



The Waggoner

The newsletter of the RASC & RCT



Issue 21 - March 2022



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President of the RASC & RCT Council

Brigadier Paul Evans OBE DL

I am delighted this edition of the Waggoner confirms that we are gradually returning to a situation where we can once again meet to enjoy each other's company and better support our members, particularly those members and families who are in most need. I remain grateful to all who are working so hard throughout our family to maintain our Branches and indeed grow membership.

As we hopefully return to a more normal programme of activities, it would seem appropriate to highlight the support which we continue to receive from RHQ The Royal Logistic Corps and the RLC Association Trust, which I am delighted to say remains impressive. We enjoy their confidence and have developed a reputation for being both reasonable and prudent in our requests for financial assistance. The RASC & RCT Council continue to oversee all activities and Council members represent us on all of the major RLC committees. I represent you all as a Trustee on the RLC Association Trust committee. Our hardworking, diligent and most capable Secretaries provide quite excellent support to members and families and work hard to maintain an extremely effective relationship with RHQ staff. I can assure you that we benefit so

much from their positive approach and their enthusiasm to respond to all of our many and various requests for assistance.

As we look forward with renewed confidence, can I please encourage all members to participate in Branch, Regional and Corps events during 2022, particularly during Corps Weekend 9-10 July 2022.



“ It would seem appropriate to highlight the support which we continue to receive from RHQ The Royal Logistic Corps and the RLC Association Trust, which I am delighted to say remains impressive

Front cover image: Colonel Nigel Gilbert greets The Duchess of Cornwall at the Field of Remembrance

■ We are looking forward to our Corps flags flying once again outside St Michael and St George on Sunday 10th July 2022

Chairman RASC & RCT Association

Colonel Nigel Gilbert

I think that the majority of us are glad to say farewell to 2021 with all the difficulties that COVID brought in one way or another (including the Gilberts who tested positive on Christmas Eve - not on Santa's gift list!) and with the hope that 2022 will bring some stability to our lives despite the many problems facing our country not least the friction between Russia and NATO members over the future of Ukraine.

Our Corps Association continues to be on a sound footing with a strong membership. Of particular note is the newly created RCT Riders' Branch whose membership is over 500! That said, one of our oldest branches, Worthing Branch has had to close due to a very small membership and arrangements are being made to lay up their Standard at some point during this year.

Despite COVID, September saw a number of gatherings. To mention but a few, 18/26 Squadron held a reunion on 4 September 2021; Perthshire Branch held their annual BBQ on the 11-12 September 2021, 65 Squadron held their reunion on the 18 September 2021 and 38 Squadron from Mulheim days held their reunion on the 25 September 2021.

October was particularly busy. Our Secretary, who is a keen motorcyclist and is President elect of the RCT Riders' Branch, attended their AGM and Ride to The Wall at the National Arboretum on 2 October 2021. Whilst he was getting soaked riding up to the event on the M4 and M42, both Maureen and I remained dry and warm in our car on the A303 driving through torrential rain to Taunton for the 60th Anniversary of the Norton Manor Branch which had been postponed twice due to COVID. It was an exceptionally well

organised event held in the Holiday Inn thanks to the hard work of Mike Mason and Paul '2 tanners' Shilling. It was a pleasure to present both of them with well deserved Certificates of Merit, much to the applause of the 92 attendees.

The Branch members are nicknamed the RASCALS and proudly wore their unique tie. It was very uplifting to see the bond of friendship that has lasted for six decades.

Amongst the members attending were Lt Col David Owen and Lt Col Paul French, both well-known Corps personalities and two Regional Chairmen of the Association, Lieutenant Colonel Terry Byrne and Des Wilson. On a personal note, it was good to meet up with David Williams who I last met in 1966 in 23 Tk Tptr Coy RASC where I was his Platoon Commander!

On 9 October 2021, the Gilberts and the Moores attended the Amphibious Branch Reunion in Barnstable. Their President is Lieutenant Colonel David Pepperell. It was a most enjoyable evening and the hotel staff could not have looked after us better. The dinner was exceptional, bringing back memories of Sergeants' Messes Christmas style buffets from 'the old days'. 16 October 2021 brought together the NE Region for their Annual Dinner and AGM and was



■ On Parade at the Field of Remembrance

attended by our Vice Chairman who is also their Regional Chairman, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Poole. On the weekend 22-23 October 2021, I attended the Annual Tank Transporter Reunion at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool organised by Leigh Williams. It was more informal than recent years, due to COVID, but nonetheless enjoyed by all, including Major Tom and Sally Broadfoot who served with me in 7 Regiment in the early 1980s.

As in previous years we were represented at the Garden of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey on the 11 November 2021. Covid restrictions on numbers meant that only myself, our Association Secretary and the Secretary of the RASC and RCT Council, Lieutenant Colonel Paul

Duncan attended. HRH The Duchess of Cornwall reviewed the Regimental Plots and commented on the number of our crosses. The Cenotaph Parade on Sunday 14 November 2021 and saw our largest contingent to date, which was capped at 70 marchers. We were also joined by 3 RCT capbadged Chelsea Pensioners.

Despite the rising number of cases of the Omicron variant of COVID in late November, bringing a degree of worry for social gatherings, the Aldershot Branch pressed ahead with their Christmas Dinner and Dance on 4 December 2021. Attendance was at maximum capacity and the Guests of Honour were Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Knowles and Geraldine. The Omicron factor meant that the visit to the Royal Hospital Chelsea for Christmas Grants to our capbadged In Pensioners was limited to two attendees, myself and our Secretary. We were well hosted in the Chelsea Pensioners' Club and overstayed our allotted time, not leaving until late afternoon!

There have been a number of Committee Meetings of one sort or another during the last few months, including RLC Forming Corps Associations Committee which met on 2 September 2021 and separately the inaugural meeting of the RLC Association Committee on 10 November 2021 to which the Chairmen of the Forming Corps Associations were invited to share ideas. The

meeting was chaired by Major General Ian Copeland. What is quite clear is that The RLC has still to draw up a workable plan on how it is going to deal with fraternity for the veteran community, which in turn will be able to take on the responsibility for the Association members of the Forming Corps. My personal view is that the RLC Corps RSM should take the lead in conjunction with the RSMs of the Regular and Reserve Regiments. There is already a synergy between a number of our branches and reserve regiments.

Your Committee of Management last met at Worthy Down on 13 October 2021 and it was a 'full house'. For many attendees it was their first opportunity to see the new RLC Museum. It gave me the opportunity to present Lieutenant Colonel Knowles with an engraved silver photograph frame containing the musical score of our Corps March on behalf of all members of our Association. It was a long overdue 'thank you' which was originally intended to be presented on Corps Sunday in 2020 and then 2021, but Covid got in the way! The Committee of Management meet twice a year and I am most grateful to all the Regional Chairmen for their comprehensive updates on what is happening in their regions. Both Lieutenant Colonel Robin Moore and I look forward to attending the Regional AGMs later in the year.

Corps Weekend this year will be held 9-10 July 2022 (note the slightly earlier date due to the Farnborough Air Show). As is custom, the Association Dinner and Dance will be held on the Saturday evening at a new venue, the Lakeside Hotel in Frimley Green. This is due to the temporary closure of Potters Hotel to the general public. The Church Service will be at St Michael and St George's and lunch will be back at the Lakeside in conjunction with the Officers' Club, widows and their families. It will be three years since we last gathered together, so I do hope that as many of you as possible will make an effort to come along and meet up with friends and colleagues from years gone by.



■ Presentation to Lt Col Jonathan Knowles

Chairman RASC & RCT Officers' Club

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Duncan, Secretary

Reflecting on 2021, one could be forgiven for having the over-riding memory of cancellations and missed chances to meet up and share the fellowship that we all hold so dear. While this is certainly true for the early part of 2021, it is notable how the spirit and enterprise of the Officers' Club

and its associated organisations emerged throughout the summer and autumn and proved that having continued to organise events for their members and seen them cancelled throughout the restrictions, they were now really ready to lay on a party!

In August, the Over 90s Lunch was held at Regent's Park Barracks Officers' Mess in London. This was our first time

there; previous events being held in Deepcut. The RASC & RCT Officers' Club has over fifty members who are over 90 years old and your Secretary spoke to every one of them to alert them to the upcoming function. It was striking, and very humbling, to be met with an enthusiastic response at every turn, where each was delighted that contact had been made and all displayed a keen interest in the latest news

gleaned from the regular delivery of the Waggoner and Waggon Master. As could only be expected, while the spirit in every case was willing, the reality of old age and distance meant that, in the event only eight attended a superb function. The Mess staff bent over backwards to display their pride in the facility and welcomed those present, over 90s and Council hosts alike, with a delicious lunch and provided a memorable occasion. We will return to such a welcoming and interesting venue in 2022.

