiment's honours and exploits and recently, Kingsley Oliver wrote his book "The RAF Regiment at War". This has many photographs in it of Cassino.

But now Malcolm, it is the turn of the x-servicemen who did their two or three years of National Service to write their stories and what stories they must have to tell the regular servicemen of today, and maybe to some of the surviving Ground Gunners too. Take care Mal. Francis.

The Battle of Monte Cassino – also known as the Battle for Rome

The RAF Regiment's part in the Battle of Monte Casino is recorded in Kingsley Oliver's books, "through Adversity" and "The RAF Regiment At War 1962 – 1946" and I recommend that anyone with an interest in the history of our Corps should read them. The appropriate passages are as follows.

"Through Adversity"

The following quotation on page 109 of Kingsley Oliver's book "Through Adversity" records.

"The landings at Anzio on 22nd January 1944, threw immense strain on the Allied Armies and RAF Regiment units were diverted to a variety of non-RAF tasks in this period. Some field squadrons were used in the infantry role and placed under Army command: 2771 and 2788 Squadrons operated on the Cassino front under command of the 2nd New Zealand Division and 4th British Division respectively from 24th April to 27th May 1944".

The Battle of Monte Cassino, which was also known as the Battle for Rome, was a costly series of four battles during World War Two. It was fought by the Allies with the intention of breaking through the German Winter Line and seizing Rome.

In the beginning of 1944, the Gustav Line was being anchored by Germans holding the Rapido, Liri and Garigliano valleys and certain surrounding peaks and ridges, but not the historic abbey of Monte Cassino, founded in 524 AD by St Benedict, although they manned defensive positions set into the steep slopes below the abbey walls.

On February 15th 1944 the monastery, high on a peak overlooking the town of Cassino, was destroyed by American B-17, B-25 and B-26 bombers. Two days after the bombing crack German paratroopers poured into the ruins to defend it.

From January 17th to May 18th 1944, it was assaulted four times by Allied troops, for a loss of over 54,000 Allied and 20,000 German soldiers.

The RAF Regiment at War 1942 - 1946

As Kingsley Oliver recorded on page 74 in his book "The RAF Regiment at War 1942 – 1946".

"In April 1944 Nos 2771 and 2778 Field Squadrons, wearing the shoulder flash of the American 5th Army, were deployed in the British front line north of Cassino. Under the command of a New Zealand brigade they held positions at the end of the winding track leading to the precipitous Belvedere Heights for most of the time.

However, in May 1944 the Regiment squadrons were temporarily re-deployed to reinforce the line between the Black Watch and the Royal Fusiliers on the high ground to the north of the aptly-named Inferno Bowl. Here the squadrons were engaged in patrolling and harassing enemy positions with medium mortar fire.

The enemy-held position known as Point 708 was a particular feature of the activity and attracted daily fire tasks of between fifty and two hundred and fifty 3" mortar bombs from the support flights of the two Regiment squadrons.

After one particularly heavy bombardment the German defences were set on fire and the screams of the enemy wounded drifted across the valley until German ambulances flying Red Cross flags appeared and the Regiment mortars fell silent.

It was not a comfortable time for the squadrons as the daylight hours had to be spent in bunkers or trenches, especially in the forward defended localities where the sections could not

leave their positions without attracting Spandau fire from Point 708.

The hours of darkness were taken up with re-supply tasks, improving fire positions and patrolling in no-man's land where encounters with enemy patrols were not uncommon. Both squadrons were commended by the British and New Zealand divisional commanders for their successes in action against the enemy".

Family protests at treatment of soldier injured in Iraq conflict

By Liam Creedon Published in the Independent: 12 March 2007

The brother of Jamie Cooper, the injured soldier reportedly forced to spend a night lying in his own faeces while recovering in hospital, said yesterday that all soldiers deserved better treatment. Mr Cooper, 18, was injured in November last year while serving with the Royal Green Jackets' in Basra, Iraq. A mortar bomb exploded behind him, leaving him with serious injuries to his buttocks and stomach. He returned to the UK for treatment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and then Selly Oak Hospital, both in Birmingham. His family allege that their son was denied proper hospital care while being treated.

They said that in once instance Mr Cooper had to spend a night lying in his own faeces. And in another instance, the 18-year-old's colostomy bag was reportedly allowed to overflow.

His brother, Stephen, 25, said: "At the end of the day, the families of all the soldiers just want to make sure that they are guaranteed better treatment. It's the last thing you would expect for someone who has been serving for his country."

