



ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

www.rafregt.org.uk

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: 239

MAY 2009

THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 239 MAY 2009

Dear Readers.

Last month on 6th April, postage rates went up once again and it now costs 30p to post a second class letter and a first class letter will now cost 39p. Also, the reason why Valerie and I don't make life much easier and don't fold the newsletters and just put them in an A4 envelope, is that they would then become Large Letters and it would then cost 61p to post each newsletter.

Daft isn't it? It would be the same newsletter and the same weight but would cost another 31p for each newsletter. An impossible cost of postage of course and so Valerie and I will continue to fold all the newsletters. So it now costs 30p to post this newsletter to you. That makes £3.60 a year in postage alone and with other branch administration costs; your monthly newsletters have become even more of a bargain.

With this in mind, we cannot afford to keep on posting newsletters to late payers who may or may not pay up in the end. So be warned, with this in mind, as from this newsletter, anyone who has not yet paid their Branch and Association Subscriptions will not be receiving any more newsletters.

BRANCH BIRTHDAYS

A Happy Birthday to the following Birmingham Branch members whose birthdays are this month with a particular Happy Birthday to Richard Oxford of Coventry who will be 80 years old on 30th May. Richard hasn't been too well lately so we hope that he is much better now and able to enjoy his special birthday.

2nd May **Ralph Dean** Birmingham West Mids.

7th May **Trevor Round** Dudley West Midlands

16th May **Tom Loach** Birmingham West Mids.

17th May **Maurice Madeley** Lower Wick Worcs.

23rd May **Tom Magee** Warley West Midlands

27th May **Richard Cox** Royston Herts.

30th May **Richard Oxford** Coventry Warwicks.

30th May **Cliff Sutor** Sutton Coldfield W Mids.

Branch Appeal

Goodies for the Military Ward

It is most important that we remember the dangers that our young men and women serving

on operations are all facing, so please remember the appeal your Branch Committee have set up.

This month through the good offices of Roy Thomas we have purchased additional laptops requested by the Military Ward staff. They have been loaded up with all the programmes and software also requested by them and were collected on Monday 27th April for delivery by Ron and Ralph to the Ward.

Roy arranged with the computer supplier to have all the relevant paperwork, guarantees, registration papers and servicing contracts etc., to be in Major Cheeseman's name and with the hospital address, so that we have no further responsibility for them.

The total cost was £1,592.00 as in the quote supplied and the equipment has another set of licensed downloads as a spare for a further computer in the future. As you can see, we need all the money that you give so come on lads, as I have said before "dig deep and die happy".

With the ever increasing number of casualties being evacuated from the combat zones, we need to encourage continuing donations to the Appeal Fund. This month we have had a cheque for £130.00 raised by one of our smaller branches, the Kent Branch that has only twelve members. The money was raised by a joint effort between six members and four ladies of the Kent Branch and the staff and customers of the Bush pub at Aleford, near Maidstone.

It just shows you what can be done when even size doesn't matter. With your help, we can continue to provide these small comforts and any other items that the Military Ward staff ask us for. We can never get enough goodies for the lads, so in the mean time, your continued support is appreciated.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any other ideas where we could help. All donations will be gratefully acknowledged and will be recorded in the Birmingham Branch newsletters. If anyone would like to contribute financially to this appeal, please send a cheque to the Branch Treasurer Tom Magee, made out to the Birmingham Branch – Military Ward Appeal.

If any of you would like to contribute items to this appeal, you can either take them directly to Ward S4, Selly +Oak Hospital and ask for Major Ian Cheesman, or any of the Military Ward staff; or post them to Major I R Cheesman, OC Patient Support Services, RCDM, Ward S4, Selly Oak Hospital, Raddlebarn Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6JD.

15 Squadron RAF Regiment

On 4th April 1955 after my Basic Training at RAF Hednesford, I was posted onto my first Regular RAF Regiment squadron that was 15 LAA Squadron at RAF Innsworth, and as you can imagine, I take a lot of interest in its comings and goings.

So this month, I was delighted to receive the 15 Squadron April 2009 Newsletter. It has a sub-heading of “All the news from Honington, Iraq and Afghanistan”. The newsletter is in six sections with the first four being of particular interest, Section 5 is for the families left behind and Section 6 is for the kids and they are:

Section 1	A Flight
Section 2	B Flight
Section 3	C Flight
Section 4	Close Precision Assault (CPA) Section
Section 5	Home Front
Section 6	Colouring Competition

Section 1 A Flight

A Flight on tour

A Flight has been very busy since arriving in Basrah during the early hours of Thursday 19th February. We settled into our accommodation which is a thirty-man tent shared with the snipers, each man with his own bed space surrounded by bricks to protect him from indirect fire attacks. We had our mandatory briefs and the Reception, Staging and Onward Integration (RSOI) package to keep us up to date on what had been going on in and around Basrah.

We then began taking over the Bulldogs from 51 Squadron. They had seemed to have looked after them well but we soon encountered a few problems such as one throwing a track and one getting bogged in on the first day of driving them. We also conducted a few patrols with 51 Squadron so they could show us around our Area of Operations (AO). 51 Squadron went home on the 27th and we were finally on our own with the Bulldogs.

Lots of “track bashing” and maintenance followed which caused a few late nights while other flights were having some well-earned rest. Sergeant Perrio-Stone has arranged for the Squadron’s Battlefield Medics to receive further training from the Immediate Response Team (IRT) to enhance the skills they learned on the pre-operational training they received from the A&E Department of the West Suffolk Hospital in Bury St Edmunds and the East Anglian Ambulance Service. He will also shortly start a BBC Radio Suffolk audio blog that will be aired on the radio station and can also be followed on their website.

We are now well into a routine and the lads seemed to be taking the shift patterns in their stride. We have all been out on various patrols all over the AO with no major problems with the bulldogs just the odd niggle. As 51 had their administration with their Bulldogs, we have also got it squared away with 2IC of maintenance Corporal Foster leading the way with his crew on hand at all times.

Working with tanks, the drivers and commanders are always looking for a bit of “bondu bashing” (cross country driving) so that we can continue to dominate the ground and deter any insurgent activity. We had our hearts in our mouths on a recent depth patrol though when Flying Officer Griffin took us off track and into the desert where after only five minutes, we found the ground getting soft and the Bulldogs were starting to struggle.

Dust and sand were getting kicked up everywhere and the driver’s visibility became very poor. We eventually made it back to the COB with all four Bulldogs intact where we had a laugh and a joke at the boss’s expense.

We will soon be losing two of our troops, SACs James and Stebbings, who volunteered for the Force Protection Wing at Honington to join the Squadron on this tour. They are heading back at the end of March for their Further Training 1 and 2 Courses where we hope they will become Corporals, so best of luck. SAC Stebbings and his wife Steph, are expecting their second child. We wish him and his family all the best.

