



# ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

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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: 240  
JUNE 2009**

# THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH NEWSLETTER

## NUMBER 240 JUNE 2009

Dear Readers.

Do you remember that little story from Birmingham Branch member Don Hancock in last April's newsletter, about going to have his haircut and as is usual with hairdressers, he got into conversation with Don and Don talked about our Appeal for the Military Ward. When Don produced a five pound note to pay for his haircut, his hairdresser said "there's no charge, just put it towards your Appeal".

Well, Don showed him his copy of the April newsletter with that story in it and blow me down, the hairdresser was so pleased that he said that in future, every other haircut he gives Don, he will donate the money towards our Appeal. And he's not an ex-serviceman either so it is all the more remarkable. Well done Don and particularly well done his hairdresser.

### BRANCH BIRTHDAYS

A very Happy Birthday to the following Birmingham Branch members whose birthdays are this month, may you all have many more of them.

- 2nd June **Ken Langley** Salisbury Wiltshire
- 2nd June **Leonard Royds** Tamworth Staffordshire
- 9th June **Jim Davies** Middlewich Cheshire
- 12th June **Mick Warren** Saltburn by the Sea Cl
- 14th June **Malcolm Overfield** Dudley W Mids
- 17th June **Fred Smith** Birmingham W Mids
- 19th June **Roland Statham** Coleshill W Mids
- 20th June **Hughie Cooper** Stafford Staffordshire
- 22nd June **Vic Whistler** Stratford on Avon
- 26th June **Hector MacKenzie** Leicester
- 27th June **Ralph Proffitt** Shrewsbury Salop
- 27th June **Jim Common** Aberdare Mid Glam

### 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. 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 for we need more money.

This month Roy Thomas and Ralph Dean our Military Ward Liaison Officers presented to Major Cheesman of the Military Ward, the laptop computers that I said we had bought in last month's newsletter. Roy wanted me to tell you that in these "belt-tightening" times with the credit squeeze, it was very heartening to be able to hand the equipment over, on behalf of everyone who had contributed to our Military Ward Appeal Fund.



**Roy Thomas, Ian Cheesman, Ralph Dean**

He added that due to everyone's fundraising efforts, we have been able to order from Boldmere Computers, two, "all-singing, all-dancing" Samsung Laptops that are wireless enabled, have a Wi Fi facility built-in, and also have a built-in webcam too, that will enable the lads in the ward to read, write letters, study for promotional exams, send e-mails to friends and family, play DVD games and of course, with the aid of the built-in Wi Fi facility, play interactive games that will aid them in stretching their skin grafts whilst taking their minds off the pain necessarily incurred during such exercise.

Major Cheesman has also asked us if, at some time in the near future, we could possibly supply a Wi Fi games package for the ward when they move to the new site. He said that the package would assist the patients in their recovery by providing enjoyable exercise through individual and team games under the watchful eyes of the physiotherapy team. He also said that donations from smaller organisations such as ours

were as important as donations from the larger, more publicised groups and our efforts are very much appreciated.

With this in mind, at the Branch Meeting last month, we decided that our Branch should give another £250.00 to the Appeal Fund. This, together with the remaining funds in the account, should enable us to not only to supply a Wi Fi games package, but also to supply another laptop computer. The laptop should be cheaper this time as with the previous purchase, not only did we buy and present to Major Cheesman, all the necessary licences for the software packages added to the laptops, we also purchased a third set of licences for the ward too, so we will not have to buy the licences for a third laptop.

However, this will almost totally deplete the Military Ward Appeal Fund so once again, we need all the money that you can give. So with the principle that it is “better to give than to receive”, please “dig deep and die happy”. 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 Warrant Officer A (Alan) Wanbon RAF, or post them to him at Patient Support Services, RCDM, Ward S4, Selly Oak Hospital, Raddlebarn Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6JD. Alan can also be contacted on 07795 801276.

## NEWS OF THE RAF REGIMENT



### FROM THE RAF REGIMENT SECRETARY DEATH NOTICES:

**MOGFORD DAVID.** Former RAF Regt SAC Gnr David Mogford, born 13 Jan 38, died in Jan 09 aged 70. Served from 1956 –60. He was a member of the Bristol & Bath Branch of the RAF Regt Assoc. The funeral has taken place and no further details are known. He is survived by his wife, Mrs Mogford of 2 Merrywood Court, Maxse

Rd, Knowle, Bristol BS4 2JT, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

**UNDERWOOD ALBERT.** Former RAF Regt SNCO Albert William Gordon Underwood, born 25 Oct 20, died on 22 Apr 09 aged 88. He enlisted in Mar 48 and served on 1, 32, 34 and 63 Sqns RAF Regt before his discharge in Jun 69. He was a member of the North Wales Branch of the RAF Regt Assoc. No further details are known. The funeral was held at Blacon in Chester on 30 Apr 09. He is survived by his daughter, Mrs Lynne Bidwell, of 44 Armthorpe Drive, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH66 4TL, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

**SIMPSON JAMES.** Former RAF Regt SAC James T Simpson born 21 Feb 34, died on 4 May 09 aged 75. He enlisted in May 55 and served in RAF Germany until 1955, when he moved to 63 Sqn RAF Regt at RAF Felixstowe. He was eventually discharged in Mar 64. He was a member of the Suffolk Branch of the RAF Regt Assoc. The funeral was held at 15.30 on Wed 13 May at the West Chapel, Ipswich.