The Taunton Curry Lunch took place at the Officers' Mess, Norton Manor camp in September and was, as usual, very well attended. This was the first such event conducted remotely by your Secretary, where the delightful setting and wonderful weather provided the highlight of the day as usual. Next year's event will be even better, returning to the expected format and with a special 'treat'.

In October, the Officers' Club Dinner took place at the Lakeside International Hotel, Frimley Green, having been postponed twice due to the pandemic. This was a new location in which to hold the event and, for the first time, officers were given the opportunity to attend with wives or partners. The event was a singular success, where all concerned proved that they were fed up with lock downs and extremely glad to be able to socialise once again! Laughter prevailed, nearly drowning out the excellent band, with an excellent menu and superb service on offer as the wine generously flowed.

Our attendance at the Field of Remembrance was cut to just four attendees, due to a mix of Covid restrictions and structural work taking place on the Abbey. Nevertheless, the RASC & RCT managed to snag the VVIP for a photo opportunity as can be seen on other pages. There was an excellent officer representation at the Cenotaph march past, amongst a contingent of nearly seventy RASC & RCT marchers.

There were more than eighty attendees at the Officers' Luncheon Club held that the

RAG in November, where it was noticeable the average age of the attendees had reduced markedly! No names, no pack drill but the festivities continued until many people's late train home.

On 11 December 2021, the Waggon Club Christmas Lunch took place at the Cavalry & Guards Club which proved to be a well-attended, happy and lively occasion, in spite of a possible further lockdown looming, understandably causing a number of cancellations. Following such a success a larger attendance is expected next year.

On 23 January 2022, the Cyprus Waggoners hosted Major General RJ Thomson CBE DSO, Commander British Forces Cyprus, at a Waggoners Luncheon where he expressed his "excitement at deepening the links between British Forces Cyprus and our gallant veterans" who he considers his "eyes on the ground in the community."

It can be seen therefore that

2021 actually had much to offer our members and that a significant amount of them were more than ready to re-acquaint themselves with old friends and attend occasions that continue to have a special place in their calendars. There is much to look forward to in 2022 as the associated organisations continue to spring back to life. The calendar has already been sent to members and it is hoped that numbers attending the events will continue to swell as we emerge from such a difficult period.

Finally, we thank Colonel Colin Constable for his careful guidance and unstinting work to ensure that the Officers' Club has remained so relevant and successful during his long service as our Chairman. Colin stepped down in October and it is hoped that he will enjoy some well-earned rest and plenty of golf. He assures us that he will continue to keep a keen interest in the Club and remain involved in all its activities.



■ A very illustrious top table



■ Terry Byrne "caught in the headlights"

Secretary RASC & RCT Association

Lieutenant Colonel Robin Moore

Our activities have restarted in earnest and hopefully the difficulties of 2020 and 2021 are now behind us. A sample of recent events are in this issue of the Waggoner, but these are only in fact a small selection. 2022 looks like it will be a busy year, with a full programme of functions, some of which have not taken place for three years. The Scottish Region Dinner Dance in Perth at the end of May and our Corps Weekend on 9-10 July 2022 are two of the more significant meetings that we have to look forward to soon.

The loosening of Covid restrictions and return to near normality does not mean that life has been without stress. At the end of November, Aberdeen Branch kindly invited Jenny and I to their excellent St Andrew's Day Dinner. However, this coincided with the weekend when Storm Arwen hit. Red travel warnings and a three-hour wait on the

runway at Gatwick started an eventful journey – which took nearly as long as flying with the RAF. Arriving in Aberdeen, we were greeted with snow and power cuts; fortunately, John Cunningham the Branch Chairman met us at the Airport and managed to navigate a safe passage through traffic light-free streets.

Despite the best efforts of Storm Arwen a very successful and enjoyable dinner was held, well done Aberdeen Branch. On a similar vein, the Ride to the Wall (RTTW) weekend coincided with the fuel shortages at the beginning of October. This journey involved heading off to the National Memorial Arboretum, passing empty fuel station after empty fuel station and eventually going past “the point of no-return” – Warwick services have never looked so good.

The real challenges have been met by our branch and regional committees who have kept our branches going

despite having to cancel and reschedule events time and again. All are volunteers - they are our unsung heroes. It is good to see routine meetings restarting and even better to see our stalwart committee members being recognised for their efforts. We have too many great people to mention, but I will single out Belle Jenkinson who has stepped down as Branch Secretary of Tamworth Branch after many years of dedicated and selfless service due to relocating to Bristol; Andy Davidson presented her

with a most well-deserved Certificate of Merit at the Branch's 2021 Annual Dinner. At the Buller Branch AGM on the eve Remembrance Sunday, I had the pleasure of handing a less auspicious award to Ken Blake from Buller Branch – don't ask.

Remembrance proved a busy period, quite rightly The RBL left the final decisions regarding the Cenotaph Dispersal to the “last safe moment” which gave us the best chance of holding a full-scale parade and was the right call. However, it did leave the requirement for some fast footwork to ensure that our largest ever contingent were all given instructions and tickets in time. We were oversubscribed and every indication is that the same will be the case for 2022. Anyone wishing to march with our Cenotaph contingent on Sunday 13 November 2022



■ Mrs Belle Jenkins being presented with a Certificate of Merit by Major Andy Davidson, Wales and Western Chairman

should pass their name to me via their branch. If this is not possible, do email or write to me directly at the addresses on the cover of the Waggoner.

This year's Corps Weekend celebrations are due to take place on the weekend 9-10 July 2022 in



■ John Cunningham, Jenny Moore and George Fenton

Andy Davidson presented her

Aldershot. We will hold a full programme including a Band Concert, Dinner Dance, Church Service and Sunday Lunch. The only planned change is that the Dinner Dance and Sunday Lunch have changed venue to the Lakeside Hotel in Frimley Green (about four miles from St Michael and St George). A detailed instruction which includes the full programme and application forms has been issued to branches. However, if you wish to attend and you are not in contact with your branch or no longer have a branch, please email or write to me at the address on the front cover and I will send you the details.

Member's data - Many members have already returned a "Member's Personal Data and Consent Form" which was enclosed in Issue 20 of the Waggoner and I am most grateful for these. However, there are still a significant number we have not heard from, so another form is enclosed in this issue – if you have not already do so, or are not sure, please fill this in and

return it. You should note that this is a two-sided form, so do remember to fill in the back and sign. Also, because this form is the same for both the Association and Officers' Club, do not worry about the mention of Officers' Club in the title.

Waggoner contributions – It would be most help full if those providing future contributions send photographs as

individual JPEG images at the highest resolution available. This will allow us to take best advantage of our new publishing format. If you have any problem doing this, please contact me and I will assist you with uploading photographs to a file transfer site.

Finally, do keep safe and well – I look forward to meeting many of you in the remainder of 2022.



■ Presenting Ken Blake with an Oscar that looks very gnome shaped

Veterans Identity Card Update



Many readers will be aware that personnel who have left the Armed Forces since December 2018 have been "automatically" issued with veteran's identity cards, allowing them to maintain a tangible link to their career in the forces, easily verify their service to the NHS, local authority and charities, helping them to access support and services where needed.

In February 2019, it was promised that all veterans who had left the forces prior to December 2018 would be able to apply for a Veteran's Identity

Card by the end of 2019. Because this date is now long passed, an update was respectfully sought from the Defence People Secretariat at the MOD and a reply has been received, a summary of this is: "Her Majesty's Government has the greatest respect for our veterans...the cards have a two-phase rollout, with Service leavers as the first phase already receiving one as part of the discharge process. For phase two, which is the extension of the scheme for existing veterans who served prior to 2018, we are currently developing a solution to ensure that veterans get access to the current and future services they require while preventing fraudulent applications. This is taking longer than we would like, but we are making progress and hope to provide an update on this shortly. Updates on the Veterans' ID card scheme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-veterans-id-cards-rolled-out-to-service-leavers>".

Please be assured that a veteran does not require a recognition or ID card to prove their status or to access veteran-related services or discounts. Veteran status can be verified by the veteran themselves or any veterans' service by contacting Veterans UK, whose contact details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/veterans-uk-contact-us>. Further updates will be included in future issues of the Waggoner.

Menin Gate Road Trip

Early in November 2021 I had the privilege and honour along with a few friends to take part in the Last Post ceremony which is held daily at the Menin Gate in Ypres. The trip was two years in the planning due to COVID-19 forcing us to cancel twice earlier in the year. The road trip saw five like-minded veterans including myself and my old 7 Tank Transporter Regiment friend Dave Williams, along with Darren "Sinbad" Storey who I first met whilst at 1 ADTR in Bunde - an enthusiastic veteran who through his antics kept us laughing throughout. Darren volunteered to drive the minibus, this offer was gladly accepted and appreciated by all.

We were joined by former RMP Dee Fielding and ex-Scots Guard Ian Murphy, great people however this is for the Waggoner so that's enough about them.