So, three and a half weeks into the tour and it is all going well. The weather’s hot and we are slowly getting tanned (or going pink in Corporal “Scouse” Briscoe’s case).

Some of us are currently on Operation Massive (in what spare time we have) which involves lifting heavy weights and drinking lots of protein shakes – which at least has replaced our usual pastime of drinking alcohol. We hope all is well at home and that everyone is OK.

Section 2 B Flight

B Flight on tour

After almost a day of travelling, the majority of 15 Squadron had arrived at the Contingency Operating Base (COB) Basrah. The rest of the Squadron would be flying out the next day. For most of the lads it is their first operational tour, and the tiredness from a long journey was mixed with some excitement.

Over the next few days the Squadron spent most of the time in mandatory briefs that gave some Iraq specific information. When not in these briefs, most people would be down at the gym getting some training in. One thing everyone here agrees on is that the food served in the mess is very good.

There are numerous choices of meal each day from a salad bar, a Panini bar and an omelette bar. More importantly though, there are plenty of desserts. After the briefings had finished it was then time for the Squadron to be familiarized with the area in which it will be working for the next few months. 51 Squadron, the Resident Field Squadron that we are replacing, had the task of taking us out on the ground that they had been operating in over the previous six months.

After getting out on patrol, most of us, especially those who have done a tour of Iraq already, were pleasantly surprised with how good the atmosphere is between British forces and the local population.

What you may not know is that Basrah is not just desert. There are many waterways running through the area in which we operate and we have recently been training alongside the Army's Royal Engineers to operate out of the boats they use to launch patrols from. Everywhere we go in and around the villages, we are swamped with children talking about their favourite European football team and trying to practice their English. In return, we attempt to speak the few Arabic phrases that we know.

51 Squadron departed just over a week after we arrived and after the hectic handover –

takeover period, we have all now settled into a routine.

Section 3 C Flight

C Flight on tour

At 20.00 hours on the 18th February 2009, C flight, 15 Squadron RAF Regiment formed up in the hangar to begin the tedious, sleepless affair that was the outbound journey to Basrah, Iraq. This began with the monotony of the coach trip to Brize Norton, only sparsely interjected by humorous episodes from Eddie Murphy on the DVD player, and ended up twenty-eight hours later being strapped into a C130 in complete darkness to begin the descent into the COB.

Upon arrival we settled into our accommodation and prepared for a long day of briefings in what can only be described as a poly-tunnel greenhouse. After we had sweated out the briefings we then went on to meet members of 51 Squadron, whom we would be relieving and could give us the greatest amount of information about the task in hand.

Leading up to the end of February we conducted joint patrols with 51 Squadron into the area of operations, familiarizing ourselves with the terrain and gathering useful intelligence about the inhabitants. It was then that we realized how much the heat affects ability to do the job, especially combined with the excessive weight of kit and communications equipment.

The rainy, overcast expanse of Stanta certainly hadn't prepared us for this, but the lads adapted quickly and soon acclimatized. Rolling into March and with 51 Squadron gone, the pace of operations began to increase. This was compounded by leaving Support Weapons back in the UK waiting to leave for Camp Bastion. We have now settled into a routine involving a mixture of tasks.

Guarding the compound, manning the Incidence Response Team (IRT) and conducting Tesserals are interspersed with more interesting in-depth patrols on Operation Black Dagger. Here we are able to conduct Key Leadership Engagements (KLE) mixing with the local population and not only helping the communities around the COB where we can, but also gathering vital intelligence from the people themselves.

The last few days have seen an increase in IDF attacks on the COB although this hasn't seemed to faze anyone within the Flight. One of the lads was more worried his washing had been

gone for three days and hoped the rocket hadn't hit the laundry.

Looking to the next few weeks we are going to see a big change in the COB and our role within it. The British Army brigade will be leaving and the Americans arriving. As with everything in the military, it's best not to speculate about how this will affect us but just do as we always do: adapt and roll with it!

Section 4 CPA Section

CPA Section on Tour

The Sniper (CPA) Section arrived in theatre with the Squadron main party, landing during the early hours of February 19th. The main effort during the first week revolved around arrival briefs and face-to-face meetings with the 51 Squadron snipers. On 25th February the section conducted a ground familiarisation with members of the outgoing CPA Section from 51 Squadron.

This gave us an opportunity to see first hand the areas we would be operating in during our tour as part of the Resident Field Squadron. The patrol took almost ten hours, and with the warm temperatures, compared to those left behind in the UK days earlier, together with the weight of the communications equipment, proved a test of endurance for many.

With the relief in place completed in late February, the section geared up for the coming operations around the Squadron area of responsibility. Maps and air photographs were studied to gain an understanding of the type of terrain we would use on forthcoming operations. Fitness levels with the section continue to be maintained by the guys as the days get hotter, and the weight of our kit exceeds ROFA weight, 80 pounds plus and in some cases far more with the communications kit etc.

The section flew out to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Oxford to conduct boat training conducted by the Royal Engineers. This proved popular with the guys and will prove a useful tool in the way the section uses boats to infiltrate and exfiltrate named areas of interest during operations.

To date we have conducted many wide and varied tasks within Operation Black Dagger such as providing over watch for the dismounted rifle flights. Short term observation posts have been utilized to provide the Squadron intelligence Cell with information regarding the whereabouts

of former members of the local militia responsible for rocket attacks against the COB.

Lately the section has used the term anti-criminality as we wait future tasking against the rising problems of theft (by local criminals) from the COB. The section's night vision equipment and thermal imaging capability will hopefully ensure success against this on-going problem.

As we look to the future we are awaiting for a decision to deploy us to FOB Oxford for a period of 3-4 days. This will locate us in the heartland of the northern rocket box and allow us greater flexibility as we continue to support ongoing air operations.

The 15 Squadron newsletter is a very well written and illustrated newsletter that I enjoyed reading and my thanks to the OC Rear Party Flying Officer Dave Bliss, the SNCO Rear Party Flight Sergeant Garry Pratt, and SAC (T) Douglas for not only producing and editing the newsletter but also for sending it to me. Well done lads.

NEWS OF THE RAF REGIMENT



FROM THE RAF REGIMENT SECRETARY DEATH NOTICES:

DIXON FREDERICK. Former RAF Regt LAC Frederick Dixon, born 20 Aug 22, died on 4 Apr 09 aged 86. He enlisted in Sep 41 and served on 2942 Sqn RAF Regt in the Imphal-Arakan Theatre 1944-45. He was discharged when the Sqn was disbanded in 1946. No further Service details are known. The funeral was held at 12.45 on Tue 21 Apr 09 in St Budeaux C of E Church, The Green, Higher St. Budeaux, Plymouth, PL5 2HN.