Family flowers only were requested but donations may be made to Cancer research via the Funeral Directors, Cooperative Funeral Services, 213 High St, Walton, Felixstowe, IP11 9BQ (Tel 01394 670100) to whom all enquiries should be made. He is survived by his son, Mr Andrew Simpson, of 69 Coronation Drive, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 8 NX, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

**EARLE ROY.** Former RAF Regt SAC Roy Longbottom Earle, born 4 Nov 35, died on 21 Mar 09 aged 73. He enlisted in 1956 and served mainly in Libya until discharged in 1959. No further Service details are known at this time. The funeral was held in Leeds on 30 Mar 09. He is survived by his wife, Mrs Patricia Earle, of ‘Cranleigh’, 27 Moorland Crescent, Homestead Estate, Menston LS29 6PB, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

**RICHARDSON PAUL.** Former RAF Regt Gnr Paul Richardson, born 10 Apr 21, died on 7 May 09 aged 87. No Service details are known at this time. The funeral was held at 1130 on Mon 18 May at the RC Church of St Edwards in Hassocks, West Sussex. Family flowers only were requested but donations may be made to the British Heart Foundation via the Funeral Directors, Bowley Funeral Services in Hassocks,

West Sussex, BN6 8AN. Members of the Sussex Branch of the RAF Regt Assoc were in attendance. He is survived by his wife, Mrs Jean Richardson of 2 Hassocks Lodge, Keymer Road, Hassocks, West Sussex BN6 8AT, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

**SKINNER REGINALD.** Former RAF Regt Sgt Reginald Skinner, born 16 Dec 20, died on 26 Mar 09 aged 89. He enlisted in 1939, joining the RAF Regt on its formation in 1942 and served in the NW European Theatre. He was reportedly one of those who helped liberate the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp in 1945. He was discharged in 1946; further service details are not known. The funeral was held in Leatherhead on 1 Apr 09. He is survived by his wife, Mrs Marjorie Skinner, of 59 Coveham Crescent, Cobham, Surrey KT11 1AR, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

**TURNER GORDON.** Former RAF Regt SAC Gordon Anthony Turner, born 10 Mar 39, died on 13 Apr 08 aged 69. He enlisted in Sep 55 and served on 85 Sqn RAF Regt at RAF Bruggen from 1956-57, from where he was discharged. No further details are known. He is survived by his wife, Mrs Turner, of 83 Coniston Way, Bewdley, Worcs OY12 2QA, to whom the Corps extends its sincere condolences.

#### **GENERAL NOTICES:**

#### **NEW COMMANDANT GENERAL ANNOUNCED**

It has been announced that Air Cdre Russ La Forte MBE MA BA will assume the appointment as the Corps' 29<sup>th</sup> Commandant General from Air Cdre Steven Abbott CBE BA RAF on Fri 5 Feb 10.

#### **ANNUAL CORPS COMMEMORATION – 27 JUN 09**

The Annual Corps Commemoration will take place at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA), Croxhall Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire DE13 7AR, on Sat 27 Jun 09, National Armed Forces Day. The Regt's Service will commence in the Arboretum's Chapel at 1130 after the NMA's Daily Homage and Act of Remembrance. The Queen's Colour for the RAF Regt will be paraded, as will the new RAF Regt Assoc National Standard, and it is intended that a number of Trainee Gunners will also be on parade. Following the Corps Service, the contingent will move to the RAF Regiment Memorial Garden where a further Commemoration Service and

Laying of Wreaths will take place. Chapel seating will not be reserved other than for official guests and Corps VIPs, and a Park-and-Ride system will be in operation at the NMA that day. RAF Regt Assoc members should register their interest to attend with their respective Branches, which should then advise the Nat Sec of their numbers no later than 17 Jun 09. The names of those Service persons who died in 2008 (including RAF Regt SACs Livingstone and Thomson) will also be unveiled on the National Armed Forces' Memorial. This is traditionally an excellent Corps day at a superb facility and strong support is encouraged.

#### **II SQN BADGE FOR THE RAF CHURCH OF ST CLEMENT DANES, LONDON**

Among the many RAF and RAF Regt badges embedded in the floor of the RAF Church of St Clement Danes in London, some sqns have yet to be represented. II Sqn RAF Regt is one of those and, quite naturally, the Sqn would like to remedy that omission. The capital cost will be in the region of £600 and donations are invited towards the project. The unveiling and dedication will be carried out later in the year and details of that event will be publicised in good time. If you wish to support this initiative, please send any cheques direct to the Proj O - Fg Off Gary Butler at II Sqn RAF Regt, RAF Honington, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 1EE. Cheques should be made payable to: 'II sqn Charity Account'.

#### **NEW HONORARY INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR THE ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE**

Air Mshl Ian MacFadyen CB OBE FRAeS RAF (Retd), has been appointed as the new HIG RAuxAF. Educated at Marlborough College, he entered RAFC Cranwell in 1960 and graduated with the Sword of Honour. His flying career included service as a fighter pilot in the UK and RAF Germany. He commanded RAF Leuchars from 1985-87 and served as Comdr of British Forces in the Middle East (Op GRANBY) in the early 1990s. Following his successful career in the RAF, Air Mshl Macfadyen was appointed Her Majesty's Lieutenant Governor in the Isle of Man in Oct 00, relinquishing the post in Oct 05.

He was promoted to the rank of Air Mshl in 1994, and retired from the RAF in Feb 99. He was also Chairman of The Princes' Trust and also of The Golden Jubilee Trust. Ian Macfadyen is a past Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the RAF Museum. He was the National President of

the Royal British Legion from 2006-9. The Corps congratulates Air Mshl MacFadyen on this significant Corps-related appointment.

### **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](mailto:johndowding_golf@yahoo.co.uk).

### **CORPS DIARY DATES:**

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)  
 15-16 Oct 09 - RAF Armd Car Assoc Autumn Reunion (Derby) - Note date change.  
 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 - Handover-Takeover of CG RAF Regt appointment.  
 5 Feb 10 - Officers' Corps Formation Dinner (RAF Honington).  
 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.

### **FROM THE BRANCH SECRETARY**

### **End of British Involvement in Iraq**

On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009, British troops ended their military combat operations in Iraq. The move came a month earlier than expected and represented a continued pattern by coalition forces to try to mislead potential insurgents who may have been plotting attacks. It has been a long and hard campaign and we've paid a very high price for it. The families of those who have lost loved ones in Iraq will be thinking very hard about that - and so we should we as well. Most of the 4,300 troops will be withdrawn by now, but a few hundred Special Forces personnel will remain in the country to continue training Iraqi security forces, and to hunt for suspected Al-Qaida operatives. Since arriving in Iraq six years ago, despite fighting a war that was largely unpopular at home, our troops have performed magnificently.

