



The NetWorker

Newsletter of the Pen & Sword Club
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SEASONAL GREETINGS

Whether you celebrate Christmas, the New Year, Hogmaney or that new fangled invention, The Winterval, the editorial team wishes you all the very best for the holiday and for the coming year.

Following the annual general meeting in London earlier this month when the best attendance was recorded for many years the build up to a programme of both regional and national events is underway. We hope to have full details in our next issue.

This is the time of year when as well as getting together with our families we all look back and remember absent friends and recall memories of the good times, and the hard, that we shared with our colleagues when the world was a different place.

This year can we also remember those members of the Armed Forces who are abroad in foreign lands and, perhaps, dig into our pockets and make certain such charities as Help for Heroes benefit as they strive to assist those who have made significant sacrifices. Think also of those separated from their families and friends by many thousands of miles and of the dangers they face for us.

And a special thought too for the serving members of Media Operations Group (V) who are either overseas or readying themselves to go. In 2009 at least eight will be off on tours of active service. They will be in our thoughts and prayers.

Annual General Meeting

Held for the first time at The Rifles Officers' Club in Davies Street, London, the club's annual general meeting was a great success with an attendance far exceeding that of recent years. There were 13 members present with apologies from seven others.

The meeting welcomed the news of the willingness of General The Lord Ramsbotham to be our Patron and confirmed the tenure of our President, Colonel Hugh Colver.

With the resignation of Lt Colonel Anthony Fairbanks Weston the meeting also elected Colonel Mike Peters as the club's new Chairman.

In accepting the honour Colonel Mike first paid tribute to those who had set up and made the early years of the P&S so successful and paid a special tribute to Lt Colonel Graham Barnett who was a very active and successful founding chairman.

On behalf of all the members, Colonel Mike presented Colonel Graham with a silver salver to express thanks for his sterling work in the first six years of the Club. Said Graham: "The salver is something I will always treasure and it will take pride of place with the statuette, which the TAPIO Pool gave me when I relinquished command."

Minutes of the meeting will be circulated to all members by Major Doreen Cadwallader who was re-elected as Secretary/Treasurer.

Discussions covered The Way Ahead for the club; a review of the club constitution; support for MOG (V), the expansion of club membership and the upgrading of The Networker with a possible club web site. An interesting note was that a call for a show of hands on the preference for evening or lunch time events revealed a majority in favour of trying to meet at mid day for most occasions.

Coming Events

National events next year will include the following:

Beating Retreat on Horseguards Parade in June. This event will be organised by Major John Boyes who will be calling for early indications of attendance so that he can make a block booking of seats in a favourable position. The cost of tickets is usually around £10 for what has become one of London's great spectacles.

Depending on numbers and an early response, a lunch can be arranged in The Rifles Officers' Club or another suitable venue. The cost of lunch with drinks will be around £15 a head. Members are encouraged to bring their partners and make this a day to be remembered.

Major Doreen Cadwallader has agreed to organise the club's attendance at the annual Remembrance Day parade in November when we hope to march alongside our predecessors the Army Film and Photographic unit. This event is by ticket only as security is obviously high, and will require an early commitment. Again a lunch can be arranged if members desire. Doreen will try to find out if we can get a member of the AFPU to join us at lunch and share some war stories,

Lt Colonel Tim Purbrick has kindly invited club members to a MOG (V) open day at the Kingston-on-Thames headquarters. So far this has attracted some considerable interest and dates will be made available as soon as practicable.

Colonel Mike Peters has already outlined details of a Battlefield Tour in Normandy in late May. He will be contacting The Regional Chairmen and Secretaries shortly to assess potential numbers.

Interest in any of the above can be e-mailed to those organising the events.

Regional Events

Lt Colonel Graham Barnett and Secretary Sue Nelmes are in the last stages of arranging the first meeting of the West County Region with a lunch planned for either early March or late April.

London Lunch Club

The January 20 lunch meeting will be at the Cavalry & Guards Club. Those wishing to attend, please e-mail Major John Boyes. Subject to advice the February lunch may be at HMS President, a Royal Navy shore establishment within St. Katharine's Dock, close to the Tower of London.

Former Light Division officers of the TAPIO Pool and MOG (V) may wish to note that they are eligible for membership of The Rifles Officers' Club. Membership is only £15 a year and the mess in Davies Street is an ideal central location for meetings. Meeting Rooms are free on contact with Sergeant Yates, the Mess Manager, and those who attended the AGM will vouch for the splendid and very reasonable cost of lunches.

