



JANUARY 2024

REMEMBRANCE

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ROYAL ARTILLERY EQUESTRIAN

# GUNNER

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### Gunner Rules

#### Guidance on Submissions

We welcome articles and pictures on all Regimental matters these articles must be submitted through the chain of command, in accordance with the Gunner content framework.

Articles must be written in Microsoft Word. Photographs must be original JPEGs; at the highest resolution; (not embedded in the article).

When using abbreviations in an article, please write the abbreviation in full, followed by the abbreviation in brackets.

Articles must be received by the 15th day of the month preceeding the magazines publication. Please send to [RARHQ-Publications@mod.gov.uk](mailto:RARHQ-Publications@mod.gov.uk)

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# GUNNER



## JANUARY 2024

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Chelsea Pensioner Warrant Officer Class 2, Colin Thackery and Gunner White  
Front cover photo taken by Michael Patrick

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### Lieutenant General Andrew Gregory KBE CB DL Master Gunner St James's Park

A Very Happy New Year to all the Gunner family. The start of 2024 provides an opportunity to reflect on recent times and to look forward. And what is my core message? It is one of 'Belief' in the Regiment and the Regimental family; I believe there are plenty of reasons to be positive.

The highlight of 2023 was hearing that His Majesty King Charles III was pleased to become our Captain General; he is very keen to learn more about the Royal Regiment and we look forward to engaging with him this year. Even before that news, the Regiment was honoured to march as part of His Majesty's Coronation as well as providing Royal Salutes across the nation to mark both that and other State Occasions. Officers and Other Ranks from across the Gunners did us proud.

A welcome return to a focus on preparing for warfighting within the Army, reinforced by lessons coming out of Ukraine, means our capabilities are priorities for investment. The Chief of the General Staff describes these as his '4+1+1', with air defence, fires and uncrewed air systems being the top three and recognised as pivotal in modern warfare. They are followed by electronic warfare, command and control and logistics. That growth in what we provide has started with 137 (Java) Battery RA and 42 (Alem Hamza) Battery RA both coming out of suspended animation and becoming part of 12 Regiment RA and 32 Regiment RA respectively. Additionally, we have welcomed 100th (Yeomanry) Regiment back into the Order of Battle. Artillery equipment has been at the forefront of that required by the Ukrainian armed forces; 1st Regiment RHA and 19 Regiment RA worked extremely hard to ensure that the majority of our AS90 fleet would perform well when taken into battle in Ukraine. ARCHER, the intermediate replacement for AS90, has started to arrive and 19 Regiment now have an exciting opportunity to develop new tactics, techniques and procedures that will stand us well in the future. More broadly, across the Regiment, we are coming together ever more under the banner of 'Find and Strike' – that is what we do.

Maintaining our officer and soldier strength across both the Royal Artillery's Regular and Reserve regiments is the main effort for activities in the early part of 2024. While other parts of the Army and Armed Forces are facing similar challenges, we are now doing all we can to sell the very positive message that the Gunners are a growing and vibrant part of Defence. Our people continue to be committed to a multitude of operational theatres across the globe,

including Eastern Europe and the Middle East, something that will endure well into 2024. I know I speak for the whole Gunner Family when I say that my thoughts were with those deployed, and their loved ones at home, during the recent Holiday Season. Indeed, our families have to live with the constant realities of movement, separation and the worry and stress that comes with military life; I thank them for all the support they give to members of the Regiment.

This year's calendar is already shaping up to be very exciting! With the Combined Services Point to Point at Larkhill on the 4th February, this will make a great prelude to this year's Royal Artillery Gold Cup at Sandown Park on the 15th February. Acting as our main Gunner Reunion, it is looking to be the biggest for years and I hope to see as many of you there as possible; it should be terrific. I also encourage as many of you as possible to attend The Royal Artillery Association National Assembly, to be held in Blackpool between 17th-19th May; it is another important 'gathering of the clan'.

We are in productive discussions with Army Headquarters over a site, adjacent to Larkhill where we can display the Regiment's nationally important collection and make our heritage and history accessible to the Regiment and more widely. In advance of that, excellent work continues to restore historic vehicles and other items, to digitise our archives and to put some of it on view; I strongly encourage you to visit the site at the old aircraft hangars in Wood Road, Larkhill.

Our website, [www.thegunners.org.uk](http://www.thegunners.org.uk) is being updated and will then act as a focus for the entire Gunner Family, both serving and retired, as well as providing links to advice and support from the main Royal Artillery charities. The 'Gunner Net' app has been launched; it is designed to ensure all serving and retired personnel have access, if required, to immediate help and contains a wealth of information. Gunner Magazine continues to be updated and improved by the Larkhill team; please send in both suggestions and articles.

This is no more than a 'wave top' view of everything that 2024 offers the Royal Artillery; I have not covered many aspects such as sport, our welfare support and much more, all of which we should take pride in. But I am clear that 'Belief' in the Gunners is how we will best seize a period of real opportunity for the Royal Regiment. Ubique.



## ROYAL ARTILLERY GOLD CUP Sandown Park Thursday 15th February 2024



### AN AFTERNOON OF QUALITY JUMP RACING

The Royal Artillery Gold Cup, first run in 1862 and one of the oldest events in the horseracing calendar and a flagship day for the Gunners. Regiments will again be setting up co-located focal points, within a dedicated Gunner area, this time in the Surrey Hall, which forms part of the main concourse on the ground floor. This venue puts the Regiment very much at the centre of the day, with immediate access to the racecourse and bookies on one side and to the Parade rings and the Winner Enclosure on the other. It also makes a range of catering outlets more easily available, with convenient bars and food outlets, providing greater choice and the opportunity to have a drink and meet with friends.

Serving and retired members of the Regiment will be able to meet fellow Gunners in the Surrey Hall, but there will also be an option to book a two-course buffet lunch in The Gallery, which is on the first floor of the Grandstand and has its own bar and views over the track. It is hoped that will be an attractive option to those who wish to enjoy a sit-down meal in slightly more formal surroundings. This will include:

Two-course buffet including dessert

Pay as you go bar (Card payments only)

Private lounge, with shared tables

Gallery Badges and admission tickets included £49 per person, please contact the Sandown Park hospitality team on 01372 477747 or by emailing [London.Hospitality@thejockeyclub.co.uk](mailto:London.Hospitality@thejockeyclub.co.uk)

Entry to The Gallery will be restricted to badge holders only until 1400 hrs.

Use promotional code **UBIQUE24**

Purchase tickets by  
scanning the QR Code



Tickets at the discounted price of £14 can be booked online

<https://www.thejockeyclub.co.uk/sandown/events-tickets/royal-artillery-gold-cup-day/>

POC please email [Emm.Pagan-Skelley100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Emm.Pagan-Skelley100@mod.gov.uk)

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## Hyde Park 2023



The Master Gunner St James's Park Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Gregory KBE CB

The Royal Artillery Service of Remembrance at Hyde Park Corner is the pinnacle of any RASM appointment to deliver. Having once stood as the Memorial Guard in 2008 I have first hand experience of the effort that is required to ensure its successful delivery on the day. This year's Service was supported by 32nd Regiment Royal Artillery (The Wessex Gunners). The efforts of the entire regiment were impressive, and they whole heartedly delivered an impeccable Service. Aply supported by the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery, I could not have been more impressed. To see over 100 serving and retired conduct the march past was fantastic, from the soldiers in their Initial Trade Training to the oldest gunner on parade, a sight that brought a smile to all. A special mention to the YOs' Branch, Chelsea Pensioners, WO2 Harris, and SSgt Grant for their continued support, we really are blessed in the Gunner family. As my final Service, I look forward to attending every year and having the opportunity to take in the Service in all its glory.