Politicians make wars and our troops who take no part in these political decisions, have to fight them and they have served us well but sadly, 179 British service personnel have been killed and many more hundreds wounded. There should now be a full enquiry into a war that many people think was illegal. We were led into this war on the premise that it was a war to defend Britain from weapons of mass destruction. This became patently untrue, and so we were then told that it was to bring democracy to Iraq and to remove the dictator Saddam Hussein.

I have difficulty in understanding the principle of Arabic democracy, for if Iraq does ever become a democratic country, as we understand it; and I have very grave doubts about that; then it will a major sea change, for it will be the only democratic Arabic country in the world.

All the others are ruled by dictators, and if we now accept the principle that we fought the war in Iraq to remove an Arabic dictator, then logically, shouldn't we be thinking about making more wars to remove further Arabic dictators? Of course not, but no wonder the Muslim world fears what we may do next. We have a lot of work to do to repair the damage that the Iraq war has wrought.

But as I have said, it is politicians who make the wars and our troops, who take no part

in these political decisions, have to fight them and they have indeed served us well. And I think that when the historians write of this campaign, they will say of the British military that they did a superb job, as we would expect them to, and we should be – and are - very proud of them. But while British military operations in Iraq have come to an end, the legacy of soldiers requiring help continues. Thousands of soldiers will need support to recover from their experiences in the conflict, for Iraq has left a legacy of soldiers who will need our assistance for many years to come. The nature of the fighting has thrown up different challenges, and while battle fatigue is nothing new, we are more understanding of what it means these days and how to help; and only time will tell whether the British involvement in Iraq will have had a positive effect on freedom and democracy across the world. Meanwhile, there are many other dictators all around the world for our politician to think on if they wish to wage other interventionist wars. But most of them do not have any oil however.

### **RAF Regiment carries out last patrols in Iraq**

Men of the RAF Regiment have carried out their last patrols in Iraq and have by now returned home. The men of 15 Squadron are proud of the rapport they have built up with local Iraqis on their regular patrols around the main coalition base next to Basra International Airport. They were tasked with protecting the security of the airfield so that RAF aircraft could safely take off and land. On one of their last patrols, they went out into the swampy area north of the base that is populated by Marsh Arabs who are generally farmers and fishermen. Having halted their Bulldog Armoured Cars in the tiny village of Al Houta, they played football with an excited gaggle of local children, although heavily laden down with their body armour, weapons and radios.

They then stopped at the local sheik's house to share tea and listen to his concerns. Squadron Leader Chris Berryman, OC 15 Squadron said: "These days it's less about deterrent and more about interacting with the local people". SAC Chris Dunn aged twenty and from Maidstone, Kent said: "This is about finding out how they are and also if possible, finding out if there are any insurgents in the area or anything like that". Letting some of the local

children look down the sights of his rifle he added: "You do get a lot of touching but it's more out of curiosity than anything". He is now looking forward to being deployed in Afghanistan in the December of next year. Al Houta resident Naseem Ashur was grim about the prospects for people in his village and said: Life is difficult, there are no jobs at all and there are not many fish". But he lit up when asked about how he felt about the imminent withdrawal of UK troops. He said: "I want them to say, the British are better than the Iraqis. The British brought us sand to help us build this land five years ago. The Iraqi Government didn't do any projects for us to reduce the problems of our people. The British Forces did all those projects". 15 Squadron were held up on the way back when they spotted streaks of tracer fire in the sky but it turned out to be from a shooting range on the base. On their return the British then handed over military command in Basrah to the Americans.



**The FV432 Bulldog Armoured Car**

### **Squadron stays as British withdraw**

Combat operations in Iraq may have officially ended for the UK, but personnel from RAF Honington remain in Basra as British activity there wound down last month. In a ceremony at Basra airport Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May, British Armed Forces lowered their flag and formally handed control of the base to the American military, six years after the war began.

But 150 airmen from 15 Squadron RAF Regiment, who started their four-month tour of duty in February, still remain in Basra and will be one of the last units to leave the base when it is handed over to Iraq's security forces. Last month, the squadron joined a joint US/UK patrol to Il Mithar, a village north of their base in Basra, where they met Iraqi National Police and delivered footballs, books and stationery to

schools, getting the chance to speak to some of the pupils there.

\*\*\*\*\*

I have now received the 15 Squadron May Newsletter with all the news from Honington, Iraq and Afghanistan. As with the April Newsletter it is very well illustrated and in sections, with Sections 1 to 5 being of particular interest to us and 6 to 8 of interest to those left at home.

Section 1: A Letter from OC 15 Squadron  
 Section 2: A Flight  
 Section 3: B Flight  
 Section 4: C Flight  
 Section 5: Comms. Ops Section  
 Section 6: Home Front  
 Section 7: Your Day Out  
 Section 8: Colouring Competition

## **15 Squadron Newsletter May 2009**

### **Section 1**

#### **A Letter from OC 15 Squadron**

Dear Friends and Families. At long last we are beginning to get sufficient understanding of our future task that we are able to make some plans to recover the Squadron from Iraq. As we expected, it will not be simple, but we hope that the provisional plans we have drawn up will survive. I am sure that your sons, husbands and friends will let you know when they will be returning in more detail, but in broad outline the plan is as follows: The first bunch should return in the first week of May. They will be a mixed bunch from across all three flights, which are reducing in size because the Americans are taking on the task of defending the base.

The second group of eight will return in mid-May once we have swapped our Bulldog tracked vehicles for Mastiff wheeled vehicles. This will include some of the A Flight guys who have been working on the Bulldogs. The remaining eighty-seven personnel from across all three flights and Squadron Headquarters will remain in Iraq, protecting UK aircraft until the last departure. This group will return to the U in early June. As always I cannot yet be certain of the exact dates each group will be flying back to the UK; however we do know that we will be spending thirty-six hours in Cyprus on the way back. This is an opportunity to unwind from the stress of the tour, drink a couple of beers (it is limited to five cans) and receive various homecoming briefs. Commonly referred to as

decompression, this is now mandatory for all units returning from operations. On return to Honington, it is my intention that all personnel will take one week R&R and then return to work at the Squadron until everyone has returned from Iraq (I anticipate that 2503 Squadron personnel will work at Waddington and take their remaining leave entitlement before they are demobilised).