Family flowers only were request but donations may be made to the St Lukes Hospice or Help for Heroes charities via the Funeral Directors, W Parsons, 11 Toothill Ave, St Judes (tel 01752 665438). He is survived by his daughter, Mrs Susan Eldiadis, of 59 Knighton Road, St Judes, Plymouth, PL4 9BO, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

HUDSPITH HARRY. Former RAF Regt Sgt Henry (Harry) Seymour Hudspeth, born 16 May 22, died in Oct 08, aged 86. He enlisted as a

Gnd Gnr on 7 Jul 41 and was discharged on 18 Aug 46. He served on 2764 Sqn RAF Regt at RAF Perton, at Snailwell (nr Newmarket) in 1942 and then at the Regt Depot at Belton Park from 1943-46. The funeral took place in 2008. No further details are known. He is survived by his wife, Mrs Valerie Hudspith of 25 Denham Cres, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4LZ, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

GENERAL NOTICES:

RAF REGT GOLF SOCIETY

The RAF Regt Golf Society has a regular golf fixture list, with "friendly" matches against closely aligned corps and formations. The Society also holds an Annual Championship at a high quality course, and each playing season culminates with a grudge match; the 4-way competition features teams from junior ranks, SNCOs, officers and retired members. Should you wish to join the Society, take part in the Championships or 4-way event, or merely need more information, please contact the Hon Sec John Dowding by phone on 01780 481430 or by e-mail johndowding_golf@yahoo.co.uk.

CG's COMMENDATIONS

The need has been identified for the CG RAF Regt to be able to recognize the efforts of Corps individuals or teams within the RAF Regt 'family', for example those of the RAF Regiment Association, who may fall outside of the conventional Service Commanders' Commendations associated with the New Year's and The Queen's Birthday Honours Awards. As a result, the CG will consider the award of his personal commendations to suitable Corps nominees on an annual basis. The Award Year will run from 1 Aug to 31 Jul. Submissions for such an award must be completed using the formal CG's Commendation Nomination Form obtainable from the Regt Sec. Submissions must be received no later than 1 Sep annually. Where the award of a Commendation is not viewed as justified, no Commendations will be awarded for that Award Year.

CORPS DEATH NOTIFICATION FORM

It is important that the death of any Corps veteran is made known to the wider Corps family as soon as possible. The Regt Sec now operates a formal Corps Death Notification scheme, whereby those informing on deaths of former Corps members should use a formal notification process and form (DNF 1).

The form is available from the Regt Sec or may be downloaded from the RAF Regt Assoc Website using the link: <http://www.rafregt.org.uk/RollofHonour/tabid/62/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>. All information provided will be passed on to associated bodies such as the RAF Regt and WOs&SNCOs Assocs as appropriate. However, it will not be forwarded to any Govt Depts, such as the Ministry of Works and Pensions.

RAF REGT ASSOCIATION PRESENTATION

The RAF Regt Association presented a Giclee print of the Al Waki picture to Trg Wg, RAF Honington on 24 Apr 09; the picture will hang in a prominent position in the Trg Wg HQ, Bldg 159, to inspire the trainee gunners and officers in the future. The Assoc group that attended, viewed a Trainee gunner Graduation Parade before taking lunch in the Offrs Mess. The Assoc also presented a trophy entitled Operation HERRICK, which will be awarded to the Top Student of the new Further Training Phase 1 Course - SAC to LCpl. The Assoc Chairman, Gp Capt Steven Brereton Martin made the Presentations on behalf of the Assoc.

AIR RANK PROMOTION

Gp Capt Russ La Forte has been promoted to the rank of Air Cdre and is now on the Royal College of Defence Studies staff course.

RAF REGT OFFRS DINNER CLUB - ANNUAL RECEPTION 2009 (UPDATED)

The 2009 Annual Reception will be held at RAF Honington in the evening of Fri 29 May 09. It will be preceded by a Corps Day involving attendance at a TG Graduation Parade, lunch, and then an afternoon of Corps capability demonstrations and a visit to the RAF Regt Museum. Accommodation at RAF Honington will not be possible, but there are a number of suitable hotels in the Thetford-Bury St Edmunds area.

The Calling Note & Application Form is available now and those members who wish to attend are asked to register their interest with the Regtl Sec as soon as possible. Please use Email wherever possible. Response has, to date, been very disappointing. If you are thinking of attending, please contact the Regtl Sec as soon as possible to register interest and obtain the Calling Note/Application Form.

RAF REGT OFFRS DINNER CLUB - ANNUAL DINNER 2009

The 2009 Officers' Annual Dinner will take place at the Def CBRN Centre, Winterbourne Gunner, on Fri 30 Oct 09. A Calling Note will be issued in the 3rd Qtr of 2009 and advertised in the Centurion.

WOs & SNCOs ASSOC - HON SEC VACANCY

The Assoc of RAF Regt WOs and SNCOs requires a new Hon Sec from Oct 09. The current incumbent's impending retirement means that this year's AGM will be his final act in that capacity. The Assoc Rules and Charter demand that the Hon Sec must be: 'A WO or FS at the home of the RAF Regiment elected by the Committee and after consultation with the Comdt of the home of the RAF Regiment'.

If you fit the bill and want to make a positive contribution to the Assoc then please get in touch with the Chairman (WO Pete Akers), the Hon Sec, or any Assoc member so that a proposal can be put forward to the Committee before the AGM in Oct 09. Please, do not ignore this matter simply because you are not eligible for election, you are entitled to approach or nominate anyone who meets the above criteria, and who you believe is suitable. It is your Committee, so all are encouraged to take an interest in the election of the new incumbent. Further information can be obtained from the present Hon Sec: FS John Lynch, J7 TD CDT, RAF Honington (Email: j7tdcdtfs3@honington.raf.mod.uk or Tel: 01359 237355).

Oman Experiences

The RAF Regt Sec is keen to talk to SOAF/RAF Regt veterans involved, primarily, in the Battle of Mirbat, the RAF Regt's defence of RAF Salalah, in 1972. An author would like to discuss the event in preparation for a book on the 'Secret War' in Oman during the late 1960s-early 1970s. Please contact the Regt Sec initially.

1- 58 - 26 Sqns RAF Regt Reunion at RAF Laarbruch - 2009

The RAF Regt Museum is in the process of loaning a Rapier FSB1(M) missile system to the RAF Laarbruch Museum in Weeze, Nord Rhein Westfalia, Germany. It is planned to hold a formal unveiling of the exhibit sometime in the Spring/early Summer of 2009 and it is hoped to use the event to stage a reunion for those who

served at RAF Laarbruch on the Regt Sqns or GDT during the period 1953-1999.