Parade Commander Major J Brackley RA, Battery Commander 22 (Gibraltar 1779 – 1783) Battery:

It was an immense honour and an enormous privilege to be a part of the 2023 Ceremony of Remembrance at Hyde Park Corner. As a Battery Commander, I can honestly say that this was one of the proudest and most defining moments of my career thus far. Everyone involved, be they marching, spectating or part of the incredible admin party was a huge credit to 32nd Regiment Royal Artillery (32RA), their Batteries, to the wider Royal Regiment and to themselves. Everyone that day felt a special kinship with all our forebears who have gone before us. There was, of course, deserved poignance given to the 49,076 killed during the Great War and the 29,924 killed in World War II commemorated on the memorial itself, extended to all the Gunners who have made the ultimate sacrifice, no matter when or where they served. We will remember them.

The journey culminating with the parade on 12 Nov 23 began months ago, with the task



of providing the marching contingent and the surrounding administration being given to 32RA. The direction from the Regimental Chain of Command was clear – this activity was to be supported by all, to be given all due diligence and the importance of which extended very much beyond the Regiment itself. We then began our work alongside RA RHQ, who could not have been more helpful in their assistance, ranging from organising recces to London, orchestrating seating plans and then overseeing the drill preparations themselves.

Ensuring the standards of the Marching Contingents is no mean feat and one that is achieved through the generosity of time and experience from SNCOs across the Royal Regiment – it is not a part of their normal day job. The key individuals that we were blessed to have instructing us were WO1 (MG) Jaime Shilling from the YO branch, WO2 (RA BSM) Lee Porter, WO2 Ryland Harris and SSgt Paul Grant from the RSA. Whilst foot drill is taught to us all, the length of time from when last conducted can vary significantly! This was even more pronounced for the Memorial Guard, some of whom had not conducted rifle drill for 7 years. No-one, instructors or participants, were daunted by this challenge, with all conducting themselves with the utmost professionalism, rigour and desire to achieve excellence. The weather itself could not stop the preparations, although we did divest ourselves of the woollen greatcoats in the heaviest deluges. The rehearsals themselves were planned with absolute precision, with the ground measured and marked to accurately reflect Hyde Park Corner itself. The RASM and then the Regimental Colonel conducted their respective rehearsals and the weekend itself loomed.

At this point, it is most pertinent to highlight and celebrate just how fantastic the admin party were in their steadfast support. Before Remembrance weekend had even begun, they had already: issued out greatcoats and accoutrements; collated all the logistical items required; worked out cabling and connectivity for PA systems; organised transport;

arranged feeding throughout the weekend and in two separate locations; plus much more besides. For the rehearsal at Hyde Park Corner on the Saturday, they arrived even earlier than the rest to set up chairs, speakers and RLS for the marching troops. During the afternoon and into Saturday evening, there was a very high-profile protest march that went around Hyde Park Corner itself. That evening, I was sent a picture of our Memorial, which had been besmirched by banners, placards and stickers. However, on the morning of Remembrance Sunday itself, our admin party diligently, conscientiously and respectfully tended to our memorial, returning it to its proper state. No-one would have believed how transformative their efforts were, had they not seen the pictures. This one act by the admin party, performed out of the public eye and in the dead of night, embodied so much about Remembrance and the vital act of showing the respect deserved for our fallen comrades.

The marching contingent, wreath layers and all those in the parade on Remembrance Sunday then gave of their best and duly honoured the occasion magnificently. From here, the 32RA Chefs provided a sumptuous meal at Seaforth House, with the majority then obtaining refreshment at the Grenadier Pub, surrounded by many old and familiar colleagues and veterans, all keen to swap stories, re-kindle friendships and to simply remember. The landlord of the Grenadier and his staff excellently hosted this gathering, ensuring a great atmosphere and perfect conclusion for the day. It then seemed no time until all troops were accounted for, coaches loaded and then all dispersed in good order.

Remembrance Sunday is always a unique and sacrosanct day - the special nature of this event was magnified by working with so many extraordinarily talented and dedicated individuals. I cannot express my personal thanks enough for all the support that was given from across the full range of the Royal Regiment. Ubique.





## Recognising our People

2023 was a busy year for all and it is increasingly difficult to find the time to pursue personal and professional development as it is to find time to play sport. It is therefore impressive to have been able to celebrate the success of our people in the 2023 RA Awards and RA Sports Awards where the gunners truly excelled.

In October 2023 we held the RA Awards where we rewarded our people for their efforts across the entirety of the RA Awards and RA Personal Development awards. This event is sponsored by the RAI and RACPD and was held in the Packway Officers' Mess, hosted by the Master Gunner St James's Park.

### Royal Artillery Awards

The **Neville Walford Medal** was instituted in 1905 to commemorate the work done by Colonel Neville Lloyd Walford in his translation in 1857 of Prince Kraft's famous "Letters on Artillery". It is awarded annually to a serving officer of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, ranked Major to Colonel, for noteworthy service.

The recipient for 2022 is **Lt Col Keith Gregory RA** and the medal is awarded as a result of his initiatives in developing the training and management of his soldiers during his tenure as Commanding Officer of 106th Regiment Royal Artillery.

The **Napier Medal** is presented in memory of Brigadier V M C Napier CB CMG DSO who served in World War I and later commanded 1st Royal Regiment Royal Horse Artillery. It is awarded annually to a serving Captain or Subaltern in the Royal Regiment of Artillery for noteworthy service.

The recipient for 2022 is **Capt Alistair McLean RA** who is awarded the medal for his service as Operations Officer of 11 (Sphinx) Battery, 16th Regiment Royal Artillery.

The **Goschen Medal** was sponsored by the Goschen family in memory of Captain John Goschen MC RHA who was killed in action at Tobruk in December 1941. It is awarded annually

to serving non-commissioned members of the Royal Regiment of Artillery for noteworthy service.

The first Goschen Medal recipient for 2022 is: **Warrant Officer Class Two (SMIG) Jay Ireland** is awarded the medal for his service whilst an instructor within the Royal School of Artillery Targeting Branch.

The second Goschen Medal recipient for 2022 is: **Lance Bombardier Aaron Draper**, who is awarded the medal for his service with 34 (Seringapatam) Battery, 14th Regiment Royal Artillery, while on an ERE posting from 29th (Commando) Regiment Royal Artillery.

The **Lefroy Medal** is named after General Sir John Lefroy, one of the founders of the Royal Artillery Institution in 1838 and is awarded annually to a serving member of the Royal Regiment of Artillery who is judged to have made an outstanding contribution to the science and application of artillery.

The recipient for 2022 is **Warrant Officer Class Two (CISWO) Curtis Rees** from 1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, who is awarded the medal for his contribution in developing the application of artillery within the multi-national domain.

The **Alanbrooke Medal** is awarded annually to the Gunner officer who attains the best overall academic result on the Advanced Command and Staff Course.

The recipient for 2022 is: **Lieutenant Colonel Tom Bright RA**.

Instituted in 2012, the **National Artillery Association Medal** is to be awarded annually to a member of the Royal Regiment of Artillery Reserves (including Regular personnel if on the posted strength of a Reserve unit), for noteworthy service.

The recipient for 2022 is **Sgt Robin Green**, then serving with the National Reserve Headquarters Royal Artillery (now re-designated as 100 (Yeomanry) Regiment Royal Artillery) for his service during events surrounding Her Late Majesty, The Queen's death and funeral.



### Royal Artillery Personal Development Awards

The annual Royal Artillery Personal Development Awards celebrate soldiers' and units' personal development (PD) achievements and acknowledge and reward their commitment and aspiration to continually progress. They also recognise the important contribution that PD makes to improving an individual's competencies, thereby supporting an increase in overall effectiveness of the Regiment.

#### Apprentice of the Year – LBdr Jayde Southin – 32 Regt RA

LBdr Jayde Southin is currently serving as an ACS L3 Command Post signaller in 22 Bty RA. She completed the L2 Express Delivery Operative (EDO) apprenticeship in March 2023, gaining a distinction for all three elements of the end point assessment.