The trip began with a stopover at Dunkirk; a visit the Op Dynamo Museum which is highly recommended and a wander around the nearby coastal defenses at "Batterie de Leffrinckouke" in which the inner child was brought out in all of us, some more than others. All I can say is watch your footing and mind your head or you'll take a tumble as I did or bump your head as David did.

While transiting to Ypres we made a detour to Mont-Bernanchon Military

Cemetery so that I could pay my own personal respects to my great uncle John Kelly who fell on 22 April 1918 aged only 20.

Once at Ypres Dave Williams was nominated as tour guide having been there previously. Once settled into a lovely apartment not far from the Town Hall, we visited a number of cemeteries along with The Hooze Crater, museum and Hill 60 and Hill 62 - known as Sanctuary Wood. I can honestly say that every one of us was moved and we all shed a tear at the sheer numbers of graves that blanketed the landscape echoing the loss of so many lives.

At the Hooze Crater Cemetery I was taken aback by the first grave I visited; this contained the remains of six servicemen "KNOWN UNTO GOD". The cemetery itself contained nearly 6,000 fallen, of which 3,500 were unidentified.

On the Saturday evening we attended the Menin Gate and watched the Last Post ceremony as spectators. The location with the sounds of the Last Post echoing around the walls, beautifully played by volunteers from the Last Post Association, is moving and awe inspiring.

As we all belong to different Veteran's Clubs in the

North-West, we hadn't planned to take part in the ceremony, however when we asked the officials if we could pay our respects the following evening and lay a wreath, they were very accommodating allowing us to take part. We

were truly privileged; we were



■ On parade at the Menin Gate

informed that we were one of the first groups to attend from the UK since the beginning of the COVID pandemic.

The silent crowd waited for the stroke of eight o'clock underneath the Menin Gate. Then the volunteer buglers raised their instruments to play the Last Post. Nothing quite prepares you for the powerful emotion of experiencing this moving ceremony first hand. We marched up in silence, laid our wreath and paid our respects.

As a veteran I would wholeheartedly recommend a visit to the beautiful city of Ypres, the officials and locals were so accommodating and friendly towards us. It made for a trip that all five of us will never forget. I'd do it again in a heartbeat. "LEST WE FORGET".

Terry McKibben



■ Dunkirk Beach Memorial



■ Operation Dynamo Museum

Dedication of the Lisbon Maru Memorial

On 3 October 2021, over 650 people attended a service at the National Memorial Arboretum, in Staffordshire, to remember the 828 Prisoners of War (POWs) who perished during the Lisbon Maru incident of 2 October 1942. During the service, a new memorial was unveiled by Vice Admiral John McAnally CB LVO, Vice Patron of The Royal Naval Association. The RASC and RCT Association was represented by our Wales and Western Region Chairman, Major Andy Davidson.

The Lisbon Maru was a Japanese freighter requisitioned as a troop transporter. Armed fore and aft, it set sail from Hong Kong in late September 1942 carrying nearly 800 troops. It also carried 1,816 British POWs to be taken to Japan as slave labour, but had no markings to show their

presence, and was therefore a legitimate target for allied attack. On the morning of 1 October 1942, it was torpedoed by USS Grouper, an American submarine, and holed below the waterline. The Americans were unaware that there were POWs on board. After the torpedo attack the hatches were battened down on the three cargo holds where the

POWs were crowded in cramped and squalid conditions, and for the next 24 hours they suffered in hot, airless conditions with no food, water, fresh air or latrines and dysentery was rife.

As the Lisbon Maru was sinking, the POWs who were now sealed in the holds realised that their Japanese guards intended for them to go down with the ship so they began to plan their escape. Lt Hargreaves Howell, RASC, forced an exit using a butcher's knife that one of the POWs had somehow

secreted aboard.

He was able to remove some of the planks and to cut open the cover providing a gap sufficient for some men to get out. Lt Howell, Lt Potter (St John's Ambulance Brigade) and a group of soldiers then got onto the upper deck and although a number including Lt Potter were shot, they managed to overcome the remaining guards

who were on the bridge. It is certain that many of the 970 survivors owed their lives to the actions of Lt Howell.

No RASC soldiers were lost on the Lisbon Maru, however very fittingly the RASC badge is displayed on the memorial alongside those of the units who lost personnel.



■ Believed to be the only surviving photograph of the sinking of the Lisbon Maru, taken from a Japanese naval ship around 08.00hrs on 2 October 1942 (Credit: National Archives)



■ Major Andy Davidson having laid the Association's wreath

The Norton Manor Group 60th Anniversary Reunion

The Return of The RASCALS

We finally made it! On the weekend 1-3 October 2021, at long last, we commemorated the 60th Anniversary of the arrival of the Junior Leaders Battalion RASC at Norton Manor. In particular we remembered the 37 boy soldiers who did it the hard way marching 120 miles from St Lucia Barracks in Bordon to Norton Manor Camp near Taunton in Somerset.

The Norton Manor Group is comprised of former RASC Junior Leaders and Permanent Staff who served at Norton Manor Camp from the Battalion's arrival in April 1961 until the rebadging to RCT in July 1965 – "The RASC years". Junior Leaders were informally dubbed RASC Apprentice Leaders giving them the unofficial nomenclature of RASCALS, a term we have been proud to adopt. Our Battalion emblem of two matchstick figures (representing Drivers and Clerks) with halos and devil-like tails gave rise to the little RASCALS' image or "saints and sinners" as it was often referred to. Aged between 15 and 17, many of us did our best to justify the rascal image, hence our 60th Anniversary Reunion became known as the return of the RASCALS.

The concept of holding a 60th Anniversary Reunion event was raised in 2018. However, the arrival of COVID-19 in March 2020 disrupted our plans, and our reunion was postponed, in fact the event had to be rescheduled three more times before we could eventually settle the final date. We then faced another setback when 40 Cdo announced that MOD restrictions on visits to operational military establishments would remain in force. After an intense exchange of emails and telephone calls, the Commanding Officer granted special permission to allow our members access to the Camp, sadly without our ladies. We also had to curtail our planned programme of a ceremonial march-in led by the Band of the Royal Marines plus lunch and a tour of the Camp. However, we were still able to alight from our coach on our old parade ground and to lay a wreath at the Memorial Garden in memory of all former Junior Leaders who are no longer with us.

Because of Covid and the date changes that ensued, our original attendance figures fell from 126 to 94. Even as the momentous weekend approached it was touch and go for many of us with all the panic buying of fuel, resourceful as ever, we were not to be daunted. Only one of our members was forced to throw in the towel as diesel could not be had anywhere near or in sufficient quantity for him to make it to Taunton. The majority of our members arrived on the Friday and

we all came together to meet up and share our many memories over a very enjoyable buffet dinner at the hotel. As in previous years we held our usual raffle in aid of BLESMA and managed to raise a little over £500. Saturday morning arrived, the day of our planned visit to our "ancestral home" at Norton Manor Camp, for some of us the first time in almost 60 years. Then, as none of us had been beaten by Covid or the fuel crisis, the powers that be above opened up the heavens and chucked it down at the very moment of our departure. We were in for a soaking but I'm proud to report that none of us had our spirits dampened. Our coach arrived promptly at 1000hrs and what an amazing coach that was; a double-decked super executive streamliner with faux-leather seating arranged at tables throughout, provided for us entirely free of charge by Berry's Coaches of Taunton and driven personally by Scott Berry, son of the present family owner. Because of the foul weather, a hastily rearranged programme was quickly hammered out with our hosts, resulting in a reduced visit and the cancellation of many of the planned Group and Platoon photographs.

On arrival at Norton Manor Camp we were boarded by the Royal Marines Duty Officer, Lieutenant Bradley Jones RM, our host and escort for the morning. We disembarked the coach onto our old Parade Ground and Drill Square, that hallowed ground now turned into a car park, such sacrilege. Yet, setting foot once more on the ground upon which we had all marched on Saturday morning RSM's parades, all those years ago, raised a few goose bumps and a lump in the throat for many of us. We were met by the Reverend Adrian Prior-Sankey MBE, Padre to The Royal British Legion and Lead



■ Colin Westcott and Terry Byrne parade Standards

Chaplain of the Taunton Chaplaincy, who paid tribute to all Junior Leaders having served at Norton Manor and led us in prayer to remember those no longer with us. The Corps Collect (adapted for our Group) was read by group member Ken Dyer and our wreath was laid by Group Chairman (former J/RSM and ex Bordon boy) Wal Stopper. The parade of Standards by Terry Byrne, Des Wilson and Colin Westcott added a real touch of solemnity to the occasion. After a minute's silence it was a hasty retreat back to the coach (still hissing it down) and sadly, departed Norton Manor way ahead of the original schedule.