Where are they now?

There have been several inquiries of The NetWorker for reports on what serving members of MOG(V) are up to and the first of what we hope will be many stories appears below. In addition, The Networker is responding to inquiries about what Club members are doing now that they are out of uniform. This we hope will become a regular feature of the newsletter. Kicking off is Lt Colonel Lawrie Phillips:

Cacti are prickly buggers.....like some PROs

Naval history was, and is, Lawrie Phillips' lifelong interest and on retirement he dived headfirst into naval writing and book reviewing. In the first three months out of The Hole (Permanent Joint HQ at Northwood) he achieved what is perhaps a record number of letters published in The Times and The Daily Telegraph ranging in topics from General de Gaulle, Thackeray, aircraft carriers and Oliver Cromwell.

He and a naval colleague spent three years revising and re-writing a new edition of the standard semi-official naval history reference book, The Royal Navy Day-by-Day. The book, dedicated by special permission to Her Majesty The Queen as Lord High Admiral, was published in the Trafalgar bi-centenary year (*2005 for pongoes*) and was launched by the then First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Alan West, at a reception in Admiralty House, Whitehall.

In the foreword Admiral West refers to Lawrie as an outstanding naval historian "with a deep admiration for the Royal Navy and a profound understanding of its business."

Admiral West was sure that "this familiar and much loved book...a treasure trove of naval lore...will be well-received in the Fleet and that our people will draw fresh inspiration from it in the years to come."

The book sold out within the year, was re-printed and is again out of print. Lawrie is now working on two other books, one at the request of a leading publisher.

"That is all very well," says Lawrie, "but I have invested very heavily in a new garden shed where I have found my true *métier* in propagating cacti. Cacti are prickly buggers like most PR operators so I hit the ground running..."

Lawrie has just stepped down as Senior Vice President of the Navy Records Society and he serves on the Councils of the Society for Nautical Research and

the Hakluyt Society and on the Admiralty's HMS Victory Advisory Technical Committee.

Editors Note: Lawrie may be excused the reference to “pongoes “but.....as for the re-growth of a luxurious full set of whiskers!

Lawrie spent 35 years in MoD PR. He had a parallel career in the Reserve Forces having joined as an Instructor Lieutenant, Royal Naval Reserve, and retired as Lt Colonel Royal Engineers (V) in the TAPIO Pool.

During his civilian career Lawrie served in Northern Ireland, Bosnia (Chief of P Info to Commander UNPROFOR) in Hong Kong (Director of PR) and in “numerous brush flare-ups and cock ups “overseas.

At MoD Lawrie was at various times Personal Press Officer to the Secretary of State for Defence, Assistant Chief of PR (Central) and Head of Publicity. He was Fleet PR Officer several times and was the first Head of Media Operations in the newly established Permanent Joint HQ at Northwood. He retired in 2001 after four years in this exacting post. He tells The Networker: “I am very content in my final posting as “Acting Assistant Press Officer of the Northwood, Ruislip and District Gardening and Allotment Society.”



Above: Lawrie responds to the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Alan West (in background) at the launch of his new book The Royal Navy Day-by-Day, held at Admiralty House, Whitehall.

Combat Camera Team in Iraq

By Capt Ric Cole R IRISH

In January 2008 I deployed to Basra as the OC of the Combat Camera Team (CCT) with the Multi National Division (South East). I took over from Capt Lorna Ward, also from the Media Operations Group (Volunteers) as she returned to Sky News.

My team was Cpl Sharron Davies, who fulfilled the role of Electronic News Gatherer (ENG) from the Parachute Training School at RAF Brize Norton and photographer Cpl (now Sgt) Martin Coleman from RAF Lossiemouth. For both, this was their first operational tour.

Once the whole team were in Iraq and had passed through their in-theatre training, we were ready... But nothing happened. The first half of our tour was marked by a total lack of 'action'. It was a difficult period as the Team Leader. So I set about finding work for the team. We recorded St Valentine's Day messages for the Germany-based units for the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) and did too many "home town stories" to recall.

One notable success was a piece about the Theatre Military Working Dogs Unit (TMWDU) after a chance image of Bertie the search dog during an anti-smuggling operation on the Al Faw peninsula. Cpl Coleman spent several days in the Unit and captured images of the dogs and their handlers patrolling the Contingency Operating Base (COB) and the Unit's OC vet Capt Claire Budge, operating on one unfortunate dog's cut paw. The resulting piece appeared in the Shooting Times, Shooting Gazette and K9 magazine.