#### Assessor of the Year – Sgt Nathan Christie – 29 Cdo Regt RA

Sgt Christie is the Asst RCMO of 29 Cdo Regt RA and nominated as the unit's Digital Support Technician (DST) telecommunications apprenticeship coordinator and Green Mentor, having gained his Level 4 Telecommunications qualification in 2023. Sgt Christie has been invaluable to RACPD and his unit, supporting Green Mentors and helping learners complete their case studies via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), despite having an extremely busy day job.

#### PD Supporter of the Year – Sgt Gino Raffermati – 1 RHA

Sgt Raffermati is 1 RHA's Training Wing assistant, an AS90 detachment commander and assistant to the unit's MTWO. He took over the role of the Unit PD Co-ordinator at a challenging and busy period for 1 RHA and made an immediate impact. Within a matter of weeks, he reduced the outstanding End Point Assessments (EPAs) in the regiment by 20%, which has helped reduce the number of learners who are past their

Planned End Date. Of note, he has supported apprentices in the UK and whilst deployed in various operational theatres.

#### Trainer of the Year – SSgt Edward Middleton – 4 Regt RA

SSgt Middleton is the TACP 2IC of 1/29 Bty RA in 4 Regt RA. Over and above his professional role, he has completed a Level 2 British Weightlifting assistant coach qualification in this academic year. He has recently enabled the training of three qualified CrossFit level 1 coaches and 3 coaches who are British weightlifting level 1 and/or 2. This is projected to increase to 2 x CrossFit level 2 coaches, 2 x indoor rowing coaches and 1 x yoga instructor in the current academic year. He dedicates a substantial amount of his own time to personal research. He also ensures anyone that attends his sessions is also conceptually developed whilst receiving physical training, thus allowing the service person to take the principles and apply them personally in their own time.

#### Learner of the Year – Gnr Keshawn Lewis – 29 Cdo Regt RA

Gnr Lewis is the 2IC of 8 Bty RA's BQMS department, trained and employed as an All Arms Storeman. He completed the L2 Express Delivery Operative (EDO) apprenticeship in June 2023, gaining distinctions in two of the three elements of the end point assessment. He also gained Level 2 in maths and English and in the same busy year, achieved his Level 2 ITQ and the Door Supervisor qualifications using his SLCs to pay for the courses through RACPD. Of note, he passed the All-Arms Commando Course in November 2022 whilst on his apprenticeship, demonstrating clear ambitions to make the very most of what the Army and Gunners have to offer. Demonstrating additional professional development during such a short period of time, Gnr Lewis gained a Category B license and completed the Arty Log level 2 course.





## RACPD CHAIRMAN'S SPECIAL RECOGNITION – Capt Rob Martin RHA – 7 Para Regt RHA

Capt Martin is now the Battery Captain (BK) of F Bty. Prior to that (and for the majority of the RACPD awards period) he was the Regimental Training Officer (RTO). Capt Martin has an infectious passion for PD that permeates throughout the Regiment; a quality he has kept even with his move from RTO to BK F Bty. He co-ordinates, manages and assists the RACPD PD staff and, due to his efforts, apprenticeships do and will continue to

flourish. He is a true PD role model for all our soldiers and officers; a fine example of someone who is willing to go beyond what is expected of him to ensure our young soldiers achieve their best.

### PD Unit of the Year – 7 Para Regt RHA

This award celebrates the PD success of a unit as a whole (Regular and Reserve RA regiments) who demonstrate that their unit excels when it comes to reinforcing a PD ethos. This year the award was hotly contested, but it was the opinion of the panel that it should rightly be presented to 7 Para Regt RHA.

## Sports Awards



Sports Awards main photo outside

### Royal Artillery Sports Awards

In November 2023 we held the Royal Artillery Sports Awards in 14th Regiment Sgts' Mess which was hosted by Colonel Graham Taylor, Chair of Gunner Sports. The relaxed but formal event was attended by our most senior Officers and over 100 sporting legends, each of whom have given their all in the name of sport in 2022/2023. The citations that were submitted epitomised the fantastic level of sport that is being played and, in some cases, at National Level. Well done to all

those shortlisted and especially the winners on the night, you are genuinely fantastic.

### Long Service Award – SSgt Dowding 12th Regt RA

SSgt Dowding's contribution to Royal Artillery Sport as a player, and now as a mentor and coach, has been both inspirational and remarkable. SSgt Dowding is a formidable athlete whose Gunner Rugby journey began in 2003 with an early selection for both the Gunner Rugby Union and League teams. With over 150 caps, with 50 as



captain and 25 caps for the Army he has truly given over and above in the name of Gunner sport.



Long Service - SSgt Dowding

### Unsung Hero Award – WO2 Spence 32nd Regt RA

WO2 Brian Spence is the Secretary of the Royal Artillery Cricket Club. For twenty years he has represented the Gunners on the field, but for the last four he has also taken on administrative running of the club. Without the dedication and commitment from WO2 Spence, Regimental, Gunner, and Army cricket would not be where it is today.

### Best Coach Award – SSgt Holland

SSgt Holland not only helped establish the Royal Artillery Field Gun Crew, but he has also coached them to a competitive standard in the first two years of competition. A short extract from his citation highlights his efforts:

SSgt Holland has demonstrated not only a selfless passion for his sport that inspires and brings the best out of those around him. He has delivered tangible – almost unbelievable – results on (and off) the track, leading the crew to short term success whilst paving the way for Field Gun to become an enduring and important part of the Royal Artillery's sporting calendar.

### Most Outstanding Sportsperson – Capt Wild RHA 7th Para Regt RHA

Captain Rosie Wild RHA has had another busy year balancing multiple sports and her commitments as Adjutant of 7th Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery.

The list of achievements over a 12-month period is truly astonishing and include: retaining her crown as Gunner Cross Country Champion, 2nd at the Inter Corps XC Country Champs, 2nd overall female at the Inter Services Marathon, 2nd place at both the Inter Services Half Marathon, London Marathon with a time of 2 hours 43 minutes, 10th fastest Briton out of over 20000 competitors. And the list even goes on!



Most Outstanding Sports person - Capt Wild

### Newcomer of the Year – Gnr Hewitt 5 Regt RA

Within her first few months in the Royal Artillery, Gunner Hewitt has had a momentous impact on the Royal Artillery Women's Rugby Team. Alongside her remarkable talent and natural ability, she has exemplified the highest standards of dedication and sportsmanship, highlighting her as a true ambassador for the Royal Regiment.





After only a few short weeks in Initial Trade Training, Gunner Hewitt's prowess as a rugby player was immediately identified and she was selected for the Royal Artillery Women's Rugby Team. Alongside her success with the Gunners, Gunner Hewitt was also selected to represent the Army in Rugby League. She has also been put forward for Rugby Union trials and will undoubtedly represent in the future.

#### Best Performance of a Sportsperson U25 – Gnr Carr 26 Regt RA

Gunner Carr has shown extraordinary dedication and talent over the last year whilst serving with 132 Battery, 26 Regt RA. She has represented the Battery, the QRH Battlegroup and the Army in the Rugby, all whilst being deployed on Op CABRIT 12. Gunner Carr's exceptional skills were showcased in high profile matches against the Royal Air Force at Kingsholm and the Royal Navy at Twickenham, where she played a crucial role in securing victories for the Army team. She is the first choice outside centre and is remarkably gifted.

#### Regimental Team of the Year – 19 Regt RA TOW

This season the 19th Regiment Tug of War success has been remarkable. Collectively this Team has won 279 medals, 34 Trophies, One England National Colour, 14 Army Colours, 15 Royal Artillery Colours, lost a staggering 112 kg of weight, and culminated with the Regiment's first historic win at the Royal Braemar Gathering, in front of HM The King.