Back again to the hotel and it was time to begin preparing for the evening Gala Dinner. It was a delight to welcome the Chairman of the RASC/RCT Association, Colonel Nigel Gilbert and his wife Maureen, as our very special guests for the evening. The Association has been instrumental in supporting our Group activities since our formation and has awarded a grant of funds to assist in the costs of organising our reunion events. For this we are extremely grateful to Colonel Nigel and all at the RASC/RCT Association HQ. All of this is made possible by the commitment of Group members in becoming Life Members of the Association. Two new members have now been enrolled as a result of their attendance on the night. With the support of the

Association this year we were able to ensure all Group Association members were given a free drink token and, given the extortionate hotel bar prices, this had to be worth more than the one-off membership fee!

With speeches over, Colonel Nigel graciously helped in presenting souvenir mugs inscribed "I'm



■ Norton Manor Gala Dinner

proud to be a Bordon RASCAL" in recognition of the first Junior Leaders to have arrived at Norton Manor Camp from Bordon 60 years ago. Among them, two of the original marchers, Alex McCrae and Pete Farmer.

The Gala dinner meal was excellent and was widely appreciated. Messages of good wishes for our event success had been received from HRH The Duke of Wessex and from the lady Mayor of Taunton, Councillor Sue Lees. It was evident throughout that the bonds of friendship formed throughout those early years in training remained just as strong today as they were then. The camaraderie and re-awakened shared memories combined to make a highly successful and thoroughly enjoyable 60th Anniversary event.

Any former RASC Junior Leader who served at Norton Manor Camp reading this article and who may not yet have joined our Group, please contact the Secretary at: mikemason47.mm@gmail.com

Mike Mason, Secretary



Norton Manor Group 60th Reunion - Holiday Inn - Taunton 2021



Rear L-R: Sid Noble, Mervyn Dare, Bruce Chandler, Paul French, Bill Whittaker, Barry Morgan, Andrew Hill, Ray Purdy, Les Spivey, Phil Peet, Jess Poat, Harry Worthington, Pete Farmer

Rear Cent L-R: Allen Davenport, Tony Ash, Sid Kilby, Kit French, Des Boshier, George Day, Spike Hawthorne, David Owen, Tel Wickings, Paul Eames, Brian Jupp, Graham DuPrat, Dale Miller, Dave Weyers

Rear Cent L-R: Richard Dimmock, Clive Oldfield, Chris Forbes-Rött, Bruce Baker, Cliff Harris, Geoff Lukins, Ken Donnelly, Mick Hosie, Ron Young, Colin Cox, Russell Pike, Terry Byrne, Colin Westcott, Des Wilson, Ken Dyer

Sitting L-R: Peter Snow, Alan Davison, John Henderson, Phil Clayton, Mike Mason, Wal Stopper, Col Nigel Gilbert, Paul Shilling, David Burnley, Alex McCrae, John Regan, Roland Betts, Richard Snell



SOUTH WEST REGION VISIT TO NORMANDY

10-13 September 2021

After 18 months in the planning, with two postponements due to covid restrictions, our long-awaited Normandy visit finally started. The short sailing across the Channel, Portsmouth to Caen, proved to be a relaxing short cruise with few other passengers competing for executive spaces.

Saturday morning commenced with a trip to the local chemist to get our return covid test, a rather

swift and efficient operation. After collection of certificates, we proceeded to follow the hastily rearranged programme. Our first visit was to the German Gun Battery at Merville where the group spent longer than planned exploring the sites and exhibitions.

The next port of call was Pegasus Museum via Horsa Bridge. Our group was the first to visit since the out-break of Covid. The short service held at the site of the original bridge proved a great draw to other spectators. A visit to Cafe Gondre and a meeting with the current owner who was only three at the time of Normandy Landings proved a must have photo opportunity.

Our next site was the Commonwealth Grave (CWG)

Cemetery at Ranville, which reflected a small portion of the price paid for success. Among the varied regimental headstones, RASC stones were dressed with wooden crosses. As time had drifted away so quickly, it was back to the hotel for an excellent dinner and evening entertainment.

Sunday saw us make an early start - via the German Radar Site - to Juno Beach Museum

(Canadian/British) and then Ver-sur-Mer which, being the site of the New British Normandy Memorial, proved to be the highlight of the tour. A short service was held with Standards, Wreath laying and once again the group was joined by those visiting the site (service video available). Kev Marshall from Plymouth recited the Corps Collect and Ron Betts recited the Exhortation. Next stop was the site of

the RE Memorial in Arromanches with Standards once again paraded. Our search for the RASC Plaque revealed that it had been removed for safe keeping as its location was now a building site (thanks to Plymouth for finding). Our last call was to Port-em-Bessin where we saw the site of the German Gun Battery on the cliffs.

Monday called for early start, but the customs procedure proved a lot less stressful than expected. Our coach driver from Berry's was to be commended for his assistance throughout the trip and avoiding a nasty accident on the M3 in front of us. At time of production the team have received emails and cards praising the excellent effort put in to provide an

informative, relaxing break. Thanks to the Association for their assistance.

Des Wilson, Chairman

■ **Above: Des Wilson and Peter Clark Parade Taunton and Plymouth Branch Standards at British Normandy Memorial**



The National Amphibian Branch Reunion 2021

Age has wearied us but we're still here! The DUKWs went nearly 50 years ago and they were 30 years old then! Created by the Americans from a GS truck to assist in the amphibious operations in World War 2 in Italy and used by US forces (and the RASC) on D-Day, they were a brilliant and versatile workhorse for many operations. We used them on Christmas Island, in flood relief in the West Country, in Singapore and Malaysia and the Australians used them in Antarctica to support research teams.



■ Chairman Bill Brooke & Elvis

However, the operators for the British DUKWs live on as members of the National Amphibious Branch of the Association. We have been continuing to gather in the Barnstaple area since the DUKWs were withdrawn in 1973 and there is still a powerful link to the local area since the early 1940s. When the Americans were offered the Slapton area of South Devon to prepare for the amphibious operations required for D Day, we took the amazing

sands at Saunton, along with the adjacent sand burrows of Braunton for our own preparations. Over the years our specialised vehicles resulted in the experienced operators staying longer with the unit than was usually the case. Lots met and married locally. Many left the Army and returned to retire locally and other members are still married to ladies with local links. Fremington Camp became our spiritual home until that too was lost and re-invented as a housing estate.

We now meet each year at the Barnstaple Hotel to spend a weekend of sharing memories over a glass or two and exaggerating perhaps just a little. Our annual 'ice-breaker', although not perhaps essential under the circumstances, is 10 Pin Bowling at the local rink. Prizes are awarded and this year Annette Everette won the ladies' prize and John Michael won the men's prize. The evening entertainment featured an excellent Elvis impersonator who brought all the ladies on to the dance floor, and several of their partners. It's fair to say that the spirit of the evening was of

catching up with each other. Our chairman, Bill Brook, who also organised the entertainment was on stage with 'Elvis' at one point and John Michael was also an eminent singer in a duo with him!

Saturday heralded our AGM. This is becoming more difficult as members fade but we managed an attendance of around 14 plus our committee. After a lively discussion, the important decision



■ Eyes down - raffle is underway

was made to meet up again on 14 October 2022. However, the main event is always the dinner/dance on the Saturday night and around 60 gathered for the event, including guest 'stars' Col & Mrs Nigel Gilbert and Lt Col & Mrs Moore. The evening was opened by our local co-ordinators Don & Babs Turner with a raffle followed by a wonderful meal (we are always superbly looked after by the hotel staff) before standing to remember our lost comrades and a remarkable rendition of Last Post on an electric guitar. We then danced and talked through to the early hours. Col Nigel entertained everyone by touring the room with some speech cards (the music was quite loud!), and it was clear that we all enjoyed the evening. Whilst it is primarily a Fremington-centric event, we always welcome guests and an 'Aldershot' table has become a fixture already, so do join us!



■ DUKW Plymouth

The Royal Logistic Corps Benevolence Support



The RLC has been providing benevolence support to thousands of Regulars, Reservists and Veterans since its formation on 5 April 1993.

Benevolence is available, if needed, for all RASC & RCT Veterans and their families. Whilst we were serving most of us made contributions to our Corps through the "One Day's Pay Scheme". Many readers will remember this money being used to support a wide array of Corps Sports, the Corps Open Day and so many other activities at Regimental and Corps level. What is less well known is that the majority of this money was paid into a benevolent fund, building a legacy that would provide for our veterans and families, Regular and Reserve, old and young and give a 'hand up' when they are in need. This fund, a significant contribution on convergence, is now looked after by The Royal Logistic Corps (RLC) and sits alongside their own benevolent fund.

RLC Benevolence gives grants to those who are in need, working closely with a number of other service charities, most notably the Soldiers, Sailors & Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA), The Army Benevolent Fund - The Soldiers' Charity, Help for Heroes and The Royal British Legion (RBL), to mention only a few. Grants are based on need and most are dealt with after a SSAFA or RBL case worker has made an assessment and formally notified the RLC Benevolence Office. The RLC Benevolence staff may not make an award for every case they hear about, but can alert others to assist and, together with these charities, make a huge difference for veterans and their families when life takes an unexpected twist. Please be aware that as part of assessing need, all applicants are means tested.