MALCOLM'S MUSINGS

The Royal Centre for Defence Medicine – Selly Oak Hospital

Although I do not have an Editorial Comment Column any more, I still have a need to express my own personal points of view about matters that I am interested in. The Royal Centre for Defence Medicine based at the Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak Hospitals, Birmingham, is one of these matters, for the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces have a very special relationship with their country. Not only do they risk their lives – and too frequently sacrifice them as well – they are also prepared to exist in dangerous and unpleasant conditions

while the rest of us live in relative comfort and safety.

We are informed by the media of those who have given their lives in our defence, but rarely do we hear of those injured in the same cause. However, I have been reliably informed that in the first three months of the year, over 2,000 service casualties have been casevaced to Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham from Iraq and Afghanistan. That's eight to ten thousand casualties a year.

These casualties are now dispersed throughout the NHS network within Birmingham. So it would appear that our wounded servicemen and women are not receiving their follow-on treatment at a military facility at all. They are all in the front line in war but will be made to stand in line at a NHS hospital when wounded. It seems to me and I suspect, to the general public at large, that our Armed Forces are not only sent to fight with second-rate equipment, but on returning home as casualties, are given second-rate hospital care too.

What was the Royal Naval Hospital, Haslar - the last dedicated military hospital - closed last month. Service personnel staffed the hospital with a Matron in charge of nursing. The staff were immaculate, as were the wards, kitchens, theatres, etc. and both service and civilian patients were treated there. Would the closure of this fine military hospital be anything to do with the fact that it stands on several acres of prime building land I wonder?

Haslar is currently MRSA-free due to its staff hygiene, ward cleaning and basic nursing care that was all carried out with military discipline of course. You would not see staff in stained uniforms held together with safety pins, uneaten food left for days beside beds, dirty wards, toilets unfit for use and sheets and other bedding left unchanged. The hospital was handed over to the NHS at the end of last month. Once transferred, if kept in NHS use, no doubt this once immaculate hospital will become another breeding ground for hospital bugs. Bugs such as the Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) bug, the Clostridium Difficile (C'diff) bug (deaths in hospital due to this bug have now outstripped deaths due to the MRSA superbug) the Norovirus stomach bug (Gastroenteritis) etc., are all of them infecting patients as a result of poor nursing care.

What a total ignominy to have survived a bomb-blast in Iraq only to possibly die of one of these hospital-created infections at home. This is not at all acceptable. The requirement for long-term treatment of Service personnel in Britain is bound to increase and we should all be demanding that a military hospital must be provided, to enable our wounded servicemen and women to be treated in a full military environment and not in NHS hospitals.

RCDM Support

The primary function of the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) is to provide medical support to military operational deployments. It also provides secondary and specialist care for members of the Armed Forces. It is a dedicated training centre for defence personnel and a focus for medical research. The centre is based at Selly Oak Hospital and defence personnel who are fully integrated within the Trust's two hospitals, work in many of the different specialities.

However, the support that the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine should be giving to wounded members of the Armed Forces is not all that it should be as the above article shows. And six months ago, there were revelations of the lamentably insensitive treatment of casualties from Iraq and Afghanistan at Selly Oak Hospital.

There was the story of a serviceman being told to take off his uniform in case it upsets any of the civilian patients. This beats everything. He is proud to wear his uniform, his uniform was good enough to fight in – and even to die in – but he is not allowed to wear his uniform at home. If anything cries out for a military hospital it must be this. Or another story of a seriously wounded serviceman's parents arriving at Selly Oak Hospital, after travelling halfway across Britain, only to be told to wait in the canteen until the official visiting hours.

How can this be? The situation is that there are so few civilians today who know anything at all about the Armed Forces and what those serving in theatres of war have to endure. The difficulty as one officer said:

“Is that many of our casualties have narrowly survived wounds that would have killed them even ten years ago. Terrific medical resources in Iraq and Afghanistan get them home alive. But when they wake up on a ward in Birmingham, what they need most is to feel secure – physically and emotionally. They want to be

with their own people. Instead, they are thrown into a civilian environment, administered by people who mean well but have absolutely no understanding of what these boys have been through, and how to look after them.

They're not simply NHS in-patients. They are young men who have suffered extraordinary trauma, and need and deserve to be looked after by their own kind – people in uniform. They want to be reassured that their service careers aren't over, that they're still part of the Army family”.