#### Royal Regiment Team of the Year – Gunner TOW

The Gunner Tug of War squad has gone from strength to strength in a spectacular season. Members of the female squad (5) were selected to represent England in both the British and Irish Championships and the World Championships. Both male (10) and females (5) have formed the foundations of the Army squad that competed at the English National Championships and won a clean sweep at the Inter-Services. At the Corps finals, the team entered all seven weight

categories and came away with seven golds, making it a clean sweep and were crowned Inter Corps Champions for 2023. These are the best results in several years, medalling in every category, particularly noteworthy when some of the team must compete in five weights on the day.



Regimental Team of the year - Tug of War

#### Harrison Award

The Award is given to any member of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, Regular or Reserve, who represents their Country at International competition, not age restricted.

#### 2023 Winners:

**LBdr Sevutia 26 Regt RA Netball Fiji**  
**Gnr Vulikijanpi 47 Regt RA Rugby Fiji**  
**Gnr Griffi 19 Regt RA Tug of War England**  
**Gnr Hadley 1 RHA Tug of War England**  
**WO2 B Fulton 19 Regt RA 7s Deaf Rugby Wales**

**Bdr J Gibbs 16 Regt RA Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu United Kingdom**



### Médaille de la Défense Nationale (National Defence Medal) - Bronze Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) Richard Carter



The medal



Richard Carter second in from the left

On Saturday 11th November, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Richard Carter was honoured at the French Embassy in London with the Médaille de la Défense Nationale (National Defence Medal), Bronze. Lt Col Carter, joined by his wife, Regimental Colonel Charlie Harmer, and Royal Artillery Sergeant Major WO1 Len Sanders, received the award at the French Ambassador's Residence before lunch as part of a very busy Remembrance Weekend in London. Lt Col Carter was subsequently on parade at Hyde Park Corner the following day.

Lt Col Carter received the French award for his work on Op SHADER in 2018, serving as Deputy Chief Joint Fires in the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) – Operation Inherent Resolve – with the Headquarters based in Camp UNION III in Baghdad, Iraq. The award is based on the close cooperation which was fostered between the Headquarters of the French 155mm Caesar Artillery units ('Opération CHAMMAL') and Coalition HQ Joint Fires Cell, for which Lt Col Carter was responsible. Lt Col Carter also received the United States of America Defense Meritorious Service Medal (DMSM) for his work during this Op SHADER tour. The delivery of the French award was delayed

due to COVID-19: both the global pandemic and then subsequently Lt Col Carter's own bout of the illness.

On discussing why the medal was so important to him, Lt Col Carter said 'It is the last medal I will be awarded after my 34 years of service. In addition to Op SHADER, it reflects close cooperation for me with the French Armed Forces from Bosnia to Afghanistan via the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and service at HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), as well as with fellow students on the Army Command and Staff Course (ACSC) at Shrivenham. Receiving the medal on Armistice Day 2023 was particularly poignant, given our closest ally's sacrifice in many of the same conflicts since the World War I.'

Lt Col Carter subsequently went on to serve as SO1 RA Workforce Plan in D Pers at Army HQ in Andover as his last regular army posting. He now acts as the Assistant Regimental Secretary, working directly to the Regimental Secretary, Colonel (Retired) Matthew Carter, and The Royal Artillery Controller, Major-General David Cullen CB OBE, out of Regimental Headquarters Royal Artillery in Larkhill.





## THE GUNNERY STAFF NEEDS YOU



Course photo

As soldiers and officers, we should all share the common desire to be the best we can possibly be. As summarised by the ancient Greek philosopher and astrophysicist, Aristotle "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not the act but the habit". Despite being thousands of years old, that quote remains true and is applicable to all Gunners. The Gunnery Staff Course is the premiere course of the Royal School of Artillery (RSA), the centre of excellence. It is where the most tactically competent and technically minded soldiers and officers go to be transformed into the next generation of instructors. The course is primarily taught by Qualified Gunnery Instructors (QGIs) from each department across the RSA. The QGIs are individuals who have proven themselves to be the most effective and talented soldiers of their cohort. They instil values of professionalism and continual development in all trainees in a way that is rarely replicated at Regimental Duty and exude a passion for their discipline that drives personal development.

In its current format, the course comprises a seven-week Common Module, a four month Special to Discipline Phase and a final exercise called Ex AGILE SCHOLAR. The Common Module is crucial because it qualifies the trainees as Defence Trainers and establishes a knowledge baseline through several doctrinal, capability and formation HQ lectures delivered by true subject matter experts from across the Royal Regiment and pan Defence. Trainees can also informally learn about other disciplines through rapport building in the evenings, allowing them to build a stakeholder network for when they



complete the course. The Special to Discipline phase sees trainees go to their respective branches and conduct intense tactical and technical training that is coupled with visits to industrial partners. The disciplines are GBAD, Close Support, STA, RPAS and ACS. Each discipline will be guided by a member of the Gunnery Staff throughout and trainees will be assessed on a series of formative and summative assessments relating to each phase of the course. The final exercise is the culmination of all the learning on the course and sees trainees conducting briefs, planning exercises and academic study to demonstrate their suitability to become a QGI (soldiers) or Instructor Gunnery (officers).

Most people only get a large graduation event when they complete Initial Trade Training. As the senior course that RSA offers, the GSC is well resourced and includes a graduation ceremony and dinner that is planned and organised by the trainees and endorsed by the Gunnery Staff. It is an opportunity to show the families what it means to wear the QGI/IG hat and meet your peers in the evening for a formal dinner.

Selection for the course is highly competitive and only the highest performing personnel who demonstrate potential are selected for the course by each Regiment. This creates an ethos of genuine professionalism and pride in learning that pushes trainees out of their comfort zone. The course is mainly assessed through teach backs, an academic essay and summative tests throughout the Special to Discipline module. Some teach backs are on topics that are related to the Royal Artillery but others are on psychological frameworks and academic studies. The essay often dismays people, particularly those that did

not engage with education while they were in their formative years however, there are a wide variety of topics to choose from and each student is assigned a Gunnery Staff member to guide them throughout.

Although most of the Gunnery Staff appointments are tied to the Larkhill area, there are several opportunities to be employed around the UK and overseas (Oman and Canada). The course provides trainees with c.£5800 worth of qualifications through Prince2Agile™ and the Defence Trainer Course (Army). GSC Graduates also have the excellent opportunity to complete a fully funded two-year BA (Hons) at Huddersfield University worth £18,000.

If you are driven, determined and dedicated to achieving professional excellence, the GSC is for you. It is never too late to start aiming for an appointment to GSC however, it is highly encouraged that you express your desires as early as possible with your line manager. This will ensure they can support you in developing the right blend of tactical and technical competence that is required to be suitable for the course. Aim to be the very best you can be and you will find that pathway leads you to GSC.

If you want to know more about life on the GSC, please contact us on Instagram at "ra\_gunnery\_staff" where you will find the most up to date photos of the current trainees and course activity.

by Captain A D Mclean  
Gunner Staff Course 04  
Royal School of Artillery





## IMJIN WARRIOR



Sgt Chris Meir set about achieving a world record for the highest number of dumbbell snatches completed over a 12-hour period

What compels someone to attempt a feat of endurance? If not for any material gain, why would someone voluntarily subject themselves to prolonged physical suffering? Perhaps the reason lies in what Edmund Hillary, the first man to summit Everest, once mused, in that 'it is not the mountains we conquer but ourselves.' Or perhaps it is as simple as an American president once stated, in that 'we do not do these things because they are easy but because they are hard'. However, I would argue that this is the wrong question entirely. What compels someone to achieve feats of endurance is important to them, but true significance often lies in the effect of their actions on others. The effect on their friends, their families, and their communities.