The Museum website may be found at: <http://www.laarbruch-museum.net>. Details of any such reunion, including suggested accommodation, will be issued at a later date. If anyone is interested in helping run, or to take on the coordination of the reunion attendees, please contact the RAF Regt Sec.

RAF REGT FUND SUBSCRIPTIONS

The RAF Regt Fund continues to have severe problems in correcting the errors of the recent Direct Debit run (in Nov 08) and we continue to receive notifications of incorrect sums, multiple payments and, in many cases, no payments at all. If any members have suffered such problems, please advise the Regt Sec who will pass the details on to the Fund's Membership Sec for action.

It is clear that the problems will not be overcome quickly and we ask subscribers to be patient while we try to unravel a very complicated software problem. The likelihood is that we will need to cancel all previous Direct Debit Mandates and start afresh. This would require the submission of a new Application Form, which was predicted earlier in 2008 for other reasons. Details will hopefully be available in the next Centurion journal.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE RAF REGT FUND

The RAF Regt Fund membership stands at around 1600, which is significantly less than the number of both Serving and Retired members. The Fund is established to support the preservation of the good name, history and traditions of the Corps, and also to support members' activities. The Fund Committee's mission in 2008 is to have every member recruit another member. Please help YOUR FUND to achieve its aims for the Corps.

If you are not a member already, why not contact your unit representative (if you are still serving) or the RAF Regt Fund Sec (Flt Lt Andy Gaskell), or the RAF Regiment Secretary at Honington for details and a membership form. Membership brings with it the annual subscription for the 6-monthly Centurion journal, rated as one of the best Regimental journals in the British Services.

While these CPNs go directly to over 800 people (some 68,000 have been sent since its inception), some 25% are not registered members

of the RAF Regt Fund. While membership of the Fund is not a prerequisite - as yet - for CPN subscription, please do consider joining and supporting YOUR Regimental Fund.

RAFR REGT ASSOC MEMBERSHIP

The Constitutional objective of the Association shall be to maintain and promote *esprit de corps* and comradeship amongst all RAF Regiment personnel, both past and present, in order to promote the good name, reputation and traditions of the Corps. All who wore the 'Flash' are entitled to join. For more information and an application form, contact the Assoc Membership Sec, Frank Xavier at: FXavier@TBGLearning.com.

CORPS DIARY DATES:

(Updated - not exhaustive - contributions welcome).

29 May 09 - RAF Regt Officers' Dinner Club Reception (RAF Honington) - incl TG Graduation and Visits.

10 Jun 09 - RAF Regt Golf Society match v Royal Artillery (Mentmore GC)

15 Jun 09 - Centurion Journal No27 contributions due.

27 Jun 09 - National Armed Forces Day (Nationwide)

27 Jun 09 - RAF Regt Memorial Commemoration - NMA Alrewas (Veterans Week). [Date confirmed]

29 Jun 09 - RAF Regt Golf Society match v RAF Police (Thetford GC)

7-8 Jul 09 - RAF Regt Golf Society Championships (Mentmore Golf & Leisure Club)

12 Jul 09 - RAF Regt Assoc Annual Service at The Chapel Royal, Tower of London (London)

9 Sep 09 - RAF Regt Golf Society match v Royal Signals (Mentmore GC)

30 Sep 09 - RAF Regt Golf Society 4-Way Match & AGM (Greatham Valley Golf Club)

2-4 Oct 09 - RAF Regt Assoc AGM and Reunion (Coventry)

17-18 Oct 09 - RAF Armd Car Assoc Autumn Reunion (Derby)

30 Oct 09 - RAF Regt Officers' Dinner Club Annual Dinner (Def CBRN Centre, Winterbourne Gunner)

8 Nov 09 - Remembrance Day (Cenotaph, London, and Nationwide)

11 Nov 09 - Armistice Day (Cenotaph, London, Nationwide)

15 Dec 09 - Centurion Journal No28 contributions due.

[5] Feb 10 - Officers' Corps Formation Dinner (RAF Honington) - date to be confirmed.

18-21 May 10 - Regt-USAF Exchange Offrs 'British Invasion III (Washington DC)

11 Jun 10 - RAF Regt Officers' Dinner Club Reception (House of Lords) - incl Palace of Westminster Tour.

BRANCH SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please remember that your Branch Subscriptions were due on 1st February and also, please remember that your total subscription will be £15.00 that is £10.00 Association Subscription and £5.00 Branch Subscription. We have **THIRTY-ONE MEMBERS** who have not yet paid up so those members are now **TWO MONTHS OVERDUE**. If you have not yet paid up and wish to remain a member, please make your cheque out to the Birmingham Branch, the RAF Regiment Association and send them **IMMEDIATELY** to **THE BRANCH TREASURER** Tom Magee and **NOT** to me.

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

I have a list of members of other branches and others, who have asked to receive Birmingham Branch newsletters. The subscription for this service is now **£7.00** per year. So would those other branch members and others who have asked to be put onto the Circulation List for Birmingham Branch newsletters and wish to continue receiving the newsletters, please send a cheque for **£7.00** as above, **IMMEDIATELY** to **THE BRANCH TREASURER** Tom Magee and **NOT** to me. Would all of you please pay your Subscriptions **immediately** as having to chase 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.

FROM THE BRANCH SECRETARY Election of National Officials

Following last year's ballot, National Officials are elected by a ballot of all members and the offices of National Secretary and National Treasurer come up for election this year, each for a 3-year term of office. It would be an unjustifiable expense to write to all members simply to ask if there is anybody who would like to stand for election as Secretary or Treasurer.

At the same time, it is very important that anybody who does want to stand for election for either office has the opportunity to put his name forward, so the Association Chairman Steven Brereton Martin has written to all Branch Secretary's to ask if we know of any Full Member within our branches, or indeed within the Association, who would like to stand for election as National Secretary or National Treasurer, and who has the support of two Full Members to propose and second him. The candidates were asked to send their details by post, in an attached form, to the outgoing National Secretary (who is not standing for election) as soon as possible and, in any event, by 15th May 2009.

In order for members to make an informed choice, the candidate form requires the candidate to provide a brief résumé of his service record and an "Election Statement", in not more than 130 words, of what he would bring to the office of Secretary or Treasurer and how he would wish to take the Association forward during his term of office. This information will be included in the voting papers.

You may wish to know that the present National Treasurer, Derek James, has confirmed that he is willing to stand for election and is nominated by Alex Hargreaves and seconded by Pat Sweeney.

The next edition of the Flash will be distributed in late June/early July and it will include the names of all the candidates and the voting arrangements. In addition, voting papers will be inserted in the envelope so that all members will have the opportunity to vote.

34 Squadron Leading RAF Regiment

34 Squadron has been formally recognised as 2008's leading RAF Regiment unit based on their achievements, leadership, exceptional standards and endeavours during the year in the UK as well as in Iraq.