Once everyone is back from Iraq and our equipment has been cleaned up and accounted for, we will commence post-ops leave (POL) for about 2/3 weeks (depending on entitlement) in late June/early July. In addition to POL we have also planned a period of Summer Block Leave in late August/early September to ensure that we begin to use up our accumulated leave. I anticipate that the SW Flight personnel will return from Afghanistan at the end of June and will take very similar leave periods.

Finally I would like to re-stress that these plans are likely to change. I have hesitated about stating them today because they have already changed twice since last week. However I did want to give you the earliest heads-up – please bear with us if they change again. Kind regards. Chris Berryman. Officer Commanding 15 Squadron RAF Regiment.

### **Section 2**

#### **A Flight on Tour**

A month or so into the tour and the past couple of weeks have been busy ones for the lads of A Flight. The Bulldogs have lived up to their expectations and are constantly breaking down, but due to our amazing efforts and the odd bit of help from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) of the Army, they have been up and running in no time. Problems have included things like road wheels coming off and overtaking the Bulldogs. Also Sergeant Perriostone and SAC “Jimmie” James almost launching themselves into the canal when their Bulldog grew a mind of its own (N.B. from “Jimmie” - !Quick thinking saved the lives of B Flight and some locals, awaiting my VC now - in your own time Queeny!!!). Due to long enduring patrols in the desert, exhausts have broken and the engines have overheated but it’s nothing the mighty A Flight can’t contend with. We have had some reason to celebrate with two birthdays already occurring - SAC Craig “Ash” Ashley and not forgetting our glorious leader Flying Officer Jon “The Crowbag Boss” Giffin. Not to say our work

stopped to celebrate but we're sure they both had good days when presented with home-made cards.

SAC Stebbings has left us to be at home when his wife for when his baby is born, on writing this, the baby hasn't arrived yet but we all wish him well and his wife the best. The Flight has also realised the joys of "Risk" the board (bored) game and Monopoly, which as all; we seem to play when we are not hard at work. Certain individuals are better than others... let's just say SAC "Geordie" Appleby is better off playing Hungry, Hungry Hippos!!!

Our two main efforts at the moment are OP Massive (as previously mentioned) and OP Bronze (getting an awesome tan) which seem to be running more smoothly than the Bulldogs. The Auxiliaries have been coping well (to those who are concerned they can't cope with the rigours of full-time soldering) especially with the amount of mickey taking off the Regular lads but it's all fun and games. SAC "Dicko" Dixon swears he'll remember every word said against him when (if) he becomes a Regiment officer. Anyway hope all is well back home and we are sure you are all probably enjoying the break from us ("especially my missus" - LAC Si Baldwin). LAC Baldwin, SAC Dixon and the rest of A Flight.

### **Section 3**

#### **B Flight on Tour**

An early start from the outset with a timing of 01.00 hours at the hangar set the tempo for the up and coming days and weeks in the Basrah province. With varying tasks and responsibilities the Squadron rose to the challenge and has followed in the prominent footsteps set by 51 Squadron. Having graduated Basic Training, completed Field Gunners, other course and then progressing onto 15 Squadron with the same lads, we were all together in Telic 13 being on our first operational tour.

We had all been through Pre-Deployment Training (PDT) yet still the term "Ops" and what to expect still held mystery and excitement. Sitting writing this now, in the next few hours B Flight will be patrolling with the use of Bulldog Armoured Fighting Vehicles, lightweight amphibious assault craft, incorporating a foot patrol with extraction by Merlin helicopter - all in a day's work. The Flight constantly rotates through a cycle providing a diverse tasking that keeps us all busy, constant interaction with the local people allows us not only to do our job but

to build relations that see us welcomed into villages and invited to spend time with prominent local figures. The friendships built in the area have helped in the gathering of information that ultimately aids the Regiment in being the professional fighting force that it is. As for myself, I have been part of leadership engagements, had afternoon tea with local sheiks, developed a complete knowledge of local geography, both by day and by night, played football with local children, visited schools and houses to deliver both educational and medical equipment, observed areas with snipers, travelled waterways on assault boats and "bondu-bashed" in WMIKs, still having downtime to train for physically demanding tasks and challenges. As for the coming days both 15 Squadron and myself welcome the challenge. SAC Taylor, B Flight, 15 Squadron. Per Ardua.

### **Section 4**

#### **C Flight on Tour**

Since our arrival at the COB and the departure of 51 Squadron, C Flight has settled into Camp Charlie, seen presumably the last of new arrivals and started the job it came out here to do.

The whole Flight has now had the chance to get out on the ground and mingle amongst the local population and all the amusement that comes with such a task. Included among this is turning down the countless offers of "jiggy jiggy" from the locals and attempting, sometimes failing, to prevent the swarms of children stealing everything not tied onto ourselves. The local children seem to perceive us as an endless supply of chocolate and footballs, despite usually leaving us disappointed at seeing neither chocolate nor footballs they still flock with enthusiasm every time they see us. There has also been the odd patrol with the comic effect of aiming to "surprise" the local population.

There has also been some interaction with media. Recently we escorted a Radio Five reporter out into one of the local towns, giving some of the lads the chance to express their views on live radio. Along with this there has been the odd radio interview take place successfully with nobody succeeding in embarrassing themselves too much or at least we haven't found out if they have yet. As usual, there have been many rumours flying round about our expected departure date from Iraq and with them changing daily, nothing can be taken as set in stone;

however despite this morale is still high and everyone is enjoying their time out here so far. E Roebuck.