On Wednesday 6th September 2023, Sgt Chris Meir of 170 (IMJIN) HQ Battery, 12 Regiment Royal Artillery, set about

achieving a world record for the highest number of dumbbell snatches completed over a 12-hour period. From 8 o'clock that morning to 8 o'clock that evening, he stood in the same sweat stained patch of the regimental gym floor and lifted a 10kg weight above his head while battling the grips of physical exhaustion.

Chris completed 5,680 dumbbell snatches over 12 hours. To put this into proportion, that is accumulatively equivalent to lifting 100kg above his head every minute, a Tonne every hour and 57 Tonnes over the course of the day: almost the equivalent weight of a Challenger 2 Tank. Only Chris knows the real reason why he chose this challenge; for the Regiment, we have witnessed a true example of physical and mental resilience.

He not only raised £847 for the Royal Artillery Charitable Fund, but, more importantly, he included every available



member of the Regiment - from the newest Gunner to the Commanding Officer - in his endeavour. Those that joined stood side by side with Chris and attempted the group equivalent of his World Record Attempt. They completed 25,030 Dumbbell Snatches over the 12 hours. As the final mark closed and the last reps were completed – Chris

spoke about his inspiration behind IMJIN WARRIOR and his desire for it to be continued by the Battery and the Regiment.

Well done Sgt Meir and Good luck to the next Imjin Warrior.

by 2Lt A1 Gliksten RA  
Strike Troop  
170 (Imjin) Battery  
12th Regiment Royal Artillery







## The 210th Anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig



Dinner in the WOs' & Sgts' Mess

Between 16-19 October 1813, half a million soldiers engaged in the battle of Leipzig in Eastern Germany, known now as the Battle of the Nations. Leipzig was the largest battle of the Napoleonic conflict and at the time the largest in human history with 500,000 soldiers involved. Napoleon Bonaparte's Grande Armée, consisting of 195,000 French, Polish, Italian and Saxon troops, took up defensive positions around the town, having failed to take Berlin the previous month. In the process it had suffered 20,000 casualties and 13,000 captured at the hands of a combined Prussian, Russian and Swedish force. The French now faced a mighty coalition army comprised of troops from Russia, Austria, Prussia and Sweden, totalling in excess of 350,000 men and 1,500 guns.

Forming in the order of battle alongside this coalition force were the 200 men of Captain Richard Bogue's 2nd Rocket

Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery – the only British personnel present at the engagement. Under the command of the Crown Prince of Sweden, on the third day of the battle, the gunners were able to use their Congreve rockets to great effect attacking the town of Paunsdorf. Five Franco-Saxon battalions had repelled all attacks until Bogue, eager to join the battle, directed his fire onto the town, causing the defenders to withdraw in some disarray. The Rocket Brigade and its escorting Swedish Dragoons charged the enemy who were eventually forced back to Sellerhausen. The gunners were then redeployed and continued to offer further close support firing upon the enemy when Captain Bogue was shot in the head and killed. The Rocket Brigade had such a devastating effect on the massed formations of the enemy that many surrendered under the weight of fire. The Crown Prince posthumously made Bogue a Knight of the



Swedish Royal Order of the Sword, and to this day O/HQ Battery (The Rocket Troop) carries Leipzig as a battle honour and is the reason we wear blue and yellow today.

This year marked the 210th anniversary of the battle and is honoured every year by the current members of the O/HQ Battery (The Rocket Troop) RHA. The celebrations began with a highly competitive sports morning. In a welcome change of pace from normal PT, a round robin of softball, volleyball and dodgeball was organised. Although a far cry from the famous exploits of the gunners at Leipzig, the matches were conducted with no less ferocious passion and determination by all ranks.



A morning of competitive potted sports

Next, the Battery was transported two centuries back in time with a fantastic demonstration from Whinyate's Troop, a living history re-enactment group specialising in the O The Rocket Brigade and its campaign in the Peninsular Wars of 1813-1816. Modern day members of the Battery joined those of Captain Whinyate's 2nd Rocket Troop for a fascinating insight into the daily life, field conditions and equipment of a nineteenth century gunner. Dressed in replica Royal Horse Artillery dress the Troop allowed current members of O/HQ Battery to get hands on the eight-

pounder gun and the Congreve rockets used to such heroic effect at Leipzig and Waterloo.



Present day members of Bogue's Troop manning the guns

The day concluded in a formal all ranks dinner-night, hosted in the 1 RHA Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess, with the Commanding Officer to the newest gunner in attendance. Captain Bogue's sword was smartly presented to his lineal successor, the Battery Commander Major AJ Chalmers RHA, by a guard of honour from Whinyate's Troop. Next followed an account of the battle by the Battery's most junior officer and the traditional toast to the King of Sweden – to whom the Battery Commander writes every year in order to maintain those historical links at the heart of O/HQ Battery's identity. The day was generously funded by the First Trust and the RAA, to whom the Battery are extremely grateful.

by Sgt Chris Wharfe  
O/HQ Bty RHA





## Exercise BARBARY STAR



Reservists conducting military swimming test in the Gibraltar early morning sunset

In October this year, 101st Regiment Royal Artillery deployed to Gibraltar on Ex BARBARY STAR for two weeks on our annual deployment exercise. Our time was spent completing some infantry-focused training away from usual MLRS duties. I spend a lot of time telling my colleagues in my civilian job how many unique experiences I get to enjoy by being part of the reserves, and this exercise had far more than its fair share!

Upon landing we were immediately greeted with the pleasant sun, a welcome sight having travelled from a mid-autumn UK. Belying the extraordinary nature of what was to follow, proceedings began as routinely as can be expected – orientations and briefings were held along with a swim test, all in order to best prepare the cohort for the serials to come.

The ordinary did not last long, and the first of the unique training quickly came in the form of urban operations, fighting in built up areas. Despite the entire peninsula of Gibraltar being not even 7 km<sup>2</sup> in area (for perspective, this is almost 55 times smaller than Salisbury Plain TA) its training facilities are reasonably well equipped and specialist, and this includes a small FIBUA village with several multi-story buildings. As with almost all of the unique training that took place on this exercise, many of the regiment had never experienced operating in this kind of environment, so it came with a steep learning curve. The requirement to track multiple connected spaces, consider verticality, and plan and execute complex tactics simultaneously had heads spinning at first, but practice lead to permanence, and sections were operating smoothly by the end of their drills.



Following this was the progression into subterranean fighting, and while there were a smattering of troops who had experience with FIBUA ops, it's safe to say that essentially nobody had ever seriously experienced tunnel fighting before, even the most senior personalities with multiple operational tours. Compared to the complexity of the FIBUA serials, tunnel operations had an almost brutal simplicity to them (rehearsals in daylight showed this incredibly clearly) but once the light disappeared and reliance switched to NVGs and instinct, things suddenly became much more difficult. Adapting to the darkness was the main obstacle here and once troops had adjusted, rolling through alcoves and passages became a snappy affair.

We were also fortunate enough to work closely with the Gibraltar Police during this serial, who provided training opportunities with their working dogs in the form of non-lethal threat suppression, which was a novel departure from the usual 5.56 mm solution and provided a good perspective on the complexities of conflict resolution in a real-world context.

Members of the regiment were also able to develop relationships with colleagues in the Royal Navy, conducting familiarisation training on RHIB boats which we would later use to insert into the training area for the tactical phase of the exercise. A different challenge to MLRS movements but equally exciting as we sliced through the choppy mediterranean waves to reach our objective.

The final exercise compiled all these unique components into one 36-hour company-level foray across the entire length of the peninsula. This began with a

reassurance patrol through the city (with most of our training taking place in large plains and open spaces, this close proximity to the public, including a full posture change, was a dramatic shift from normality). This proceeded without issue to a tunnel entrance halfway up the promontory, from which several hours of tunnel clearance followed. The increased number of moving parts at company level added a swathe of complexity beyond the basics that had been practiced in individual platoon serials earlier in the exercise, but once individuals had adapted to the additional bodies and (once again) the darkness, competence swiftly returned.