The Squadron, from RAF Leeming in Yorkshire, has been awarded the prestigious Higginson Trophy which is given out annually to the regular RAF Regiment Unit that has had the most achievements throughout the year. Their year's achievements began with the end of a successful deployment to Iraq as Squadron Leader Michael Formby explained:

"We were dealt a good hand of cards in our tasking for 2008. We were on operations in Iraq for the first two months of the year and

during that time we found an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) which still had a member of the IED team in its proximity. The information he gave out to us led to helping in subsequent operations. It is all part luck, part skill and part experience to make something like that happen."

During the Squadron's deployment to Iraq from September 2007 until February 2008 the team found and dealt with four separate IEDs and were heavily involved in Contingency Operating Base (COB) security:

"We were engaged in Force Protection duties at the COB in Basra," said Squadron Leader Formby. "We were patrolling the outside perimeter trying to detect threats including indirect attacks. Our job was to keep the numbers of rockets fired at the base down to a minimum. The other main threat was attacks from their air which we also had to deter."

As well as their deployment to Basra, 2008 saw the Squadron involved in many local community projects as well as training programmes which have contributed to them winning the Higginson Trophy. Squadron Leader Formby said:

"We've taken part in a lot of outreach to the local community including allowing school kids to come to the base and look at equipment and talk to gunners about their experiences.

We've also done some work for the Royal Star and Garter veterans' home in Richmond to make sure their surroundings are as nice as they can be. We've taken part in a lot of adventure training and parachute training in America as well as walking and training at the Grand Canyon."

Receiving the Higginson Trophy means 34 Squadron is considered the leading RAF Regiment squadrons in the country. This is a huge accolade for the Squadron to have under its belt and Squadron Leader Formby said:

"Effectively it's formal recognition that we've done the best out of the other Squadrons. It's quite an achievement and is a reflection of not only what we've done, but the standards to which we have achieved it.

It's a formal recognition for the members of the Squadron of what they've done. Everyone was really pleased with themselves. For the guys who have been here for the whole year, they know their efforts have been well received."

Now, as the Squadron take two weeks leave to recover from the past few busy months,

all focus is on pre-deployment training as they prepare to join Operation HERRICK in Afghanistan. Squadron Leader Formby said:

"We're getting ready to go on Op HERRICK which we expect to be deployed to in the early summer. We're currently taking part in pre-deployment training which involves getting to know the weapons we'll be using and familiarising ourselves with the Standard Operating Procedures. We believe that we will be the first RAF Regiment Field Squadron to take over the defence of Camp Bastion."

The Higginson Trophy was presented to 34 Squadron on Friday 27th March 2009 by Air Commodore Abbott, the RAF Regiment's Commandant General during his recent visit to the Squadron at Lydd Ranges during their pre-deployment training.

Camp Bastion, Afghanistan

34 Squadron will have their hands full when they arrive at Camp Bastion to take over its defence for currently, Camp Bastion holds around 4,000, mainly British, personnel. By late summer this figure will be swelling significantly as US troops arrive, placing extra demand on the military infrastructure. To accommodate them, the base will grow to nearly three times its current size. Air Commodore Les O'Dea, Commanding Officer of UK Joint Force Support, said:

"The US operation is already huge. To make sure that everything will be ready and waiting, cargoes of freight are already arriving on a US scale." In January, nearly 30 C17 cargo planes full of supplies and equipment were flown in. By this month, that will have risen to 675 flights a month, and by late summer to a remarkable 860 a month:

"That is about the same amount of freight that Gatwick airport has to cope with," said Air Commodore O'Dea. The forthcoming handover from 3 Commando Brigade to 19 Light Brigade will take place while the pace of the US expansion is accelerating, squeezing the number of air transport slots available for roulement. Bastion's increasing size will mean that the area to be protected will also grow.

On the other hand, force protection for those making the 10-minute journey from Bastion to Camp Tombstone, where the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team are based alongside

members of the Afghan National Army, will no longer be necessary. When Bastion expands, Tombstone will find itself well within the wire. As well as extra accommodation, cafes and gyms, there are plans to upgrade the UK-led role three hospital, making it a larger, joint US/UK facility. A problem of growing waste disposal will have to be addressed:

"The burn pit at Bastion needs sorting out anyway," said Air Cdre O'Dea. "And plans to do that are already underway." At the moment the pit burns about 30 tonnes of rubbish a week. That will soon become 90 tonnes.

Fortunately, Bastion enjoys plentiful water supplies. Below the base is a massive aquifer from which the camp bottles its own water. Tests have shown that the aquifer will be able to quench thousands of extra thirsts. If the rate of C17s landing at the base is maintained, those extra troops can expect to be comfortably accommodated and fed as well.

Troop Aid Ball

At the National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull, in Support of our Injured Troops

On Friday 3rd July 2009 at 7.30 p.m. for 8.00 p.m., there will be a superb three course dinner with entertainment at the National Motorcycle Museum with all the proceeds being given to support Troop Aid. Tickets are £50.00 each and Booking Forms are available at <www.troopaid.co.uk> or by telephoning 07914 464507. Tables of twelve can be booked for those of you wishing to dine with friends.

Troop Aid in a very big way, do what we do with our Military Ward Appeal in a smaller way. In addition, Troop Aid is a Registered Charity and has HRH Prince Charles as its Patron, so it is a charity that is also very well worth supporting. Troop aid supply the basic necessities (see below) to injured troops either at our medical stations in Afghanistan or to troops casevaced back to the Selly Oak in the UK. What we do is to supply the Military Ward with their specific requests as we have done this month with the laptops so both efforts are well worth supporting.

TROOP AID

Troop aid was founded in November 2006 by three ex servicemen, Captain (retired) Al

Sutton, Derek Joss and Ray Warren as a result of a visit to Selly Oak Hospital's Alexandra Wing in Birmingham. This is the home of the Defence Medical Welfare Services who are responsible for the welfare of all Armed Forces Personnel, male and female who have been injured during the conflict in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere.

When troops return to the United Kingdom from the war zones they arrive back without their personal effects or clothing. The objective of Troop Aid is to supply the "basic essentials" when service casualties return from serving their country overseas.

Servicemen and women, injured on duty, often have to wait for their kit to catch up with them. Sometimes it has been destroyed in the incident in which they were hurt. The idea is for each of them to get a present to show how much we appreciate them. The bags contains everything our boys and girls need to make their lives more comfortable during their stay in hospital and the plan is to provide a simple version in Afghanistan and Iraq or any other war zone and then a more comprehensive bag for the UK. This is a gift from grateful people of the country who just wish to show their support. This is a very simple idea but it makes a real difference to the morale and comfort of the patient. The bags contain all the 'nice to haves' like a tee shirt, underwear, socks, washing and shaving kit, or female equivalent, as well as other items like writing paper, a telephone card and memory stick.