Not only that, some of the civilian personnel responsible for managing Selly Oak Hospital, do not appear to have the slightest concept of what it means to serve in a combat zone. David Ross the Medical Director of Selly Oak Hospital appears to be one of these people. He has said and I quote:

“There are some senior people in the MOD, perhaps three or four senior generals in the Army, who strongly want a military hospital. One of the complaints we have had is that we tell these squaddies to stop swearing. That is because it's not acceptable to use foul and abusive language in a public place.

It seems to me some of these generals believe that side of the camaraderie amongst soldiers is more important than our core business, which is to make sure patients don't lose their life or limbs”. He added: “Some of these generals want to be in control of how we do things in this hospital but the fact is, they do not understand what it is they are trying to control”.

This is shocking, what does David Ross think these lads have been doing in the Middle East? Going for a stroll in the park? Does he have any concept of what it is like in a combat zone? The fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan is heavier and more sustained than anything the British Army has known since Korea in 1950-53 but unfortunately, there are so few working people today who would remember that terrible war – or any other war for that matter.

It seems to me that far from criticising generals who he says do not understand - it is he who does not understand and you have to question whether such a man should be in charge of the treatment of wounded military personnel. In my opinion he should not. Wounded servicemen and women should be treated in a dedicated military hospital, cared for by servicemen and women – and even generals - and not in a NHS hospital

where civilian staff just cannot appreciate what they have been through.

Members of our Armed Forces take part in conflicts on the instructions of the Government. The reasons for these are numerous but our Armed Forces take up the challenge and carry out their duties to the best of their abilities, so it is only right that the Government should ensure that adequate facilities are provided within a service environment to aid injured and disabled personnel.

The NHS is already stretched, beds are limited and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) struggle to make ends meet. Is this really the best environment to treat servicemen/women who have been subjected to injuries that many of us can only imagine? A more sensible approach would be to treat these people in facilities dedicated to their needs and surrounded by their comrades. Spare capacity could be used to assist the NHS as it was in the former military hospitals.

This would be a reverse of the current situation and would free up beds and ease the burden in NHS hospitals. Bringing back military hospitals can go some way to providing this service. This is a small price to pay for the servicemen and women who help to protect our liberty.

JOKE TIME

A very confident James Bond walks into a bar and takes a seat next to a very attractive woman. He gives her a quick glance, then, casually looks at his watch for a moment.

The woman notices and asks, "Is your date running late?" "No", he replies, "Q's just given me this state-of-the-art watch and I was just testing it." The intrigued woman says, "A state-of-the-art watch? What's so special about it?"

Bond explains, "It uses alpha waves to talk to me telepathically." The lady says, what's it telling you now?" "Well, it says you're not wearing any panties.

The woman giggles and replies, "Well it must be broken because I AM wearing panties!" Bond shrugs, taps his watch and says, "Damn thing's an hour fast."

Have fun and keep smiling.

Malcolm

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



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Wednesday 25 th April	2007 ANZAC Day	Sunday 10 th June	2007 RAF Cosford Air Show
Sunday 29 th April	2007 ANZAC Day Parade	Thursday 14 th June	2007 Branch Night
Thursday 10 th May	2007 Branch Night	Sat 9 th - Fri 15 th June	2007 Weymouth Military Fest.1
Friday 11 th May	2007 Officer's Din Club Rec	Saturday 16th June	2007 19th Ann Branch
Sunday 13 th May	2007 Rededication of Chapel	Saturday 17 th June	2007 Falklands 25 th Ann Comm
Sunday 13 th May	2007 Runnymede Service	Monday 18 th June	2007 Branch Social Lunch
Sunday 20 th May	2007 Twr of London Parade	Sunday 24 th June	2007 NS Veterans Service & Par
Monday 21 st May	2007 Branch Social Lunch	Wednesday 27 th June	2007 Veterans Day NMA
Saturday 26 th May	2007 63 Sqdn Reunion	Thursday 28th June	2007 Corps 65th Ann at NMA
		Thursday 12 th July	2007 Branch Night
		Monday 16 th July	2007 Branch Social Lunch
		Thursday 9 th August	2007 Branch Night
		Monday 20 th August	2007 Branch Social Lunch
		Fri 21 st - Sun 23 rd Sept	2007 WO's & SNCOs Reunion
		Fri 5 th - Mon 8 th Oct	2007 Association Reunion
		Sat 13 th - Sun 14 th Oct	2007 ACC Association Reunion
		Friday 9 th November	2007 Officers Din Club Dinner

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