Though we could not see it from inside our limestone envelope, day quickly turned to night, and the clearances came to a steady halt in a larger chamber where we would recuperate, and receive and deliver orders for the next phase. Throughout the night, reconnaissance took place along the southern face of the rock, with sections scouting approaches and enemy positions and activity to better prepare the final attack.

Before the crack of dawn, the company departed the dusty tunnels and advanced along the rock towards the village that would form the culmination of the operation. One beach insertion via the RHIBs later, and a company level attack on the remaining enemy elements in the village concluded with multiple neutralised threats, one rescued VIP, and one eliminated enemy commander – tea and medals all around.

As a reward for notionally clearing the peninsula of enemy forces, the remaining time abroad was spent enjoying some





AT and downtime. The various activities had us spanning the entire range of the peninsula's verticality, with time split between paddleboarding, powerboating, and exploring the heights (and depths) of the rock and its historical tunnels.

In the reserves, the time you spend together as a Troop, Battery, Regiment is often heavily diluted by civilian commitments, especially when units can easily be separated by entire counties. While stuck together overseas, everyone in the regiment, from the Commanding Officer to the most junior gunner, was able to forge stronger bonds with those alongside them. While it's easy to focus on some of the incredibly unique and exciting training opportunities we enjoyed out there, I think it's also worth not understating how precious that having that

extended time together really was, both in a training and social context, and one thing that I really appreciated about being able to attend the exercise was the chance to get to know those around me a lot more, not just as soldiers, but as people too.

All in all, this was an amazing experience for everyone involved. Two fantastic weeks greatly growing our understanding of complex environments and improving cohesion, all while enjoying some incredible weather – it doesn't get much better than that.

by 2Lt Matt Burden RA  
101st Regiment Royal Artillery



Reservists Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boat (RHIB) insertion

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Sunday 3rd December 2023



Sunday 3rd Dec 23, the Royal Regiment of Artillery celebrated St Barbara's Day with a service held at The Royal Garrison Church of St Alban and St Barbara. The service was led by Reverend Mark Henderson CF, Chaplain to 32nd Regiment Royal Artillery and accompanied by Venerable Stephen Robbins CB, Honorary Chaplain to the Royal Artillery. This year we enjoyed a superb turnout from the Serving and Retired Regiment and were supported by the local Scouts, Beavers, and Cubs from 1st Larkhill Group, a truly 'family' affair.

Following the service we enjoyed a superb carvery lunch, which was held in the Royal Artillery Officers' Mess. The lunch allows a more informal reunion event and is a great way to keep the family lines of communication open, delivered in a fine establishment which showcases our rich heritage perfectly.

Many thanks go to all involved with organising every aspect of the day, and to the hundreds of the gunner family that supported it, it was much appreciated and enjoyed by all.







## Royal Artillery Equestrian Team Round Up 2023



LBdr Lauren Sweetland on Amigo, Army Dressage Team rider of the year

This year has seen the Royal Artillery Equestrian Team have a busy and successful year. We have had 4 members on the Army Team and have been the main contributor of riders for the Loriners Trophy (a tri service competition, with a 'leg' at each military event), which is a huge achievement for one Mounted Sport Club (MSC).

The year kicked off with the Army Grassroots League (AGRL), which is aimed at novice riders and a good starting point for those wishing to get involved with equine sport. Bdr Fernyhough 5 Regt RA graduated from the AGRL and we look forward to seeing her out with the team next year.

The first military competition of the year saw the team at the RAF Championship Sparsholt. This was a 4-day competition with dressage, show jumping and combined training. It was a successful week with a

range of top placings and personal goals achieved.

Over easter leave the team assisted Larkhill Eventing at the British Eventing competition at Knighton Down. This was 3 days of hard work ranging from setting up, pole picking and a lot of running around. As a result of our efforts, the team received sponsorship from Larkhill Eventing, which supported the team through training with gold medallist Lucinda Fredericks and offset competition costs throughout the season. Many of our achievements would not have been possible without Larkhill BE's financial support for which we are incredibly grateful.

At the end of May we had the UK Armed Forces Dressage Championship at Weston Lawns. This saw LBdr Griggs step up a level within her discipline, coming away with a range of rosettes.



July saw the show jumpers amongst the team at the Royal Tournament held at the Defence Animal Training Regiment, Melton Mowbray. A fantastic week seeing LBdr Benny 26 Regt RA, qualify for the London International Horse Show in London, a tri service competition for only 7 riders.

The Royal Navy Championship at David Broome's event centre saw Maj Chapman out at her first event on her new horse having an educational and successful week.

UK Armed Forces Championship at Addington Manor. An incredibly busy 2 days saw riders step up last minute for the final Loriners Leg, which resulted in 3 out of 4 members of the team being RA riders. A week of confirming and consolidating the training that had taken place throughout the year, where a number of personal goals were achieved, and prizes were won.



3 RA Team riders part of winning the Loriners Leg at UK Armed Forces Championship

Finally, the Army and Royal Artillery Hunter Trials held at Knighton Down. Unfortunately, due to the date, not many could attend. SSgt Leighton and LBdr Griggs both had strong rounds on their older equine partners, seeing LBdr Griggs win the Intermediate section.

All these achievements would not happen without the strong bond our riders have

with their horses. All the horses have been self-produced and demand a lot of time and care from the soldiers that own and ride them, whilst fitting all this in within each regiments forecast of events.

Army Equitation Awards:

Bdr Lara Hails – Full Colours

LBdr Liz Griggs – Full Colours and Riders rider of the year

LBdr Lauren Sweetland – Dressage Rider of the year

We wish LBdr Benney all the best at the London International Horse Show.



LBdr Megan Benney on Quattro qualifying for the London International Horse Show

Should you wish to get involved in RA Equitation please contact the following people:

Grassroots Riders: Bdr Ryan Law – ryan.law103@mod.gov.uk

Team Captain: SSgt Lisa Leighton – lisa.leighton946@mod.gov.uk

Also give us a follow on Facebook and Instagram.

by SSgt Lisa Leighton  
BQMS, Gibraltar TSM  
43 Bty (Lloyds Company)  
47th Regiment Royal Artillery





## ‘Sport for All’ - Gunner cricketers in South Africa

On 13th November, 17 Gunners left Heathrow for Cape Town. Our playing staff spanned the ranks, from Gunner to Colonel and including a Reservist, with Strength and Conditioning, technical coaching and umpire functions being covered off by Gunner veterans. Arriving early the following morning, we deployed to our base for the first half of the tour, on the outskirts of the university town of Stellenbosch.

From the outset, the weather was excellent, something that made all the difference as we arrived at the oldest turf pitch in South Africa for that first game. With an impressive mix of talent on show, ‘Groot Drak’ made the most of the guests they had invited to put us under some pressure, but our batsmen and bowlers were up to it. Much as we already had a squad rotation system in place to ensure our relatively small squad could stand up to nine fixtures in 12 days, we were not expecting 15 to take to the field on that first day. Legendary hosting and excellent food followed; a theme of the whole tour. By now sharing our hotel with the German national hockey squad on a warm weather training camp, we headed to the picturesque (then again – where wasn’t on this trip...?) Elgin Grabouw Country Club to play the very sociable Elgin CC. A comfortable win there was followed by the far more competitive Somerset West, who were put to the sword by our bowlers, most of whom were by now routinely strapped up. A tour of the Winelands coincided conveniently with our only day of rain, followed by a return to the Stellenbosch Scorpions, opposition we first played in 2008 and who beat us four years ago on our last visit. Having gladly returned the favour, our main free day followed. While some spent the morning resting and getting the squad’s whites back into shape, 10 of us played a round at the Erinvale Golf Club, designed by Gary Player and in the top 10 South African golf courses. The place was immaculate in every regard. Life memories made.