It also has a letter from a school child wishing the patient a swift recovery. Simple but rather wonderful, for just think how good you would feel if you were a wounded soldier and this gift enabled you to have a wash and shave, make an extra phone call home, write a letter or read someone's good wishes for your recovery. It's so simple but it sends a powerful message.

Examples of what is supplied are a Grab Bag containing washing and shaving kit, towel, face flannel, shower mules, socks, underwear, t-shirt and shorts. Female requirements are also provided. The Grab Bags are currently being sent out to the UK Medical Stations in Afghanistan. In addition to this emergency pack, also supplied on demand to the injured service personnel are many other items of clothing and footwear.

Troop Aid deals directly with the Defence Medical Welfare Service and other military medical establishments in the UK where there is a

need. They have sponsored two rooms at Selly Oak Hospital for the families of Armed Forces personnel who are in intensive care. Their funds come entirely from fund raising events and donations from organisations such as Help for Heroes, Rotary International, Lions International, Masonic Lodges, the Royal British Legion, ex-Service Associations, plus the local business community and the general public. They will continue to help our troops returning from conflicts for as long as possible.

BUT THEY CANNOT DO THIS WITHOUT DONATIONS.

Troop Aid understands that everyone who joins the Armed Forces may one day go to war and fight for their country. They believe that when injured troops return home they should be cared for and at Selly Oak Hospital, injured servicemen and women receive the very best medical care. Troop Aid would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this venture and with continued support they will give our troops the support they deserve.

How can you help?

If you would like to make a donation however small, please make cheques payable to **TROOP AID** and send to the following address. Troop Aid, PO Box 14482, SOLIHULL, B91 9LD.

Goods supplied to Selly Oak Hospital and UK Medical Stations in Afghanistan are as follows:

T-Shirts – polo shirts – sweat shirts - track-suit bottoms – shorts - Boxer shorts – socks – Trainers - Fleece jackets - water proof coats – rucksacks - full shaving kits - shower mules – ladies underwear – toothpaste – tooth brushes.

RAF Regiment Books

I am often asked for information about books about the RAF Regiment. The following list is of the books that I know of that I am regularly adding to. If anyone knows of any other books about the RAF Regiment, please let me know. The details I need are the following; title, author, brief account of subject matter, year of first publication, who published it and the ISBN number. If the books that you would like to obtain are out of print then specialist booksellers may be able to help. I have obtained several books in this way.

In addition, even though a book may be out of print, it's always possible that your local library may either stock one or can obtain it for

you from other public libraries in the UK. I have recently borrowed a book from my local library that was borrowed by my library from a public library on the south coast so I know it can be done. There is a small charge for this service though.

I've just finished a library book called "Providence Their Guide - The Long Range Desert Group 1940-45", by David Lloyd Owen (who retired from the Army in 1969 as Major General D L Lloyd Owen CB DSO OBE MC). He joined the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) in August 1941 as a Major in command of the Yeomanry Patrol and finished up commanded the Group as a Lieutenant Colonel from 1943 till its disbandment in 1945. This book however is not about the RAF Regiment at all but his authoritative account covers not only the justly famed activities of the LRDG in the deserts of North Africa, but also - for the first time - its later operations in the Aegean, Italy and different parts of the Balkans (Yugoslavia and Albania particularly) where its adventures were appropriately colourful and often bizarre and it is their later activities in the Balkans where the RAF Regiment comes in on pages 203 and 212.

Page 203

On page 203 of the book the fourth paragraph down states:

"John Oliver was also in Greece commanding a Patrol of Rhodesians mounted in Jeeps. He had been put ashore in the Peloponnese with a party of the RAF Regiment to seize and hold Araxos Airfield, from which the enemy had been reported to have withdrawn".

In September 1944 a composite force drawn from Land Forces Adriatic and the Balkan Air Force was assembled with the aim of seizing the airfield at Araxos in the Peloponnese to enable air support to be provided future operations in Salonika. This was code-named 'Bucketforce' and comprised elements of the Special Boat Squadron and the long Range Desert Group - a troop of Royal Marine Commandos, a company of Highland Light infantry - and 2908 Squadron RAF Regiment - totaling some 450 all ranks, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel the Lord Jellicoe.

Following a parachute drop on Araxos airfield, the main force landed at Katakolon on the west coast of the Peloponnese. The RAF

Regiment component included a special mine clearance party of two officers and 39 airmen drawn from various Regiment, squadrons other than 2908. One of the many unusual features of this force was that 2908 Squadron had its own chaplain - the Reverend (Squadron Leader) GH Church - who made an outstanding contribution in the many and varied situations which the squadron encountered during its service in Greece.

Page 212

On page 212 of the book the second paragraph down states:

"The Army element of the Combined Force at Zara was called Land forces Northern Adriatic. It consisted originally of a Squadron of the Special Boat Service and our Rhodesian Squadron. Some guns of the Raiding Support Regiment were later added, as well as a unit of the RAF Regiment."

Zara (now called Zadar) is on the Dalmatian coast of Croatia that until 1944 belonged to Italy and Zara was the Italian name for the port. When it was liberated in 1944 it became part of Yugoslavia and was renamed Zadar.

By the end of January 1945 it was occupied by the Yugoslav partisans and as it had a good harbour and an airfield at Prkos about twenty miles away, it was chosen by the Combined force as an advanced base for combined operations. Their orders were to "harass the enemy in the North Dalmatian islands and on the mainland of Istria and Croatia".

"**Khaki and Blue**" the early ground defence of the RAF in WW2 by Colonel Ronald Sherbrooke-Walker TD DL. Published in **1952** by The Saint Catherine Press Ltd. Now out of print. No ISBN number.

"**A Short History of the RAF Regiment**" from 1942 to 1970 with a brief account of the approach to the problems of airfield defence in the RAF from 1918 to 1942 by Kingsley M Oliver. Printed by Thanet Printing Works in **1969**. No ISBN Number and now out of print.

"**The Battle of the Airfields 1st January 1945**" by Norman L Franks. About "Operation Bodenplatte" when the Germans attempted to destroy the advanced Allied Airfields. It goes into great detail about the involvement of the RAF Regiment and lists all the squadrons together with their "kills", and the airfields the squadrons were

on. First published in **1982**. ISBN 1 898697 15 9. Republished by Grub Street in **1994** in an updated version.

"The Blue and Khaki Hunters" Privately published in a Limited Edition of 500 copies in **1993** by D F Sampson through Newton Publishers. ISBN 1-872308-34-1. Can be obtained directly from Mr D F Sampson, 17 Shelley Close, Highcliffe on Sea, Chrsitchurch, Dorset, BH23 4HW. Telephone number 01425 279206.