The RLC Benevolence Office looks after veterans and the families of the Forming Corps by giving assistance in a wide range of circumstances. Some examples from real cases are as follows:

- **Home adaptations for illness.** A former RCT SNCO was diagnosed with a debilitating, terminal illness. RLC Benevolence assisted the family with its compulsory financial contribution

to the local council making home disability adaptations by paying over £8,000 almost immediately when notified of the need. That was one less worry for the family at a very difficult time.

- **Brown goods.** The widow of a RASC veteran needed a specially adapted bed and mattress due to the onset of arthritis. Assistance totalling £1,400 was given.
- **Electrically Powered Vehicle (EPV).** These mobility scooters are a godsend to those with physical difficulties, enabling them to cope with routine shopping, visiting and leisure activities that able bodied take for granted. An average award from RLC Benevolence is £1,000 towards these vehicles, with The Royal British Legion and ABF also assisting with any additional costs.
- **Home repairs.** Working with the local council, SSAFA arranged for a Disabled Facilities Grant for repairs to the house of a former RCT Driver who had served in Northern Ireland. This enabled the repair of a leaking outside wall. The cost was over £15,000 and the RLC Benevolence granted £2,500 and arranged other funds from other charities to cover the total bill.
- **Funeral costs.** All Service charities assist with funeral costs for veterans. It should be noted that assistance cannot be provided retrospectively, however Funeral Directors are usually less insistent on rapid or upfront payment if they are told at the beginning that Service charities are involved.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that benevolence support is not provided retrospectively; therefore it is important that those in need seek assistance as soon as they can. As the RLC's Benevolence staff do not have the capacity or geographic reach to carry out case work, usually the best place to start is by approaching the local SSAFA or RBL branch. For more information, visit: www.ssafa.org.uk and www.britishlegion.org.uk

Chelmsford (Essex) RASC & RCT Branch (the last one in the county)

All branches have faced difficulties in recent years. However, the three years since we lost our President and former Chairman Mr John Woodward Fredrick Hughes MBE have been particularly challenging for Chelmsford Branch.

Born in Chelmsford and educated at King Edward VI Grammar School, John was known for always attending the "Old Chelmsfordians" AGM with a chicken or turkey tucked under his arm as a raffle prize, most appropriate having been in the meat trade all his life.

John undertook his National Service with the Royal Army Service Corps in Aldershot. This service subsequently led to a lifelong membership of the Chelmsford Branch of the RASC & RCT Association, he was Chairman from 1992 until 2010; at which time he was appointed President and remained in the

monthly meetings here and the room was lovingly adorned with our military memorabilia.

Sadly, following the passing of John, the property at Roselawn was put up for sale and the Chelmsford Branch was given three months' notice to quit. On the evening of our final meeting at Roselawn, Tommy "Twinkle Toes" McLoughlin, who is 94 years young, took a tumble coming into the hut. As he had cut his head and broken a finger, David Lloyd took him to A&E, where they both spent six hours missing the meeting and the last picture of us in our old home.

Thanks to a small band of willing volunteers, our significant collection of artifacts was recorded, packed and safely moved our new location - The Royal British Legion Club in New London Road, Chelmsford. The

Branch is extremely grateful for the hard work that went into the move and for the friendly hospitality that has been shown to us by all the members of The RBL. We are now well settled

into our new home, despite the long break from meetings due to the pandemic. Also, our "quality of life" has improved, we now have heating, toilets and hot and cold running water. Hopefully, a long and happy relationship will be developed between ourselves and The RBL.

Activities are now back in full swing. On Thursday the 11 November 2021, the Branch paraded at the War Memorial outside the Church of St Mary with St Leonard in the parish of



■ **Mr John Woodward Fredrick Hughes MBE**
3 May 1936 - 8 October 2018

Broomfield, this is where our old standard is displayed. On Remembrance Sunday the Branch attended a ceremony in the centre of Chelmsford. We paraded alongside our new friends from The RBL and David Lloyd, our treasurer, laid a wreath on behalf of the Branch and members joined the veteran's march past. Some of our branch were fortunate to obtain tickets for the evening performance of the annual Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall on Saturday 13 November 2021, it was a memorable experience – very moving. WE WILL NEVER FORGET!

Arthur Pearce, Branch Chairman



■ **David Lloyd laying our Wreath**



■ **The Final Branch Meeting at Roselawn**

post until the day he died. The post is now filled by our very popular Tommy Mc Loughlin. John was more than just a branch office holder; he was a great benefactor. A very generous man, he very kindly gave the use of the old school room at the side of Roselawn farm to the Association and this was our Branch Headquarters for many years; we held many happy

RCT Riders' Branch - Ride to the Wall 2021



The Riders' Branch of the RASC & RCT Association is a relatively youthful (the Branch not its members) and diverse (we have riders who are current, lapsed and broken, with interest in cruisers, street, touring and sports bikes, trikes and even scooters). Having had our genesis on-line, social media has allowed us to grow our membership nationally and internationally, we now have members from such far-flung and exotic locations as Bulgaria, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Canada, Kenya, Essex and Fife! Many of our members also belong to their local branch of the Association.

As we are spread so far and wide it is a challenge to get together, as a result 'Ride To The Wall' (RTTW) - a well-established annual high-profile veteran focused event has become our principal gathering. With many branch members already attending RTTW every year, it was also sensible that we should hold our Branch AGM on this weekend at a local venue in order to encourage attendance. This year, with the very kind assistance of Defence Medical Services (DMS) Whittington, we were able to hold a very successful face-to-face AGM for the first time.

Perhaps I should first elaborate on RTTW for those who are unfamiliar. The Armed Forces Memorial (The Wall,) located within the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) near Lichfield, Staffordshire, is a 43-metre stone

structure with two curved walls and two straight walls constructed of 200,000 bricks faced with Portland stone panels. The panels contain the names of over 16,000 personnel who have given their lives in the service of the Nation since the end of the Second World War. RTTW is a unique motorcycling event which gives serving, veteran and civilian motorcyclists an opportunity to gather at a place of remembrance, to pay their respects to our fallen Service men and women and in doing so raise funds solely for the purpose of perpetuating their memory and recognising the sacrifice made. Think Remembrance Sunday, but on motorbikes! All those taking part are invited to make a voluntary donation of £10 when they register for the ride, all of which, along with funds from merchandise sales, goes to the NMA, ensuring that access remains free for all. RTTW was founded by Martin Dickinson, who is himself, ex-RCT and a member of our branch.

RTTW always takes place on the first Saturday of October each year (2021 being its 14th year), with registration for the event opening at the end of the preceding April. Riders converge on the NMA from 11 start points with marshals and escorts, whilst some riders choose to free-run in and register on the day. The ride in from Drayton Manor (a much

sought-after departure point) includes the Flag Party who ride right up to the Wall at the centre of the Arboretum; there are always lots of RCT flags being flown and indeed 1 Sqn flags by the more discerning riders! There is then a Service of Remembrance and many also take the opportunity to visit specific memorials around the NMA, Logistic Grove being the focus for RASC and RCT veterans. In June 2013, Her Majesty the Queen awarded RTTW the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, an annual award made to recognise and reward excellence in voluntary activities in the community. This is a significant accolade - the highest such award in the UK. Over £1 million has now been raised for the NMA by RTTW.

The first obstacle facing our intrepid riders this year was the Mad Max like fuel shortage that was gripping the country, many made it on mere fumes and optimism. Sadly, it must also be said that October isn't famed for its clement weather, but on the understanding that 'skin is waterproof', those travelling from farther afield started to arrive in the local area on the Friday, presenting, no doubt, some welcome business for the hospitality sector, particularly in terms of beer sales, as old friendships were rekindled, memories revisited and stories



■ RCT Riders at the steps to the Wall



retold. There is always a sizeable contingent who ride over from Belgium and this year also saw ex-pats riding up from Spain.

A relatively early start on the Saturday saw riders arriving at DMS Whittington Barracks from 0900 for the AGM at 0930. The excellent facilities here were made available by the kind permission of the Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr Jayne Arscott and the RSM, WO1 James McSeveney, who even permitted the use of "his" square for the parking up of motorcycles! However, some were slower off the mark than others! Having already had mechanical bad luck with his own bike, Chairman Andrew Wright was kindly offered the loan of a motorbike for the day by Paul Goldingay the landlord of the Branch's adopted pub, The Bull's Head in Tamworth. It is sad to report that the high-tech wizardry of this Harley Davidson initially flummoxed our Chairman, and he was unable to fathom how to start it until he was enlightened by some fulltime 'Hog' riding members. Still, things could have been worse, at least he didn't fuel it up with diesel!

A packed meeting saw the business of the inaugural AGM dealt with in an efficient manner, allowing time for refreshment before we were joined by members of Airborne Riders, REME Riders, Military Police & Law Enforcement Motorcycle Group and the 'Eights and Aces' (a serving and veteran's group based in NE England). In total, 154 bikes formed up on the square for the ride to the NMA (Flag Party members having already departed to form up at Drayton Manor).

