

# The NetWorker

**Newsletter of the Pen & Sword Club**

**Issue No: 2 November 2008**

**Plus**

**Media Operations Group (V) Commanding Officer's Sitrep**

## **First Club Patron**

Excellent news as the Club heads towards the end of 2008. Following discussion with a former Director of Public Relations (Army) your Acting Chairman, Colonel Mike Peters is pleased to announce that for the first time the Pen & Sword Club has a Patron.

General The Lord Ramsbotham has accepted the appointment as Club Patron and has already said he is looking forward to meeting old friends and colleagues. "Rambo, "as he is affectionately known throughout the Army, was Director of Public Relations in the early 1980s when the TAPIO Pool was beginning the major expansion that led to the Media Operations Group (V) of today.

The squadron structure of today's MOG (V) was mooted through General Ramsbotham in the early 1980s by Colonels Alan Protheroe, David McDine and Mike Peters.

The discussion papers drawn at that time show the ideas of photographic and escort officer groups, as well as dedicated vehicles, camera, recording and other electronic equipment plus a dedicated headquarters location and permanent staff were being put forward.

And there were major papers too, on a role in the running of Allied Press Information Centres commanded by a One Star Officer. In 1983 the TAPIO Pool was much involved in 1 British Corps exercises that set out the proposal for a BAOR area APIC that would have catered for hundreds, if not thousands, of international journalists in

the event of a eastern bloc invasion of West Germany. This APIC would have had a 100 strong staff and would have been fully mobile in the Corps Rear Area.

Says Mike: "General Ramsbotham had a most distinguished military career. He was DPR (A) during the Falklands War and, as such, was in close contact with Colonel Alan Protheroe at that time. Alan was Deputy Director General of the BBC and was part of the media and MoD debates. Colonel David McDine was also much involved and was to deal with the General as David took on a major role assisting the Chief of Public Relations on the sixth floor of the MoD.

"I was in just as close contact as my role was then Senior Army Press Officer in the MoD press office and I worked with him on a day-to-day basis," says Mike.

"As the war ended the General, together with Lt Colonel John Mills – one of the club's earliest members – and myself accompanied the Governor back to the Falklands Islands aboard the first passenger Hercules to land at Port Stanley.

"The General was his usual 'ball-of-fire' and I recall our first night sharing a bedroom in what a few days previously had been called The Malvinas Hotel. I would add that in this room were another 12 Royal Marines who were 'snoring for Britain.' The only one who did not sleep was the General. I can see him now with a torch clenched between his teeth writing the first of many reports that were to influence future thinking about the media and the military.

"The General went onto command a Division in British Army of the Rhine where his GSO2 P Info was the late Lt. Colonel Patrick Gouldsbury. That was how Patrick came to join the Pool.

"Ending his career at the top of the Army structure as Adjutant General, Rambo was to enter civilian life still well in the public eye. In the role of Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons he was dynamic and for several years was always in the news.

"Far from being retired the General is now Lord Ramsbotham and sits on the cross benches of the House of Lords where his opinions carry

much weight and he remains at the front of British public life. He is, too, an ardent supporter of Army Public Relations and decries the loss of the single service directors at One-Star level.

“The General told me that he is much looking forward to meeting his old friends and colleagues within the club. I welcome him as a great strategic thinker in terms of media operations and look forward to his contributions and his position as our mentor. “

## **Annual General Meeting**

Members who wish to attend the Club's annual general meeting should contact Major Doreen Cadwallader as soon as possible. The meeting will be held in London on Tuesday December 2 next at 1230. The venue is The Rifles Officers' Club in Davies Street (within 30 meters of Bond Street Underground station) where we have free use of the conference room. Lunch will be available at the agm and will be in place of the normal monthly London Lunch meeting.

Any items for the agenda should be passed to Doreen.

At this point we note that Lt. Colonel Anthony Fairbanks-Weston will resign his position as Club Chairman, for family reasons, at the meeting.

“Ant” has always been a great supporter of the club and also made a significant contribution throughout his time with the unit. However, we are not saying farewell as he will continue his club membership. The Club wishes him and his family all the very best for the future.