"Below the Bottom Rung" the RAF Regiment in Palestine by Edward Grocott. Published in **1996** by J and K H Publishing. ISBN 1 900511 57 6.

"Through Adversity" the History of the RAF Regiment 1942 - 1992 by Kingsley M Oliver. Published in **1997** by Forces and Corporate Publishing Ltd. ISBN 0 9529597 0 4.

"In Adversity" Exploits of Gallantry and Awards to the RAF Regiment and its Associated Forces 1921 - 12995 by Nicholas G Tucker. Published in **1997** by Jade Publishing Limited. ISBN 1-900734-08-7.

"The RAF Regiment" History, Colours, uniforms and Equipment of the RAF Regiment. Edited by Stuart Asquith. Published in **2000** by Nexus Special Interests Ltd. Book Number 001772. Foreword by Air Commodore R C Moore, MBE, RAF, Commandant General, RAF Regiment. The RAF Regiment Today. The Early Years. The Formation of the Royal Air Force Regiment. The RAF Regiment at War. The Return to North West Europe. The War in South East Asia. The Post War Years. The RAF Regiment Since 1980. The RAF Museum. The RAF Regiment Chapel. The RAF Regiment Association. Packed with superb full colour and black and white reproductions of paintings, sketches, and photographs, both contemporary and modern and including portraits of officers and men, groups, battles and engagements, uniforms, badges & insignia, equipment, colours, regimental devices, bands, and much more. But now out of print.

"The RAF Regiment at War" 1942 - 1946 by Kingsley M Oliver. Published in **2002** by Pen and Sword Books Limited. ISBN 0-85052-852-6.

"On the Road to Mandalay" featuring the life of the author Randle Manwaring focussing particularly on his time with the RAF Regiment in the Burma Campaign. Published in **2006** by Pen and Sword Books Limited. ISBN 1844154971.

"Constant Vigilance" the RAF Regiment in the Burma Campaign by Nigel W M Warwick. Published in **2007** by Pen and Sword Books Limited. ISBN: 9781844155002.

"Joint Force Harrier" by Commander Adrian Orchard, with James Barrington. The true story of a Royal Navy Fighter squadron at war. Published in 2008 by Penguin Books and Micael Joseph. ISBN 9780718153991.

In addition, other books have been privately published by their authors telling of their experiences in the RAF Regiment. If anyone knows of any other books, please let me know.

NATIONAL MEMORIAL

ARBORETUM (NMA) UPDATE

William launches £8m bid at arboretum

The National Memorial Arboretum has unveiled plans that will see it transformed into a world-class centre for remembrance. The Arboretum, supported by The Royal British Legion, honours the fallen, recognises sacrifice and fosters pride in the country. On 24th April 2009, Prince William visited the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) to launch an £8million appeal for it to become a world-famous centre for remembrance. The prince was at the site to be formally invited by Major General Patrick Cordingley DSO to become the patron of the NMA Future Foundations Appeal, tasked with raising £8 million to expand the infrastructure and a new education facility, a veterans pavilion and a central space for major memorial services.

This followed a huge surge in visitor numbers in 2008 to the 300,000 mark when the Armed Forces Memorial was dedicated and Major General Patrick Cordingley, Chair of the Appeal, said:

“The first time I visited the Arboretum, I stepped up to the Armed Forces Memorial and gazed at the walls of names. It was a very emotional moment. In amongst the names were those with whom I had served over the years. This wonderful Memorial, combined with the many other tributes to fallen comrades that fill the 150-acre site, make it a most powerful and uplifting place. The Arboretum’s wonderful memorials are drawing increasing numbers of visitors from across the UK. This Appeal will ensure that it has the facilities to provide every person who passes through its gate a uniquely memorable experience.”

During his visit, Prince William met and spoke with Tricia Wall of Nottingham and her son Alex aged 6. Her husband, Company Sergeant Major Colin Wall, was killed in Basra, Iraq in 2003 and his name appears on the Armed Forces Memorial. She said:

“The Arboretum has come to mean a great deal to all of the family and especially to Alex, who was just eleven months old at the time of his dad’s death. We’ll always be incredibly proud of Colin and this magnificent place is an awe-inspiring tribute that will forever honour him and the thousands of other men and women who have lost their lives serving their country.”

Prince William met the National and Regional Appeal Councils tasked to raise the cash as well as families and friends of the people who are remembered on the site. As part of a tour of the site, he also visited some of the memorials including the St Dunstan’s Path and the War Widows’ Rose Garden, before proceeding down the causeway to the Armed Forces Memorial where he met members of the public and then he visited the Police Garden of Remembrance.

Speech by HRH Prince William at the launch of the National Memorial Arboretum Future Foundations Appeal

“After 12 short years, the National Memorial Arboretum has already become part of the fabric of the Nation. Any memorial to those who have given their lives for others is poignant. But the vision behind this extraordinary place is something else altogether. It is, quite simply, unique - a worthy focus for our Nation’s pride in those who have given their lives in the service of others. It is the most fitting way for us to express our solemn gratitude to them. Already 3,000 children a year come here to undertake school projects. There are over 200 annual memorial events. There are hundreds of thousands of visitors.

All this needs infrastructure: meeting halls; the enlargement of the education centre; improvements to the Chapel, although I thought it was pretty good when I went in there earlier; expansion and redesign of the restaurant and shop. In short, it needs the Future Foundations Appeal.

It is an immense honour for me to be the Patron of this Appeal - to have the chance to contribute something towards ensuring that future generations can come and learn with pride of the great debt that we all owe those commemorated

here - military and civilians from the police, fire and ambulance services. So, I would just like to say thank you to all the staff who work here so tirelessly. Thank you to the Appeal Committee for the vital work that you are undertaking. Thank you to those of you who are supporting this Appeal. And finally, thank you for according me this great privilege of becoming your Patron”.

Donations to the Appeal can be made via <www.thenma.org.uk> or by sending cheques payable to the “National Memorial Arboretum” to: The NMA Future Foundations Appeal Office, 1 Fitzgerald Road, Mortlake, London, SW14 8HA. Enquiries can be made by calling 01283 792333 or emailing appeal@thenma.org.uk.

Engraving of new names on Armed Forces Memorial

At 06.00 hours on 29th April 2009, engraver Nick Hindle started adding the names of 67 servicemen and women to the Armed Forces Memorial. Every spring, over a period of around three weeks, the names of those who have been killed on duty or as a result of terrorism during the previous year, are engraved on the Memorial’s Portland Stone walls. Nick was available to explain to visitors the process of engraving the names on the walls.