## Section 5

### Comms Ops Section – the story so far

Providing a 24-hour Bowman support has been achieved but not with the usual ease. Moving bed spaces from Camp Charlie to Trenchard (only to be evicted by the Americans), to then moving into the Sigs. Bay. Setting up mattresses on the floor and literally sleeping where we work. When the water ran out on Trenchard Lines, the bottle of water and solar showers really added to the sleep where you can gypsy theme. If you ever have a problem, the Comms ops hobo's are not far from the place they work! The Comms Op Flight has been able to provide a good level of Bowman training to the troops that need and want it. We have received a great deal of interest especially from B Flight who have been keen to understand and use the best kit available to them, rather than just the kit that was given to them at the start of the tour. That has ensured the best communications to the CP making their lives and the lives of the CP staff a lot easier.

With the situation of the FT 1 Course looming and four of our top Bowman SACs on the list to go home, a lot of pressure has been placed on the people attached to 15 Squadron Comms Ops Flight. Having never really touched the Bowman system before PDT the attaches could soon be the people the troops turn to when they have a problem. The lads have taken to this in their stride and having undertaken a higher level of sigs training and fault-finding in their spare time, they are now well on their way to being able to provide a similar support to the troops that need it. The struggle to provide PMR radios for local communications around the COB has been met with a lot of unserviceable kit due to the harsh conditions, with batteries dropping like flies, agencies on the COB sick of seeing us, and the large amount of paperwork and demands that we bring them. Coping with just over one battery per PMR it is a struggle to keep the network and running.

### The Comms Ops Ice Pop Shop

With the weather getting hotter and the idea of something cold to eat increasing, the Comms ice pop shop was formed selling ice pops for the bargain price of 25 cents. Regular visits to

the NAAFI ensured the stocks were kept high, making it possible for the lads to eat ice pops for many months to come, especially when a few shady deals with the NAAFI staff increased stock to over 500 ice pops.

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I'm not surprised the lads are having problems with the Bowman radios for apart from anything else, it is too heavy. It was developed at a cost of £2.4 billion but is too heavy for the average soldier to carry. Troops using the Bowman digital radio have also found that they cannot talk to other communication systems deployed with allies on the battle-field in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although the units now using Bowman have found it significantly better than Clansman which it replaces, military personnel have complained that it was too heavy to be carried by troops in combat, and it is so complicated that it requires a substantial amount of training. However, some 3,400 additional Bowman tactical radios have been purchased by the MOD to meet demands to train and equip troops deploying to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan and the British Army is to widen the scope of an upgrade of its Bowman radio communications fit across its vehicle and man-portable radio fleets. Known as BCIP 5, the upgrade is already being rolled out to the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, the RAF Regiment and specialist Army signals units.

General Dynamics said in a statement the upgrade is planned to make the voice and data system "simpler for troops to use, provide enhanced battle planning tools, a more stable and robust tactical Internet, and improved situational awareness." A company spokesman said the Army has endorsed a timetable to field the latest increment of the system. He said he wasn't able to give timing details. One industry executive said that taking into account the training requirements for the upgraded software and hardware involved in BCIP 5, its first full use in Afghanistan is unlikely before 2011.

**Update to the 15 Squadron May Newsletter - The following information was enclosed with the newsletter as it was received after the newsletter had gone to press.**

The much awaited Support Weapons Flight tour of Afghanistan finally went ahead on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2009. With the first flight being delayed by a few hours, we eventually boarded a

C-17 aircraft and left Brize Norton, on a non-stop seven and a half hour trip to Camp Bastion, in Helmand Province. Once the aircraft was in flight, the lads spread themselves out wherever they could around the spacious airframe, laid out their roll mats and sleeping bags and got their heads down. As we approached Camp Bastion, the younger lads of the Flight were to experience their first tactical landing, in the dark, wearing body armour and helmet. SACs Tyler and Mackenzie provided the entertainment for the rest of the lads, as one didn't like flying and the other had never been in an aircraft before (so good experience for them). Our welcome to Afghanistan consisted of a bus journey to temporary accommodation where we got our heads down in a hot and noisy 100-man room. The first day of Reception Staging and Onward Integration (RSOI) started with a late start at mid-day, as we had landed in the early hours of the morning. We found ourselves receiving death by Power Point for the next eight hours, much of it we had already covered in Pre –Deployment Training. Day two was an opportunity to zero our personal weapons, where we also experienced our first acclimatisation period, consisting of a 1.5 kilometre mile tab to the range wearing full kit and carrying rifles. The shooting was the usual sketch for our lads, with all comfortably achieving the required standard.

A swift tab back to Bastion and we were on the move again to the transit accommodation. Luckily the Force Protection Company supplied a flat bed truck, so no humping or dumping our kit for the 3 kilometres between accommodations. Surprisingly the transit accommodation is rather good as the “all tented area” is new and well air-conditioned. On the third day the lads headed up to the training area where we could test out our skills on finding dummy Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Firstly we were shown a mixture of devices that have been used before in attacks against British Forces whilst on patrol in Helmand Province. We then moved onto a compound complex, which had been built to replicate a traditional Afghanistan home. Here we went through how to clear and enter compounds safely, in case the Taliban set traps. The afternoon ended with the lads moving down a man-made wadi and carrying out the drills they had been taught. We finished the training with an IED find and extraction exercise.

Then it was medical training and vehicle extraction training. Then it was back to the training lane to complete a night training exercise. The day ended with the Army instructor praising our sections, as the best at the clearance drills they had seen come through in the last seven weeks. This was a huge confidence boost for the younger, less experienced lads. Our fourth and final day of RSOI and once again we drew the short straw, which saw the Army getting a lift to the range and us having to tab once again. We started the morning off with a vehicle top cover shoot and then moving on to fire team; fire and manoeuvre ranges. On the fifth day we moved into the Normandy Company accommodation, were issued with additional operational equipment, including Osprey body armour. Since moving into the company lines we have focused on making our living accommodation as comfortable as possible. The tents have internet access and are air conditioned, but a little cramped at the moment. As SW Flight we have conducted 60 mm and 81 mm mortar ranges and the snipers have been blowing up fruit on the ranges with their high-powered rifles (plus some conventional targets). This activity was interspersed with the lads chasing local children who were trying to steal the spent cartridges, away from the ranges. The lads are also conducting driver training over the next few days and hopefully, by the time that you read this we will find ourselves out on the ground doing the job. The next couple of months look as though they are going to be very busy, but we will try to keep everyone at home up-to-date with events as they happen. Our next news update will include a number of photographs of the Force Protection Company accommodation where we live and work. Per Ardua. Corporal “Donny” Donaldson.