## **Regional Chairman**

We are pleased to announce more good news. Two of the central committee's most active members have volunteered to run the South East Region. Major John Boyes has accepted the role of Regional Chairman and Doreen is to secretary and treasurer. John managed the last House of Commons dinner with great aplomb and Doreen continues her vital central co-ordination role. The South East contains a high proportion of the club membership

Colonel Mike has also asked all the regional chairmen to appoint a publicity officer and he is hoping for a good response to the regional chairmen.

The Networker needs a continuous supply of news and, we hope, photographs of our club members in action. We want to hear about individual success and activity. That is another of the aims of The Networker.

Wales and The Marches, for example, put out a press release following their successful first meeting last month.

## **Club Notepaper and 'Goodies'**

Thanks are due to Doreen for her work on the initial design and production of a club letterhead. This has not been finalised though interim notepaper is in use. The Club is also considering whether or not there will be sufficient interest in a club shop offering the usual regimental type 'goodies' such as sweat shirts etc.

## **Battlefield Tours**

Colonel Mike has been hard at his e-mails to try and get a consensus on the first battlefield tour for club members. Not wishing to take the club too far on the first attempt the opinion is beginning to move towards a late Spring visit to Normandy. Though we might consider that MOG (V) will also be covering the same trip on the D-Day anniversary.

The possibility of a coach tour has been considered but the view, at the moment, is that we should try to do this with private vehicles. With four paying members to each vehicle to cover motoring and ferry costs this brings the overall financial outlay down very considerably - though it does rely on the goodwill of the vehicle owners.

Ideas are still being sought but we seem to be coalescing around an RV for all vehicles at Poole in Dorset for an overnight passage to Cherbourg. Brittany Ferries has new ships and very reasonably priced cabins or relaxer seats depending on individual choice.

The current plan is to look at the role of American forces in the Cherbourg Peninsula on the first morning by driving straight to St. Mare Eglise. When Mike was there a few months ago there was still a dummy parachutist suspended from the famous church steeple. The day continues with a view of the US breakout battles around St. Lo before driving east across to the Bocage country for an overnight hotel.

Day 2 can be spent looking at Operations Epsom, Goodwood and Blue Coat and the Falaise Pocket. Day 3 will be the Merville Battery followed by the British beaches and a view of the Mulberry Harbour at Arromanches. Overnight in Bayeux.

Day 3 can take in the large and modern museum at Bayeux and the adjoining British Cemetery before moving back to the coast, a view of the German defensive positions and an overnight stay.

Day 4 will take us to Omaha and Utah Beaches and then back to Cherbourg to catch the overnight ferry.

This is a reasonably ambitious programme and will be in good but cheap hotels such as the IBIS chain which is very similar to Travelodge in the UK.

Mike has suggested that the regional parties should take responsibility for researching and describing the battlefields and locations appropriate to their local regiments. He and Roger Goodwin, who has travelled to many battlefields in recent times, including Gallipoli and Monte Casino will cover the other locations.

## **V Weapons**

Another tour in the making is a look at the V Weapons Sites. We have a ready made guide in John Boyes whose knowledge of

missiles in on display in his recently published book – Project Emily: Thor IRBM and the Royal Air Force. A good read. As most of this tour would be in the Calais area there is the opportunity to go on to a World War 1 battlefield or even Waterloo.

## **Gibraltar**

With the aid of Colonel Martin Newman there is the possibility of an interesting trip to Gibraltar. Not many are aware of Operation Felix – the German plan to capture The Rock. This would be the subject of a tour together with a look at the more historical aspects of this big piece of British history.

Martin has been working hard, wearing his cadet hat, to establish a cadet force for the Gibraltar Regiment and has offered to find us a military sponsor to stay in military accommodation. With Easyjet now flying daily to Gibraltar this looks a real opportunity. The Rock is also duty free and while its bars are not now the haunt of jolly jacks, brown jobs and crab a number of members can vouch from recent experience that the nightlife is as good as ever.

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