Despite hopeful prayers to the weather gods over the preceding

days, the heavens opened on the ride in and continued throughout the day, making conditions 'wetter than an otter's pocket' and far more character building than was necessary! However, nothing could dampen the spirits of all who were there, either literally or metaphorically, particularly with the event not having run the previous year due to COVID restrictions (despite which £115,000 was still raised for the NMA that year, in itself a remarkable achievement!). As ever, a very moving service was conducted including musical pieces by Gari Glaysher and Abigail Carter-Simpson, and some words of wisdom and thanks from Padre Huw Evans, Founder of RTTW Martin Dickinson, RTTW Patron Air Commodore Simon Richardson and Managing Director of the NMA Phillipa Rawlinson. Formalities concluded; members met later that afternoon at The Logistic Grove where President of the Branch, Robin Moore, laid a wreath.

Many Branch members gathered that evening at The Bull's Head in Tamworth, where thanks to a grant from the Association, the Branch was able to purchase supplies for a loyal toast, whilst Paul and Nicky Goldingay arranged for sustenance, rather fittingly provided by a food truck. Before things got too far out of hand, two presentations were made. The President gave the Bull's Head a painting of an RCT Section commander on a Can-Am 250, which was gratefully received by Paul and Nicky and is now displayed alongside a growing collection of RCT and Branch memorabilia in the Pub. The

Chairman presented the Welfare Officer, Berni Wilkins, with a pair of toasting glasses for her to use during her nightly toasts to absent friends. After closing-time the more determined "continued the movement" at Aldergate Club in Tamworth, where Dougie McPhee excelled with his 'dad dancing' and branch members met the comedian, John Bishop. Photographs by kind permission of Rosi McIsaac and Robin Moore.

More information regarding RTTW and the NMA can be found at the following links:

<https://www.thenma.org.uk/>

https://www.rttw.org/about_rttw.php

Dave Nelson, Secretary



■ These flags were not dry for long!

Tank Transporter Branch

Despite the restrictions of Covid the Branch continues to flourish. Although there may not have been as many social events in 2021 as in previous years, the Annual Reunion was held over the weekend of 22-25 October 2021 at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. All ages and eras of the trade were present and, understandably, many friendships were re-ignited and strengthened.



■ A picture of sartorial elegance - Andy Smith and Bob "Balouga" Kenny

We were fortunate that the current OC of 19 Tk Tpтр Sqn RLC, Major James Smale and the Head of Trade, WO2 Steve Elliot together with some of the current members of 19 Squadron were able to join us. At the Branch AGM Major Smale gave an update on the activities of 19 Squadron both in the UK and NATO countries. He also briefed us on the implications of recent Defence reviews, which in the case of Tank Transporting

appear to be encouraging, due to the current and anticipated future needs for wheeled movement of armour and other assets. As always, it was good to interact with today's Tank Transporter operatives in an informal and convivial atmosphere.

Following the AGM there was a complimentary double decker bus tour of Liverpool for our members. This tour was provided at no cost by Kevin Riley who is the owner of the bus company and former member of 19 Tk Tpтр Coy, back when it was based at Ranby.

The Gala Dinner was well-supported with numbers attending only just slightly less than in previous years. Despite Covid restrictions, a good time was had by all.

Looking to the future, the Chairman and Committee are working on the 2022 Annual Reunion with the aim to produce a truly memorable weekend in October. Members should also be aware of other gatherings for 2022. These are being held at Retford (senior members), Preston (Summer Gathering), Eastwood [Nottingham] (3 Sqn), Weston-Super-Mare (16 Sqn) and the annual Christmas Jumper Drinks at Amesbury (19 Sqn). More details of these gatherings are being published on

Facebook events by the respective organisers.

In recognition of 33 years' service to Tank Transporting, John "Tommy" Laughlan was presented with an illuminated crystal plaque. One of the most respected Tank Transporter Operators, "Tommy"

started his career at JLR and on Passing Out was posted directly to 16 Tk Tpтр Sqn at Fallingbowl in the mid-70s. He went on to drive the Antar, Commander, Oshkosh and any other tank transporter that was put before him.

Wayne Meadows continues to keep the historic vehicle fleet roadworthy and together with volunteers from the Branch ensures that there is a presence of both the Commander and Antar at shows. If anyone fancies a weekend at (former RAF)

Lyneham helping to maintain the vehicles, they would be made very welcome. The shows that our vehicles can be seen at in 2022 are: Basingstoke (Festival of Transport), Heddington (Steam Rally), Gloucestershire (South Cerney Camp Cirencester) and Newbury (Retrofest). More details and dates can be found on the events page of the Tank Transporters Facebook page.

Ian Lloyd, Secretary



Above: Steven "Tanky" Allen and WO2 Steve Elliot (Head of Trade)



Left: Christmas Jumper Drinks at Amesbury



■ Happy Campers

For the second year running due to the COVID-19 restrictions, our weekend had to be changed from the usual first weekend in July to the second one in September, logic being that the schools were back and the weather is generally fine; and so it proved to be, not baking sunshine all the way, but enough to make it pleasant to sit out and have drink and catch up, and no rain, so good old SSM Pete Leonards saying, "Stop moaning, skins waterproof" wasn't needed!

The venue was once again Ashdown WW2 Camp at Evesham. This is a mock-up built by an enthusiast who sadly is no longer with us, but the site is managed by his daughter Emma, who despite being a young lady, is a nut about WW2 and especially the US Navy 'Seabees'. Knowing this I asked if she could organise for a couple of military vehicles to come to camp.

Friday night is traditionally fish and chip night, but word had spread that the chippy we used last year which delivers had changed hands, so Ski kindly offered to drive into town to pick up the order and apart from Taff Thomas's pie going AWOL, we all had a good supper followed by some good yarns and reminiscing, as well as

17 Sqn RCT 'Old Pals' Branch Annual Reunion

Below: Brain Cornes and Emma in her Seabees Jeep



putting the world to rights!

After a good full English breakfast with a Scottish twist cooked by Woody and his wife 'lady Phyllis', the boys then gathered at the NAFFI for the AGM. At the meeting it was agreed by voting to change the criteria for membership to the Branch, so from now on it is open to any person of the RCT who served or was attached to 17 Squadron RCT while it was stationed in Bielefeld, up until the dissolution of the RCT in 1993. New members will need to be nominated by a serving member of the Branch. For further information, please contact the Branch Secretary Richard (Titch) Fry at: oldpals17sqn@outlook.com or call on 07899 668433.

On the Saturday was a German style BBQ and as the Braty's, Frikadelle and Kartoffle salad were being washed down with cold beers, the sight of three original WW2 Jeeps, led by Emma in her grey Seabees wagon were seen hurtling across the fields. This was then topped by a fly pass of the Red Arrows; truth be

known it was a fluke but both Emma and I claimed to have booked them! The Jeeps then came into the camp and a few of the members were treated to a blast around in them. I'm working on a Diamond T for the next event, watch this space!

In the evening, prior to the raffle, SPAM fritters were served, who can say no to one after a few beers? They were followed by a projector show of old photos set to music. It was put together by Mick Hill and he really did the boys proud. So much hair and moustaches on show, sadly no longer!

On Sunday, again following a full English/Scottish breakfast and after a group photo, people started to say their farewells. However, the rear party were once again treated to a fantastic meal and this time Phyllis was joined by Liz White and the boys were well fed.

**Dates for your 2022 diary:
Thursday 7 - Monday 11 July 2022.**

Richard Fry, Branch Secretary

38 Squadron Reunion 2021

After missing 2020's reunion, 38 Sqn was finally able to get together again in St Neots, where we were hosted by Glen Martin at the Cx-Servicemen's Club. As is customary, the troops began to gather on Friday evening, those in hotels taking libations, renewing old and forging new friendships in the hostilities of St Neots, and for the 'happy campers' a night of Bingo with the 'older members' of the Ex-Servicemen's Club. It's amazing how much fun Bingo can be - or are we all just getting old?

Saturday morning saw folk walking down into the Town Square where there was a local festival and farmers market in full swing. With Morris Dancers et al performing, we enjoyed our breakfast and chats in lovely sunshine, such are the joys of our ever-cheerful throng of 38 Sqn brothers and sisters. A bit of

shopping and relaxation in a lovely environment for some, and a crafty beer or two with the 'Birmingham Real Ale Crew' who were visiting the area.

Thereafter it was back to our respective accommodation for a shower and brush up ready for our main event, the Reunion proper. A minibus was laid on to collect folk from their various hotels and

transport them to the venue. A big thanks goes to the Air Cadets/ Flt Lt Glen Martin for providing this much valued facility.

Hopefully passengers were generous towards the minibus driver, as is of course the '38 Sqn RCT' way.