### **MoD builds Afghan village in Norfolk**

An Afghan village with a mosque, markets and suicide bombers has been unveiled by the Ministry of Defence - in the middle of Norfolk. The MoD has spent £14million building a replica Middle East settlement at Bridge Carr in the Stanford Training Area, near Thetford. Houses are arranged around a traditional courtyard and vegetable patch and the village is populated by volunteers dressed as insurgents in traditional Taliban robes. Islamic calls to prayer ring out from the mosque and the dusty streets are strewn with motorbikes, tires and carts. The smell of

food cooked by the villagers wafts through the streets and synthetic aromas, such as rotten meat, are pumped out. Designed to re-create conditions in Afghanistan, the village has been built on a 30,000 acre live fire site which covers two per cent of Norfolk. The area was originally a replica Nazi village built in 1942 and has previously been transformed to resemble settlements in Northern Ireland and Bosnia. Every British soldier sent to Afghanistan - an estimated 11,000 a year - will train at the facility. Lt Col Simon Lloyd, Commander of the Defence Training Estates for the Eastern region, believes the camp gives soldiers the best possible training. He said: "The place is magnificent. I've served in the Middle East and the likeness is uncanny. We've sourced props from all over the world. We've replicated everything but the heat as there's not much we can do about that in Norfolk. Every soldier that goes on active duty in Afghanistan, and some headed for Iraq, will come through our camp. It will make the shock of going to war much less and prepare a soldier to the very best of their ability."

The 12.5 acre village is arranged around 25 concrete-clad compounds with between four and 12 homes in each arranged around a courtyard with a vegetable patch, a well and a washing line. All the homes are decorated with rugs and pots and pans, and shops are open selling rice, kaftans and flip flops. The MoD employs Gurkhas who have done active service for the British and amputees from the charity Amputees for Action, to act as villagers, insurgents and injured soldiers. Lt Col Lloyd added: "I believe the new village gives us the best equipped training site in the UK. We're very proud. I can't fault it."

The troops will encounter every possible scenario at the village - from peace and quiet to suicide bombs. At one juncture the soldiers will round a corner to find a person caught in a bomb blast with missing limbs. Lt Col Lloyd said the idea was to ensure soldiers are used to such sights so they get on with saving lives, rather than reacting, when faced with the a real situation. Work started on the camp in December. The first troops to experience the meticulous level of detail, 11 Brigade, are set to arrive in two weeks' time. They are bound for Afghanistan. General Sir David Richards, Commander in Chief Land Forces, praised the camp. He said:

"These new training facilities mean that we will be giving our soldiers the very best

chance to succeed in today's complex operations and return home safely. We need to provide as realistic an environment as we can for our excellent fighting soldiers. They need to operate from the same type of place that they will use in Afghanistan and be put to the test in as realistic a manner as we can devise. They deserve nothing less. Training on these facilities will ensure that UK military personnel will continue to be trained to the highest possible standard prior to active duty." Ian Levett of Natural England said they have worked alongside the MoD to ensure it did not disrupt wildlife. He added: "Natural England has worked in close partnership with the Military on this project to ensure that they have been able to fulfill their responsibilities towards nature conservation at the same time as providing their training needs. This is a very special area for wildlife and it is a tribute to the Defence Training Estate that the natural environment has been given the prominence it has, alongside the training requirements."

### **RAF Regiment Wing Commander speaks of Iraq pride**

A Regiment Wing Commander has spoken of his pride in his men as British troops hand over the running of Iraq to the new government there. As part of the RAF Regiment that provided force protection at RAF Basrah Wing Commander Simon Sharples was in Iraq at the start of the allied invasion in 2003 and now commands the Force Protection Wing as 4,000 British troops left the country. Simon has witnessed the effect of the work the personnel under his command have been doing on the ground first hand. He said:

"I regularly visit village leaders and over time we have developed genuine trusting relationships. To me, the proof of the 'normalization' of Iraq is that, these days, my guys can go out and work alongside the Iraqi Police and Army and help to develop something close to normal policing roles, to deal with what we would consider to be normal law and order issues. The potential for this country is obvious, and I find that really exciting and to know my guys have had a significant hand in attaining that position is very satisfying". Simon lives with his wife and two children in Louth and has been in the RAF for 23 years. Previously he has served in Northern Ireland, the First Gulf War, the Balkans and Cambodia as a UN observer with the peace keeping force monitoring elections. "That,

undoubtedly, was one of the most fascinating periods of my career," said Simon. "What other job would have given me the opportunity to be involved in something like that?" He is currently taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the RAF to study. "I have been able to work towards completing my masters degree in leadership which is being sponsored by the RAF and has really helped me to develop my understanding of how to improve leadership training within the service."

### **Panther Command and Liaison Vehicles**

The first batch of Panther Command and Liaison Vehicles has been delivered to troops in Afghanistan, complete with the latest battle-ready upgrades. Weighing over seven tonnes, the Panther protected vehicle is fitted with the latest high-tech developments, including a remote-controlled weapon system that allows the user to operate a machine gun with a camera and joystick from inside its turret.



**Panther Command and Liaison Vehicle**

It can operate in all weather conditions, day and night, using thermal imaging equipment that 'sees' in the dark, and the vehicles are protected against a range of threats including small arms and blast and anti-personnel mines. Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, Quentin Davies, said: "Panther is an extremely tough, air-transportable and agile vehicle which will provide commanders on the ground with a vital asset suited to a variety of roles and operational environments. We have made a number of essential modifications since its entry into service which have been key to ensuring we deliver on our commitment to provide a vehicle which is fit for our front line troops. I am confident that through our work with industry we have a vehicle which will be very effective in all sorts of situations." Panther, which was delivered to 1 Mechanized Brigade for training last summer,

has undergone design adjustments following a series of hot weather trials to make them ready for operations in Afghanistan. These include a rear view camera for improved situational awareness, a protected engine compartment, the addition of a fourth crew member and theatre-specific electronic counter-measures.