We also had images appear in Combat & Survival magazine and the BBC News website, while Cpl Davies' footage was being used by the BBC, Sky News and Al Jazeera.

The fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq marked the half-way point of the tour and we hosted a number of journalists, including; BBC's Defence Correspondent Caroline Wyatt, Kim Samgupta from the Independent and Deborah Haynes from the Times. GMTV also sent out a team and did a series live segments each morning about life on the COB. The anniversary was seen as an important milestone and the media coverage was unexpectedly positive, focusing on those serving in Iraq, not the losses or the politics of the operation.

No sooner had the journalists boarded the transporter back to the UK, the tour changed. Iraqi PM Maliki gave the order and Gen Mohan moved into Basra to retake the city from the clutches of the Shia Militia.



Above: Captain Ric Cole, a freelance photographer in civilian life, pictured in Iraq

The CCT were with the first British troops back into the city, the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and the Combat Support Regiment forced a supply convoy through the city to the Iraqi HQ at the Shatt al-Arab Hotel. This bold move was expected to meet with fierce resistance and would probably have to fight in and out of the city. As it turned out, not a shot was fired.

As the Iraqi plan unfolded and lawless areas of the city were retaken, the CCT was in the thick of it, including the Iraqi Security Forces push through the Shia stronghold of the al-Hyyaniyah district, where the body of a US defence contractor was found in an open grave. The Iraqis also recovered hundreds of tonnes of weapons and munitions, which the Team photographed for the Weapons Intelligence community to paw over.

Being so personally involved in such a historic operation was a wonderful opportunity, as a soldier and as a photographer. To see the team's images and footage appearing on the world's news media was hugely rewarding.

The last day of my tour was also marked by an historic event; Defence Secretary Des Browne went for a walk about in downtown Basra and sat with senior Iraqi officers in a local coffee shop. The footage was used by the BBC and the images can still be seen on the news websites.

The tour was not all happy, a number of soldiers were injured and Sgt Baz Barwood from 903 Expeditionary Air Wing was tragically killed during an indirect fire (IDF) attack. Filming his repatriation service was by far one of the hardest tasks I have ever had to undertake.

But despite the difficulties of the tour, it has not put me off and I am off to Afghanistan in 2009 to work in the Press Information Centre in Helmand province.

News of our Light Blue Friends

For many years TAPIOs and MOG (V) invited members of the RAF and the Royal Navy public information teams to join in our training and we experienced some interesting moments. Memories of these surfaced at the P&S Christmas dinner in the Army & Navy Club when Colonels Peter Bishop and Mike Peters "swung the lamp" with tales of Exercise Purple Warrior in Stranraer. That week long combined forces exercise included media operators from all three services and was most notable for the media team being billeted in a local hotel that matched Fawly Towers.

Mike Peters made contact with former Squadron OC Alex Dickson recently to find him retired but much associated with what is now 7644 Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force. Alex is Honorary Air Commodore of the RAF's media

operations squadron and is pictured below, sporting a chest full of medals to rival that of Major Peter Griffiths, with one of the newest members - Flying Officer Tom Calver. Alex continues his civilian broadcasting career in Scotland



7644 Squadron, based at RAF Halton, is now 19 strong and recently welcomed a new commanding officer in Wing Commander Steve Dargan, who is well known to many club members? This is Steve's second time around as squadron OC and he returns to the role after retiring as DACOS Reserves last year. Most of Steve's career appointments were in public relations and operational roles with the Fleet Air Arm and Submarine Service. He was one of the very small number of people to receive flying pay and submarine pay at the same time

After qualifying in broadcasting and television production Steve taught film and TV production techniques to degree level in the USA and at the largest school of photography in Europe. He served six years as OC Public Relations and Photographic Squadron and was director and lighting cameraman on two award winning recruiting programmes.

Steve also served for six years as a Public Affairs Officer with the Royal Naval Reserves. He organised media coverage of the D-Day commemorations and shortly after transferred to the RAF with 7644 Squadron (VR) before taking command in August 2000.

Keep it coming

Any offerings for Where they are now? or Serving Officer tales from the frontline are welcome. Please contact Colonel Mike Peters on 01202 559950 or e-mail michaelpcoms@btinternet.com

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