The evening unfolded with joviality, banter and a great deal of fun; first time attendees were warmly embraced and soon felt themselves at ease and a real part of the

proceedings. A photo of an absent friend LCpl Lee Wellington (lost to the Squadron during Op GRANBY) was placed on the bar where he had a myriad of glasses raised to him over the course of the evening and we kept him firmly in our hearts and minds.

A raffle and auction (big thanks go to all who generously donated items) were held in support of the 38 Sqn RCT Reunion Fund; the 'star lot' being a brass shell case used during the Gunfire Salute at Cardiff Castle to celebrate the Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The shell case was

subsequently engraved with the Corps badge (see photo) by donator and Parade Sergeant Major WO2 Jon Hewitt. A comprehensive finger buffet was also provided for attendees which was most enjoyable and gratefully received by the hungry hordes.

To conclude, another fantastic, popular, well attended (87 Pax) 38 Sqn RCT Reunion, enjoyed by all. The Squadron's legendary rapport and esprit de corps continues to burn brightly, keeping alive the great times and achievements for individuals and the formidable unit



■ 38 Sqn festivities in full swing

that is (in happy retirement) 38 Sqn RCT. A massive 'thank you' to all concerned, we can now look forward to the 38 Sqn RCT Reunion 2022, to be held who knows where!



■ The Birmingham Real Ale Crew are in town



■ 38 Sqn Star Prize



■ Tony Barton uses a 1 Squadron Op Granby flag to hide some very dubious knees

It felt so good, following the restrictions of the lockdown, to be back with old comrades and returning to as near a normality that is possible to achieve with those sorts of characters! This year was particularly poignant for many at the Reunion, as for many Corps veterans elsewhere, as we recalled the 1st Gulf War 30 years ago. Our oldest squadron veteran, attending for the first time, was Mr Thomas (twinkle toes) McIloughlin at 94 years old and in residence just down the road in Chelmsford. We were joined this year by a contingent from our workshop

1 Squadron Reunion 2021



who served during the Gulf War, offering to tow anyone back to their hotel in exchange for the normal yellow handbag (if you know, you know!). The event was organised by the efficient Delyth and supported generously by the Association. Nearly 100 1 Squadron RASC and RCT veterans, along with some partners, attended the event safely and the splendid history of the Squadron was acknowledged.

Colonel Tony Barton



70th Anniversary Gun Salute at Rheda-Wiedenbrück, Germany

The Rheda-Wiedenbrück Rifle Association (Schützenverein) invited The Royal British Legion Germany Standard bearers to participate in a Gun Salute to mark the 70th Anniversary of the ascension of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth to the throne of the United Kingdom.

Robert Neale, Gutersloh Royal British Legion Chairman, co-ordinated the event with RCT veterans filling many of the key roles. The Parade Marshal was Robert Thompson (RCT), the Osnabrück Standard was Bearer Peter Doyle (RCT/RLC) and two members of our Riders Branch attended; Didier Jehan and Dave.

Comments from the Rifle Association were that they were honoured to have a Royal British Legion contingent on parade and that the Legion contributed significantly to the success of the event. This event not only strengthens Anglo-German relations but demonstrates the popularity of the British Monarchy in Europe. This is also just one example of the support that our veterans and Association members give to The Royal British Legion and the spread of our influence beyond our significant branch structure in

the United Kingdom.



■ Members of the Schützenverein and RBL on the Town Hall steps at Rheda-Wiedenbrück

Getting into the Christmas Spirit!

Making the most of our recently restored freedom many of our branches made a special effort celebrate Christmas.

50 members and guests of Norfolk and Norwich Branch gathered at Furzdown Hotel in Great Yarmouth for a traditional Christmas dinner with all the trimmings. They hosted Colonel Howard and Mrs Celia Stephens and entertainment was provided by Richard Dawson, ex-Corps band member for 24 years and his partner Glynis. An outstanding rendition of "Wait for the Wagon" resounded, as well as some musical reflections prior to the toast to absent friends, followed by a very popular Christmas sing along. The raffle, organised by our Secretary Eunice Byrne, provided a steady stream of late Christmas presents for many of our winners. The Byrne family also provided four generations of attendees, including the newest member, 16-month-old Lexi who was the centre of attention.

Doncaster Branch held a very popular Christmas dinner at Castle Park Rugby Club. 76 members and guests included three old OCs and five old SSMs from 150 Regiment attended. Bootle Branch arranged a party for 52 children, in G. M. V. C. Army Reserve Centre, Bootle; entertaining their grandchildren and the children of 238 Squadron RLC's personnel.

Unable to wait for Christmas, Edinburgh Branch held Cold Warrior 2020/21 at Halloween in Dalkeith British Legion, with 30 plus warriors including 7 REME, meeting up for the first time in over two years. During the reunion we had the Mimics to entertain with Rab C Nesbitt and Billy Connolly making an appearance.

■ **Right: Brian Kendrick Santa (ex SSgt 238 Sqn) relaxing at the G.M.V.C.**

■ **Far Right: Terry, Eunice and Lexi Byrne**



■ **In from the cold warriors**



■ **Doncaster Christmas Dinner**



■ **Since COVID some people really have got a mask habit**



Several regions have now been able to hold get togethers and the next to take place will be the Scottish Regional Dinner Dance in May at the Salutation Hotel in Perth. As a foretaste, many members from Scottish Region's Branches attended the very enjoyable St Andrew's Day Dinner in Aberdeen at the end of November.

North-East Region lost their regular get together venue in Scarborough and then had to face the pandemic. Following a determined effort, a new home was found; The York Way Motel which catered their every need and the food was fantastic. The rooms were recently redecorated and very nice indeed, they even accommodated wheelchairs. Friday night was a "chill night" to relax and enjoy, catching up with other branch members - with Teesside, Grimsby and Hull branches all in attendance.

Saturday night was a "suited and booted night" with another lovely meal and a few words from the Regional Chairman, Lt Col Peter Poole MBE. The night was great, Bingo was played, a raffle was done and a quiz held which got all the Branches thinking hard and created a lot of banter.

The Wales & Western Region's Annual Reunion took place over the weekend 19-21 November 2021 at Tiffany's Hotel, Blackpool. This was most successful with 98 members and guests. It is remarkable that the number attending was up again on previous years.

Around the Regions



■ Mr Hales and Mrs Cutting with Sefton Branch on the next table



■ St Andrew's Day Dinner - Robin Moore, John Cunningham and Helen Nichol share a joke



■ Duncan and Cathie Forbes and a full table for St Andrew's Day



■ Mr Gordon Barker MBE, President of Hull Branch making sure everything is squared away



■ Julie and Frank Spender with Jill and Graham Sumner at the entrance to Tiffany's



■ A satisfied soldier

Remembrance 2021

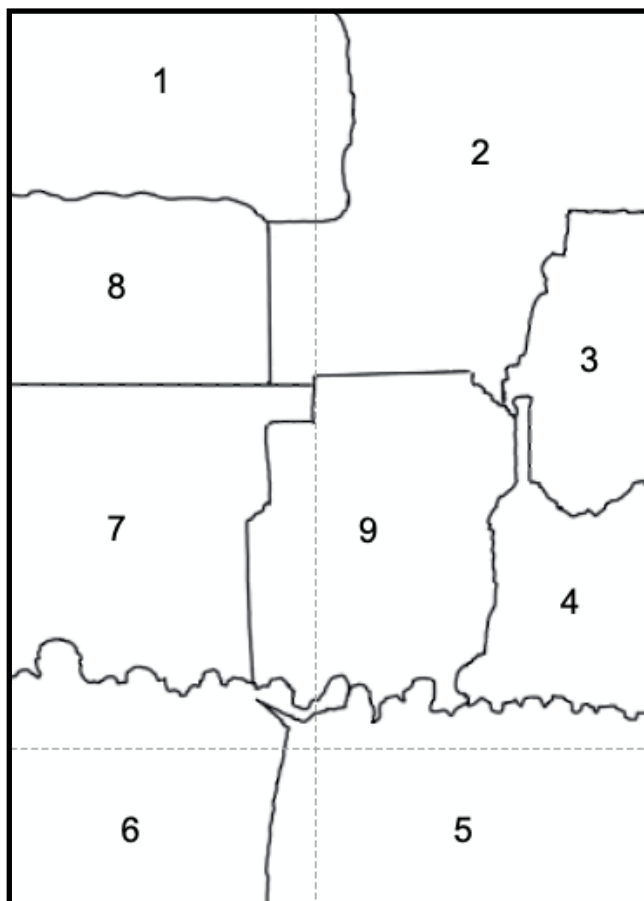
On Sunday 14 November 2021, Branches of the Association paraded across the length and breadth of the country to remember the fallen. It was a great relief for many to be able to do this in a near normal manner for the first time in three years.



The RASC & RCT Cenotaph Contingent, which formed up on Horse Guards Parade, after a rather fraught scramble to get through the security checks, was the largest contingent we have paraded. In all, 69 members marched and we had far more volunteers than places. We are particularly grateful to those who agreed to stand down so that older veterans who may have fewer future opportunities to march could parade with us.