The vehicles will be first used by both the RAF Regiment and the Army's Close Support Logistics Regiment. More vehicles were en route to theatre last month for deployment on the front line. The modifications to Panther were carried out at BAE Systems Global Combat Systems' Newcastle production plant. Over 60 Panthers have received the Theatre Entry Standard modifications and a number of these vehicles have now been delivered to theatre, with the remainder being made available for training. More than 400 Panthers are being assembled by BAE Systems under a £160m contract. It is intended that the Panther will replace vehicles including Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle (Tracked), Fighting Vehicle 430, Saxon, and Land Rover Truck Utility Medium. Panther is air-transportable and can be underslung beneath a Chinook helicopter. It is armed with a 7.62 mm L7 general purpose machine gun-equipped remote weapon station, which can be upgraded to a 12.7mm weapon if required, and an appropriate day/night sighting system. The armoured citadel provides crew protection from small arms fire and blast mines.

### **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.

**"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. 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. 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.

If anyone knows of any other books, please let me know.

## NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM (NMA) UPDATE

### Basrah Airport Memorial Wall

In last month's newsletter I published the news that the plaques to the fallen on a wall at Basra airport will be dismantled and the wall rebuilt among the tranquility of the National Memorial Arboretum. The plan is to replicate the memorial wall in Basra as closely as possible and the MOD is working with the Arboretum to finalise the design.



### The Memorial Wall at Basrah Airport

The proposed design will incorporate the marble centre-stone of the Basra Memorial Wall, which is engraved with a quotation from the Bible's Book of Wisdom "Honourable age does not depend on length of days, nor is number of years a true measure of life". The wall has now been dismantled brick by brick by members of 37 Armoured Engineer Squadron and will be transported to the NMA. Iraq's Government is making a contribution towards the cost in gratitude for the sacrifice of the British servicemen during the six years, one month and 11 days of the mission. Work on the foundations of the wall is likely to start at the Arboretum later this year. It is hoped that the memorial wall itself will be completed by July next year when there will be a dedication service to unveil the completed memorial. Peter Cleminson, National Chairman of The Royal British Legion, which supports the National Memorial Arboretum, said: "The Memorial Wall gave servicemen and women in southern Iraq a very personal way of remembering colleagues that had been killed. By choosing to bring this Wall to the Arboretum, which sits in the very heart of the country, it will become a place where family and friends can also now come to mourn and remember."

### Royal Naval Patrol Memorial

Brave sailors who helped keep the seas free of German mines will soon have their own memorial, thanks to the efforts of the fund-raisers of the Pershore members of the Royal Naval Minesweepers Association, who have helped to

raise £7,000 to fund a memorial dedicated to the Royal Naval Patrol Service at the National Arboretum. Shipmate and standard bearer Arthur Young recently completed a 12-mile sponsored walk along with other activities, helped to raise the money needed to install the memorial to the thousands of men who served on minesweepers during the Second World War. Mr Young said:

“Most of these men were taken off the fishing trawlers, which were converted. They were known as the Harry Tate Navy because they didn't have the proper kit. The phrase ‘Harry Tate’ was slang for ‘amateur’ in the Royal Navy at the time. They were recognised by Winston Churchill in 1945 with a silver badge, which was used as an emblem. They were very proud of this.” The big, bronze memorial at the Arboretum will carry that emblem, but will not feature any names. Instead it is dedicated to all 5,000 men who served with the patrol service during the war.

The memorial's official dedication took place at the Arboretum at 11.00 a.m. on Sunday, August 23, the 70th anniversary of the creation of the Mine Service. The name 'Harry Tate' dates back to the First World War and was used as jargon for anything clumsy and amateurish. It originated from an old music hall entertainer who used the name Harry Tate but whose real name was Ronald Hutchison (1872-1940). Harry Tate would play the clumsy comic who couldn't get to grips with various contraptions. His act included a car that gradually fell apart around him. He made his debut at the Oxford Music Hall in 1895, and became well known for his impressions of performers such as Dan Leno, George Robey, and Eugene Stratton.

Success came with his comedy sketch “Motoring”, in which he played the part of a new car owner trying to repair it. His other sketches included Running an Office, Billiards and Fishing. Several catch phrases he used became popular in Britain in the 1930s, including "Goodbye-eee", "How's your Father" (used as an escape clause when he was unable to answer a question) and "I don't think", used sarcastically (as in "He's a nice chap – I don't think"). He used his bristling moustache to express all kinds of emotion by twitching or moving it. Harry Tate died in 1940 as a result of injuries suffered in an air raid during the London Blitz. He is buried at St Mary's, Northolt. For a time, his son Ronnie continued the act as Harry Tate junior.

## **The Royal Naval Patrol Service**

### **The “Harry Tate” Navy**

The Royal Naval Patrol Service or Harry Tate's Navy, as it was more popularly known, was a very special service indeed with its own rules and regulations and the unique distinction of having its own exclusive Silver Badge, worn by sea-going officers and ratings alike. Its headquarters were at Sparrow's Nest, the municipal pleasure ground at Lowestoft, and its fighting fleet consisted of hundreds of requisitioned trawlers, whalers, drifters, paddle steamers, yachts, tugs and the like - 'Minor War Vessels' - as the Admiralty called them. Armed with ancient and out-of-date weaponry, they set out from Lowestoft to fight the Second World War in every corner of the globe. The RNPS fought in all theatres of the war, from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the Far East, involved in convoy duty, minesweeping and anti-submarine work. Most particularly they kept the British coast clear of the mines that were wreaking havoc with merchant ships. One RNPS member, Lieutenant Richard Stannard won the Victoria Cross while in command of the Hull trawler “Arab” during the Namsos campaign.