Plaques to the Fallen at Basrah Airport to be moved to NMA

At Basra airport, where Britain’s combat troops are packing their kits ready to come home, RAF padre John Ellis, 45, was spending a quiet moment reading the 179 British names engraved on polished brass plaques on a memorial wall. A Union flag flutters over the red brick wall which bears the quotation from The Bible: “Honourable age does not depend on length of days, nor is the number of years a true measure of life.”

The Squadron Leader with 903 Expeditionary Air Wing told me: “Many of us here have friends’ names displayed here.” Pointing towards the polished brass plaques, John said: “I knew him... I knew him... and I knew him. Memories have been made here and people want to keep hold of those memories.” The plaques to the fallen at Basra airport will be dismantled and rebuilt among the tranquility of the National Memorial Arboretum.

**Future Events at the NMA
Sunday 21st June 2009**

The Mercian Volunteers Association (MVA) will hold a dedication for association branches' standards and a families day.

Saturday 27 June 2009

A Service to Rededicate the RAF Regiment Memorial. For details contact the RAF Regiment Secretary Wing Commander Martin Hooker RAF (Rtd) at RAF Honington at <rafregtsecretary@honington.raf.mod.uk>.

Saturday 12th September 2009

Northern Ireland Veterans' Association. Annual service of remembrance, with drumhead, followed by parade to Ulster Ash Grove. At 1.30 a.m. a Service in the Leonard Cheshire Amphitheatre Open to all. Standards welcomed but advance notice of participation appreciated. Contact Alan Preston <service2009@nivets.org.uk> or PO Box 9004, Leicester LE21 4BL.

Who Are the Gurkhas?

Gurkhas have been part of the British Army for almost 200 years, but who are these fearsome Nepalese fighters? "Better to die than be a coward" is the motto of the world-famous Nepalese Gurkha soldiers who are an integral part of the British Army. They still carry into battle their traditional weapon - an 18-inch long curved knife known as the kukri. In times past, it was said that once a kukri was drawn in battle, it had to "taste blood" - if not, its owner had to cut himself before returning it to its sheath.

The potential of these warriors was first realised by the British at the height of their empire-building in the nineteenth century. The Victorians identified them as a "martial race", perceiving in them particularly masculine qualities of toughness.

Since then, the Gurkhas have loyally fought for the British all over the world, receiving 13 Victoria Crosses between them. More than 200,000 fought in the two world wars and in the past 50 years, they have served in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Borneo, Cyprus, the Falklands, Kosovo and now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Gurkhas Right to Stay in Britain

I have often said that where politicians are concerned, I despair. I have just watched the TV news with utter disbelief. Whenever their own interests are concerned then politicians rise up to defend them but when soldiers who have demonstrated their loyalty beyond dispute are concerned, then Immigration Minister Phil Woolas has said he doesn't want to set a precedent

for other groups to take advantage of. I think this Government should hang its head in shame.

I am absolutely appalled and shocked that the Gurkhas are being denied their right to live in here - they have fought for this country, risked life and limb and surely that entitles them to live here for their sacrifices and loyalty to the Crown is unmatched by any other nation. They have stood by us for nearly 200 years and they are the bravest of the brave. We owe them so much that we could never repay it. Once again this morally and nearly financially bankrupt Government has got it wrong.

Even the High Court has said that their ban on Gurkhas settling in the UK who have served in the British Army was unlawful. These good and faithful soldiers have served us in conflicts and wars all over the world with valour, yet the powers that be say that they have no strong ties with Britain. Instead of doing the right thing and letting all Gurkhas settle here, the Government has changed the rules. They now say that anyone who has served for 20 years can settle here, however, only officers can serve 20 years. Other ranks only serve for 15 years so that rules out most of them.

It also means that rather than the 4,000 that the Government say will be affected, it will only apply to a few hundred instead. Meanwhile, immigrants from all over the world are allowed to come here and claim benefits.

It seems that only those that have served in our Armed Forces appear to be refused. If Phil Woolas is worried about precedents, then he can take as an example no finer precedent than that of the French towards members of the French Foreign Legion. They enlist for five years but after only three years of service, a Legionnaire can claim French citizenship. And if they have shed blood in defence of France, then no matter how long their service, they can claim French citizenship.

Common sense and decency dictates that every ordinary Gurkha enlisted for five years that has served for the same three years - and those that have shed blood in our defence - should be allowed, together with their families, to stay here unconditionally.

Gurkha graves are spread across the face of the earth in nearly every country in which Britain has fought - a silent testament to Gurkha loyalty and courage. The respect with which they

are regarded by those members of the Armed Forces who have had the privilege of serving with them, reflect the view of anyone with any shred of morality. Let them stay, they have indeed have been "Soldiers of the Queen" and we must keep on fighting for these brave fighting men for they are loyal, honourable people who have more right to stay here than many others.

Illegal immigrants, economic migrants and scroungers are almost welcomed. Fight for this country and you get nothing. Arrive here with nothing and you get everything. Swear allegiance and be prepared to die for this country and this Government will abandon you. This new legislation may prove so unpopular that the government may just have to do another humiliating U turn.

Please remember the Military Ward Appeal for we need all the money that we can get, so save up all your small change and send it to us. Well spring is well and truly with us now so look after yourselves and enjoy the sunshine.

Malcolm

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



16

Thursday 11 th June	2009	Branch Night	Thursday 8 th October	2009	Branch Night
Sunday 14 th June	2009	Cosford Air Show	Wednesday 21 st Oct	2009	Battle of Trafalgar Day
Tuesday 16th June	2009	Branch 21st Ann.y	Sunday 1 st November	2009	Midlands Fest of Rem.
Saturday 27 th June	2009	Reg.t Service at NMA	Sunday 8 th Nov	2009	Remembrance Sunday
Thursday 9 th July	2009	Branch Night	Wednesday 11 th Nov	2009	Remembrance Day
Thursday 13 th August	2009	Branch Night	Thursday 12 th Nov	2009	Branch Night
Thursday 10 th September	09	Branch Night	Saturday 14 th Nov	2009	B'ham Poppy Ball
Fri 2 nd – Mon 5 th Oct	2009	Ass.n Autumn Reunion	Sat 28 th -Sun 29 th Nov	2009	B'ham Int Tattoo NIA
Sunday 4 th October	2009	Merchant Navy Day	Monday 30 th November	09	St Andrew's Day
			Thursday 10 th December	09	Branch Night
			Monday 1 st February	2010	68 th Ann RAF Regiment
			Monday 1 st February	2010	Branch Service at NMA
			Thursday 11 th February	2010	68 th Ann RAF Regiment
			Thursday 11 th February	2010	Branch Night and AGM
			Thursday 11 th February	2010	Branch Subs Due
			Thursday 11 th March	2010	Branch Night
			Friday 23 rd April	2010	St George's Day

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