The problem with returning to clubs you have beaten in the past is that they, like us with the Scorpions, want to return the favour next time. This was the case at Rondebosch on the outskirts of Cape Town, who fielded a team of mixed

ability but still laced with former and current first-class professionals, including a young Somerset allrounder who had been sent there for some winter practice. Rondebosch won by a single wicket in the end, but we made the game a closer affair than it maybe should have been, even though one of our bowlers in particular indirectly caused significant damage to surrounding resident’ roofs. Having moved now to Cape Town, a second rest day saw some of our party taking a boat from Simon’s Town for some shark fishing close to the Cape of Good Hope. Spending the morning catching and tagging Bronze Whaler sharks to aid with their conservation, others ventured up Table Mountain, all of us meeting up in the evening before Saturday’s fixture against the Friendly Cricketers Association, made up of some high quality players unable to commit to regular club cricket but who turn out when they can. A return to winning ways there also marked the last time Osman and Harmer would walk out together to open the batting, the two having played together for the Gunners for 20 years. The seventh game against Western Province, whilst not the opposition we had faced previously, saw some great performances from all players to make it six wins from seven. Although the last two matches, both against Durbanville, resulted in defeats, it almost didn’t matter. The Gunners won six of nine fixtures overall – the most matches we have ever played on a single two-week tour. The players returned home stiff and sore, many nursing injuries that had flared up early and a couple nursing their pride. The Gunners’ South Africa tour reset the clock and enabled us all to start again. There were many standout performances. Schofield’s hundred at Somerset West, several half-centuries from Cross, Wiseman, Parks and Warner, the newcomer Sawyer’s swing bowling and some excellent catches (which win matches) from across the squad.

Sport is alive and well in the Gunners, and particularly cricket. Senior players have returned and we have found new ones. The whole Gunner family was represented: Regular, Reserve, veterans, even some parents came to watch; but you can’t play cricket in the dark...



## When Discipline Meets Sportsmanship



Team photo



Portsmouth game, left Bdr Lockwood, 7 Para RHA and right Portsmouth player Jack Fox

From the parade grounds to the playing fields, the Royal Artillery Football Club (RAFC) embodies more than just the sport of football. It is a representation of a unique fusion of military discipline and competitive sportsmanship, with a rich history that spans over a century.

The RAFC, established in 1888, has always held a distinguished position in the realm of military football. The club is composed of members from the Royal Regiment of Artillery, one of the oldest and most distinguished regiments in the British Army. This intertwining of military tradition and football has given the club an unparalleled sense of teamwork and grit.

The Royal Artillery’s commitment to the game is as steadfast as their dedication to their service. Despite the rigours of military life, the team consistently trains and competes, bringing a level of discipline and tenacity to the game that is rarely matched.

One of the club’s proudest moments was as recently as 13th September this year when the RAFC took on Portsmouth U18s in what was a celebration of Portsmouth’s 125th anniversary. Pompey wore the club’s third strip for the commemorative fixture, with the salmon pink kit reflecting the colours of the club’s opening decade of existence. Pompey found themselves trailing 2-0 to the Royal Artillery, following a double from Gunner Harry Beckley at Privett Park. However, Portsmouth recovered from

being two goals down at half time to beat the impressive gunner side, as they staged an impressive fightback and finally winning the game 3-2.

The RAFC’s contribution to football extends beyond the field. They are instrumental in promoting the sport among service individuals, fostering a love for the game and encouraging physical fitness within the regiment. The club also actively participates in charity matches and community outreach programs, further reinforcing their commitment to service and community.

Today, the RAFC continues to uphold its legacy, remaining a stalwart representative of military football. The grit and discipline instilled in each player, coupled with their love for the game, make the Royal Artillery Football Club a unique and distinguished entity in the football world.

In essence, the RAFC is more than just a football club. It is a symbol of unity, discipline, and perseverance, embodying the spirit of the Royal Artillery regiment. As they march on, both on the battlefield and the football field, the RAFC continues to inspire, reminding us of the extraordinary things that can be achieved when duty and passion come together.

by Bdr Holden  
26th Regiment Royal Artillery





# Royal Artillery Assembly

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- Standard Bearers Competition
- Annual Assembly
- Sunset Ceremony
- Civic Reception
- Gala Dinner
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### SUNDAY

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## Message from the Chairman Brigadier (Retd) Mark Pountain CBE

Dear Members

2023 draws soon to a close, and we have said farewell to a number who have left our ranks this year, as we have also welcomed those new members who have now joined our Association.

We all know the saying, 'once a Gunner, always a Gunner' but what does that mean? Different things to each of us, probably, in our own different ways, but we also all share a common bond. The foundation stones of our Association are comradeship and welfare. Welfare has come to mean for many the help given by the state or an organisation to those in need, and certainly the Royal Artillery Charitable Fund has dispensed about £750,000 this year to help members of the Association in need. More widely though, welfare means the health, happiness, good fortune and prosperity of a person or group, which is also delivered through comradeship.

GK Chesterton wrote, 'Friendship implies individuality, whereas comradeship implies the temporary subordination ... of individuality. Friends are the better for being for two; but comrades are the better for being two million'. We may not be two million, but whatever our age, gender, ability, race or creed, whether currently serving, retired or a family member, we all share the common bond and distinction of serving or having served our Country through being members of our Gunner family, an experience not shared by any other. It is important therefore that we acknowledge that, and honour those who have gone before us as well as celebrate our shared experience and those who have now joined us.

This year has seen our usual time-honoured events – among them Sandown, 'Gunner Sunday' at The Royal Hospital Chelsea, the Royal Artillery Assembly at Blackpool, remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum, and our annual Remembrance Day service at The Gunner Memorial in London. I am delighted to report that these have been even better attended than last year, which indicates that these are all important, and wanted.

It would be easy to be satisfied with that, but we are not complacent, and we know that people turn to each other when times are tight. Following the workshops that I wrote of last year, we briefed the findings and the work now being undertaken to the Royal Artillery Assembly at Blackpool. There have been some 'quick wins', such as dropping Branch membership dues. Other initiatives will take more time, but we recognise the need to acknowledge and support in some way all the various groupings, whether families, former regimental associations, functional groups like the RA clerks or bandsmen and women, or interest groups such as 'The RA Riders'. We shall continue to listen and work hard to ensure that your Association is and remains relevant to you.

My heartfelt thanks to the National Executive Committee (NEC), our Honorary Chaplain, the Branches, all our wonderful volunteers, particularly our Standard Bearers and the Royal Artillery Band of the Lancashire Volunteers for their outstanding commitment, and of course the central staff at Larkhill for all their work over the year. The thoughts of the Association are with those on operations over the Christmas and New Year period and with all those on duty, especially where families are separated, as well as with all those in need.

May you be safe wherever you are, and with best wishes,

**Mark Pountain**

## Suez Maru Memorial Service

Standard Bearers from Nottingham, Bloxwich & Walsall and Birmingham Branches attended the 80th Anniversary of the sinking of the Suez Maru on Wednesday 29th November 2023. The Suez Maru was sunk by the USS Bonefish at 0817 hrs on Monday 29th November 1943 with the loss of 414 British POWs, including 133 Royal Artillery soldiers. The memorial service was held at the National Memorial Arboretum.







### Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey

His Majesty The King opened the 95th Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey today, 9th November 2023. The Annual event marks the start of the nation's Remembrance commemorations and has been held every year since 1928.

After the observance of two minutes' silence, The King toured the grounds meeting veterans, representatives from the military organisations and members of the public. Members of the Royal Artillery Association attended with three families of Royal Artillery Officer's; Captain Tom Sawyer RA - 29 Cdo Regt RA, Lieutenant Aaron Lewis RA - 29 Cdo Regt RA and Captain Alex Eida RHA - 7 PARA RHA.