In the accounts already published about the Battle of the Atlantic and the long struggle against the U-boats, attention is not unnaturally focused more upon famous destroyer captains and the dashing individuals who later commanded the fast, well-equipped ships of the specially formed submarine-hunting groups, such as Walker of Western Approaches. Little of the limelight falls upon the anti-submarine trawlers of the RN Patrol Service. Yet these humble, unglamorous little ships with their slow speed, limited armament and comparatively untrained crews, were to prove just as much of a headache to the Nazi U-boat fleet as their bigger sisters in the Navy's general service. By the start of WW2, the name “Harry Tate” had been adopted by the Royal Navy. It came to mean anything amateur or incompetent and was used for the purpose of poking fun at the trawlers and drifters of the Royal Naval Patrol Service. In true RNPS style they took it on the chin and the title of Harry Tate's Navy was proudly adopted. As the war went on it was to become a worthy password for courage.

**Future Events at the NMA**  
**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009**

A memorial is to be unveiled at a ceremony to honour dog handlers and their dogs that were killed in Northern Ireland while working with the Army Dog Handlers Unit. The Red Paw, a tiny badge, is worn by dog handlers alongside their regimental badge when working as part of the Army Dog Unit, Northern Ireland. They would like to find more handlers before August 1st so they, too, will have the opportunity to take part in the final event of the unit's history. For more details, log on to <mwww.armydogunit-ni.co.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.

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2009**

An event to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the final flights of "Operation Plainfare" the Berlin Airlift. More information is available by visiting [www.veterans-uk.info](http://www.veterans-uk.info) or telephoning 0800 1692277.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

The annual Ride to the Wall to remember all the troops that have died on duty since World War II. The Inaugural Ride which took place last October, saw more than 2,500 motorcyclists ride together to the National Memorial Arboretum.

For further information please contact: Martin Dickinson, Founder, Chairman RTTW Organising Committee by email at [martindickinson@aol.com](mailto:martindickinson@aol.com) or by telephone on 07740871983.

**BERLIN AIRLIFT VETERANS  
REMEMBERED**

Events to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Berlin Airlift, and the outstanding

contribution of UK Armed Forces throughout the campaign began on 12<sup>th</sup> May in Berlin. Forty British veterans visited the former RAF Gatow Airfield in Berlin where they operated from during the June 1948 to May 1949 campaign.

The veterans then travelled to the Airlift Memorial at Templehof Airport where an international commemoration took place. Wreaths were laid on behalf of the countries involved in the Airlift. Citizens of Berlin stood alongside veterans of the campaign from the UK, USA, France, Australia, Canada and New Zealand for a minute's silence to remember those who lost their lives in ensuring others did not. 39 personnel from the UK were killed in the operation. Air Chief Marshal Sir Glenn Torpy, who attended the event, said:

"The Royal Air Force and the United States Air Force, supported by civilian and Allied aircrew from around the world, tackled the seemingly impossible task of keeping Berliners alive during the 10 month blockade of their city. This was a difficult, unglamorous and dangerous undertaking – the biggest humanitarian operation ever conducted. The operation demonstrated the strategic importance of air power but also the West's determination to prevent Soviet expansionism in the confused early days of the Cold War. The consequences of failure for the people of Berlin and Western Europe would have been profound and I therefore salute the achievements of everyone involved in the operation." Airlift veteran Geoff Smith, Chairman of the British Berlin Airlift Association, said: "Today brings back many memories of Operation Plainfare. Standing alongside my fellow comrades and the people of Berlin, I am so proud of what we achieved sixty years ago. Those who lost their lives are not forgotten and our success truly was a defining moment in the history of the Cold War." British aircraft flew more than 175,000 trips to and from the city as the RAF, supported by civilian pilots and Army teams on the ground, faced the most challenging of conditions in ensuring that the two million people living in Berlin did not starve or freeze to death when their supplies were cut off by the Soviets. Events will culminate on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September, the anniversary of one of the final flights, with a commemorative event organised by the Ministry of Defence at the Berlin Airlift Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Service veterans, those who supported from the civilian population, and their families, are urged to apply for tickets to attend to what is likely to be the last major commemoration for this remarkable endeavour. For further information on the events visit [www.veterans-uk.info](http://www.veterans-uk.info) or call 0800 169 2277.

### **Campaign Lapel Badges**

The Branch Quartermaster Tom Magee, has a quantity of the following lapel campaign badges for sale at £2.00 each plus postage. In addition, he is hoping to add campaign medals for Kenya and Oman. If anyone is interested in buying one or more of these, please contact Tom. His contact details are on the back of this newsletter.

**Afghanistan – Falklands – Cyprus –  
Palestine – Suez – Northern Ireland –  
Iraq – Malaya – Korea – World War Two  
– The Gulf – Vietnam - Normandy.**

Well that's all for now, keep smiling if you can.

*Malcolm*

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



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Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009 Midlands Fest of Rem.  
 Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009 Remembrance Sunday  
 Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009 Remembrance Day  
 Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009 Branch Night  
 Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009 B'ham Poppy Ball  
 Sat 28<sup>th</sup>-Sun 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009 B'ham Int Tattoo NIA  
 Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November 09 St Andrew's Day  
 Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 09 Branch Night  
 Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010 Branch Night  
 Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010 68<sup>th</sup> Ann RAF Regiment  
 Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010 Branch Service at NMA  
 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010 68<sup>th</sup> Ann RAF Regiment  
 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010 **Branch Night and AGM**  
 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010 Branch Subs Due  
 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2010 Branch Night  
 Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2010 St George's Day  
 Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010 ANZAC Day Parade

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009 Branch 21<sup>st</sup> Ann.y  
 Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2009 Reg.t Service at NMA  
 Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009 Branch Night  
 Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2009 Branch Night  
 Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September 09 Branch Night  
 Fri 2<sup>nd</sup> – Mon 5<sup>th</sup> Oct 2009 Ass.n Autumn Reunion  
 Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009 Merchant Navy Day  
 Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009 Branch Night  
 Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 2009 Battle of Trafalgar Day

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