A particularly sad absence this year was in-Pensioner James Hawtree who passed away unexpectedly on 29 October 2021. Any member who wishes to have a place in our contingent for the 13 November 2022 Cenotaph Dispersal should contact the Secretary via their Branch, alternatively if this isn't possible, please email the Secretary at:

rascrctsec@rhqtherlc.org.uk



1. Lt Col Douglas Pover, Chippy Wood, Neil Porter, Duncan Forbes, Ian Munro, Ally Stirton, Alec Gerard, Dave Pattie of Perthshire Branch
2. David Taylor and Neil Porter BEM at the Cenotaph in Whitehall
3. Major Joe Igoe RLC and Andy McLean
4. William Fordyce
5. Aberdeen Branch falling-in for Parade
6. Lt Cols John May OBE (hiding at the edge of shot), Derek Armitage, Paul Duncan, Hugh Montgomery, Tom Broadfoot and Robin Moore, and Colonel Nigel Gilbert wait with the RASC & RCT Contingent on Whitehall
7. Ally Stirton laying the Association Wreath at the North Inch War Memorial
8. John Gilmore, Ian Cooper, Ian Hodgson and Colin Inches on Horse Guards Parade
9. Steve Cunningham with Edinburgh Standard at the Scottish Rugby Players' War Memorial Arch at Murrayfield



Geoff Lee



Geoff Lee, a stalwart member of Chelmsford Branch sadly passed away on 5 January 2022. Geoff was a Normandy veteran, an extract of his experiences was shared with the Branch at the D Day 65th Anniversary Service in 2010.

I joined the R.A.S.C. as a boy soldier at the tender age of 14 in 1938. I signed on as an Apprentice Tradesman, Electrical, at St. Peters Barracks, Jersey, Channel Islands. We had to move back to the UK in June 1940 to continue our training. After serving in a number of units in the UK I, along with many thousands of others, was transferred to the Invasion Force. My unit was the 301 Infantry Brigade, 59th Division.

About three months before 'D' Day Landing, exercises started. Waterproofing vehicles ready

for a wet landing and testing in water troughs, like sheep dipping troughs. Climbing up and down 12ft high towers on scramble nets in full battle gear, ready for disembarking from ships. Camouflage netting training for hiding our vehicle; extra First Aid training; aircraft recognition, map reading; field cooking; hygiene. 24-hour convoy driving training and quite a number of other things.

Our unit embarked for Normandy on 'D'+15. We drove in convoy from our base near Canterbury to Wansted Flats, London and waited for the storms to die down in the Channel. On our journey to Wansted Flats, young ladies from The British Red Cross were standing on the concrete pill-boxes filling our outstretched mugs with tea from large jugs. It turns out that one of

those young ladies is now my wife Kathleen.

Our unit finally embarked at West India Docks. The ships were Tank Landing Craft, the ones with the two big front opening doors. Children were on the quayside calling for English money! On our journey down The Thames, the Dagenham Ford Factory broadcast a message of 'good wishes' over their loud hailer. We were loaded with Ford vehicles. At this stage the adrenaline was very high, this being the first time we had been in a battle situation and the Gung Ho spirit prevailed. After quite a long journey, we at last approached the Normandy Beaches, in our case, Juno Beach. As if to greet us, the battleship laying off-shore opened a barrage over our heads! It was at this point that the GungHo spirit began to disappear. It is said that at this point some of our unit approached the Captain and said, 'would he mind terribly turning round and going back to England'. His reply is not on record!

After all the months of training in four feet of water, the big front doors swung open, the ramp dropped down and we drove off in two inches of water! Thank You The Royal Navy. We drove up the beach between the white marker tapes, showing us that the mines had been cleared, at a much faster rate than in practice. Thank You The Royal Engineers. Things that stand out in my mind are watching the beautiful City of Caen being bombed and the bloated smelly cattle in the fields round Falaise. On the unforgettable side also was the burnt-out British tanks with the four rough wooden crosses beside them. Also, what will never leave me is the comradeship, the bonding that lasts even up to today.

Geoff was laid to rest at St Mary's Church, Great Baddow on the 21 February 2022, the Branch Standard was paraded, the Army Medical Services Band provided a Bugler and Geoff was carried by a bearer party from 13 Air Assault Support Regiment RLC – our thanks to WO1 (RSM) Graham Patterson RLC.

Last Post

Ainsley - In December 2021 Lt Col C H Ainsley TD RASC/RCT

Aitkenhead - 9 January 2022 Maj R Aitkenhead RASC/RAOC

Ball - 5 January 2021 Mr PF Ball RASC/RCT

Barnett - 1 April 2021 Mr S Barnett RASC/RCT

Beall - 24 January 2022 Mr W Beall RASC

Beecham - 1 May 2021 Mr KS Beecham RASC

Biggin - 26 February 2022 Mr B A Biggin RASC

Booth - 15 September 2021 Mr W Booth RA/RCT

Boyles - 18 January 2022 Col RJ Boyles RASC/RCT

Bull - 5 January 2021 Mr D Bull RASC/RCT

Bunn - In May 2021 Mr R Bunn RCT

Carcary - 20 August 2021 Mr J Carcary RASC

Coburn - 13 November 2021 Mr J B Coburn RASC/RCT

Collinson - 4 December 2021 Mr KS Collinson RASC/RCT

Crebbin - 2 March 2022 Mr D Crebbin Worcestershire Regt/RCT

Cuerden - 22 August 2021 Mr D Cuerden RCT/RLC

Duffy - 17 August 2021 Mr T Duffy RCT/REME

Duncan - 4 January 2022 Mr F Duncan RE/RCT

Foxwell - 24 December 2021 Mr DG Foxwell RCT

Hawtree - 29 October 2021, Mr J A Hawtree RCT

Hill - 16 December 2021 Mr M Hill RCT

Hitchman - 9 October 2021 Mr CF Hitchman RASC

Hope - 4 October 2021 Mr T Hope RASC

Keeble - 19 May 2021 Mr D Keeble RCT

Lee - 5 January 2022 Mr G C Lee RASC

Lewis - 26 February 2022 Lt Col JEC Lewis RCT/RLC

Lofts - 11 October 2021 Brig JD Lofts MBE RASC/RCT

MacNeill - 11 November 2021 Mr O P MacNeill RASC/RAOC

Malcolm - 4 February 2022 Mr M Malcolm RCT

Meeks - 17 September 2021 Mr A Meeks RASC/RCT

Moore - 26 September 2021 Mr R Moore RASC/RCT

Nordmann - 10 September 2021 Capt MJ Nordmann RASC/RCT

Notley - 7 January 2022 Maj A N Notley MBE TD RASC/RCT

Oliver - 1 November 2021 Mr MJ Oliver RASC

Palmer - 18 January 2022 Maj E F Palmer MBE RCT/RLC

Patton - 5 May 2021 Maj MA Patton RASC/RCT

Peacock - 23 November 2021 Mr AJ Peacock RASC/RCT

Rendall - 18 January 2022 Mrs FE Rendall WRAC

Riddoch - 15 September 2021 Mr R Riddoch RASC

Riggall - 29 September 2021 Col JS Riggall OBE RASC/RCT

Scott - 17 November 2021 Mr W Scott RCT

Smith - 25 February 2022 Mr P Smith RASC/RCT

Stanton - 17 October 2021 Maj R C Stanton TD RCT/RLC/RAF

Thomas - 21 January 2022 Mr S Thomas RCT

Thorpe - 3 October 2021 Col PJ Thorpe RCT/RLC

Trott - 18 September 2021 Mr B Trott RASC/RCT

True - 10 September 2021 Mr AA True RASC

Tunstall - 29 October 2021 Mr P Tunstall RCT/RLC

Turner - 31 December 2021 Mr CG Turner RASC/RCT

Wade - 4 December 2021 Maj E R L Wade RASC/RCT

Watson - 11 November 2021 Mr D Watson RASC/RCT

Watts - 16 May 2021 Mr J Watts RASC/RCT

Wellington - 4 April 2020 Mr J Wellington RASC/RCT

Wickes - 10 November 2021 Lt Col DJC Wickes LVO RASC/RAOC



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BECOMING
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IT’S BEEN LIKE
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Before I came here, I left the house every day just to get a walk. But then I came back to an empty flat. Nothing – just the television and the phone. I was isolated – now I’ve got people to talk to.

The best thing about being a Chelsea Pensioner is there’s care here for the guys who need it, but you can get out and about. The company’s fantastic and the food is beautiful.

Structure is important in the Army, but here you can come and go as you like. And there’s lots to do here. I went to the quiz and there was a fantastic music night in the Chelsea Pensioners’ Club – we were all singing.

I respect the history here. Tradition and history are important in the Army and here at the Royal Hospital. All the battle honours on the wall in the Great Hall that’s our history, as soldiers.

If you’re on your own, think about becoming a Chelsea Pensioner. It’s been like a family.