### St Barbara's Day

On Sunday 3rd December 2023, the Royal Regiment of Artillery celebrated St Barbara's Day with a service held at The Royal Garrison Church of St Alban and St Barbara.

The service was led by The Reverend Mark Henderson CF, Chaplain to 32 Regt RA and accompanied by The Venerable Stephen Robbins CB, Honorary Chaplain to the RA. This year we also celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Dorchester Branch and we commemorated those members of the Gunner family who have recently died.

A carvery lunch was held in the RA Officers' Mess after the service.

Many thanks go to all who were involved with the organising of every aspect of the day to make this an enjoyable event by all those who attended.



### RAA Branches

#### South Pembrokeshire Branch

On Wednesday 15th November the Association Secretary travelled to South Pembrokeshire Branch to present Mr Colin Friend with a Certificate of Merit for his outstanding service and commitment to the Association and South Pembrokeshire Branch over 28 years. Colin has been supported by his wife Florrie who is also a Branch member.

'Colin has been a source of inspiration and is greatly admired by all the members of the Branch and also to the wider community. Colin has dedicated his life to the Royal Regiment and it is rightly fitting that he is recognised for his lifetime of service.'



#### RAA Dorchester Branch

##### Celebrates 50th Anniversary

The first available RAA Certificate of Authorization to form the Wareham/Dorchester and Districts Branch is dated 14 November 1980. However, prior evidence that a Branch existed in 1978 consists of humorous



acceptance replies from Spike Milligan and Harry Secombe inviting them to become honorary members.

Whilst early meetings were probably held in Wareham, by 1986 meetings were being held at the Royal British Legion in Dorchester. By 8 May 1987 a new Standard had been purchased for £173: 7p and was dedicated on 6 September 1987. The old Standard was laid up at Wareham Church. The Branch now meets at The Junction Hotel.

Early Minutes from 1985 show membership to have been 90 in total many of whom had seen active service during and after WW2. A Ladies' Section was formed in 1986 growing rapidly to 32 within a year. At the same time Branch numbers rose from 73 to 94, drawing members from further afield in the County. The Ladies Section disbanded in 2002 when they became full members of the Branch. In 2014 there were 30 members.

This year the Branch celebrates its 50th Anniversary. They currently meet on the third Sunday of the month at The Junction Hotel, Dorchester and conduct reciprocal visits throughout the year to other Branches including Poole. The Branch is affiliated to 29 Commando Regiment, 8 (Alma) Commando Battery. The Branch Standard was paraded at St Barbara's Day on 3rd December 2023.

With acknowledgement to 'A Short History of the Dorchester Branch' (2012) written and published by Rev. Norman Beggs.

#### New Branch! Sheffield

I am pleased to announce a new RAA Branch in the Sheffield. 71 Troop who are part of 269 Battery (Leeds), 101st RA are based at Manor Top Army Reserve Centre (ARC), Sheffield, S12 2AN Drill nights are Tuesday evening 7-9pm, the aim is to initially run meetings at 8pm in the ARC location, enabling 'Past and Present' members to come together. Please contact: BSM 269 Bty WO2 (BSM) Matt Bell Work - matthew.bell1971@mod.gov.uk or private - mattbell1975@hotmail.com.

#### Bury St Edmunds Branch

A joint RAA and RBL Christmas Lunch was held in West Suffolk College, students who are studying Hospitality and Food Management Courses took care of group in their Restaurant, EDMUNDS. Meals were paid for by the group contributions

to the college, and they were informed that the students would benefit from the college trip to the East Anglian Coast next year. A great afternoon of comradeship.



#### Newbury Branch

Seven intrepid members of the Newbury and District Branch of the RAA spent the first weekend in December in Celle, Germany, as guests of the North Germany Branch. From the moment we arrived we could not have been looked after better. Highlights include a visit to Celle's Weihnachtsmarkt to test the Glühwein and the branch Christmas Dinner held in the local Bundeswehr Officers' Mess. After a wonderful meal we played bingo and tested our luck in the raffle. Lots of fun, laughs, new friends and happy memories. Whilst there are too many names to mention, Newbury Branch's thanks go to Michael Bridgeman for his hard work, and Elke, Ben and Michael; Lee and Maja; and Henry, Bernhardt, Cathy, Nick and Bernie, and the two Santas... who all went out of their way to make us feel part of the Gunner family in Germany. Thank you!







RACF SUPPORT TO THE REGIMENTAL FAMILY

The RACF are here to help with those essential needs over this winter period. Let us help.

Some of the areas we can help with are household goods, funerals, rental deposits, removals, mobility aids, priority debts (rent arrears, council tax arrears, utility arrears), training, care home fees and annual grants.

£90,000 of our total grants pledged thus far have been for household goods - Our Gunner families are needing help to buy those much needed items in the home.

101,000 of grants pledged helped towards mobility adaptations and mobility needs such as EPV's Riser recliners and DFG mobility changes to the home.

If you have concerns about finding the money for essential needs, please contact us. We cannot however help with private medical or legal fees.

Please do not hesitate to ask for help if you need it. Call SSAFA on 0800 731 4880, the Royal British Legion on 0808 802 8080 to get a case up to us or contact us on either 0300 167 3998/0300 158 7035.

We can be contacted by email: RARHQ-RACF-WELFARE-MAILBOX@mod.gov.uk or the website.

Thank You's

"Very quick turnaround. Again from the Regiment and the individuals thank you so much for the generous offer and all you have done for members of 105 RA this financial year, your help and support is invaluable and has made real differences to our Soldiers and Officers lives."

"Once again thank you so much to the RACF. This will greatly enhance the recovery process for XX."

"Thank you. The Royal Artillery Charitable Fund are fantastic and help out the Royal Artillery community immensely. I am so glad they have supported me through this troubling time."

RA Historical Society 2024 Programme

Date and Timings	Event	Subject	Lecturer/ Lead	Bookings Close	Cost per Head
1930 hrs Tuesday 23 January 2024	MS Teams Webinar	17 Pdr SP M10 in WW II	Maj Frank Baldwin	Friday 19 January	Nil
1930 hrs Tuesday 20 February 2024	MS Teams Webinar	Tracing Frederick Miller VC	Maj Mark Martin	Friday 16 February	Nil
Tuesday 23 or Wednesday 24 April 2024	St George's Day Lectures, RA Mess Lunch and AGM, Newcome Hall, Larkhill SP4 8QT	War in North America: Could the British have won the War of Independence?  British Artillery in the War	Professor Jeremy Black (To be confirmed)  Maj Rick Hatton	Tuesday 9 April	To be notified

These events are open to all Gunners  
To register please email the RAHS Secretary by the dates shown  
Email Lt Col Clayton, RAHS Secretary: richard.clayton312@gmail.com

All Gunners are entitled to join the Society. Please contact the Secretary for details.



THE DUNCAN COMPETITION 2024

The Duncan Essay Competition is sponsored by the Royal Artillery Institution. As per previous years the traditional essay format will remain, but submissions will also be accepted via other mediums including podcast, animation, power point presentation or any alternative format that enables the same level of analysis expected. See the rules below for details.

The competition is open to all ranks who are serving members of the Royal Artillery (Regular and Reserve). All submissions are to be sent to RHQ RA COS no later than 29 Mar 2024. Additional direction and guidelines regarding RA Unit submissions will be issued by Formation HQs.

The Prizes are as follows;

1st Place - £1500.00

2nd Place - £1000.00

3rd Place - £750.00

4th Place - £500.00

The entries will be graded and judged by a designated panel and invigilated by the Regimental Colonel, their decision is final. Results will be published in Gunner Magazine and the RA DOWNREP.

Competition Rules:

- Questions are to be chosen from one of the titles provided by RHQ RA below.
- Submissions must be original work but can be from a single author or by collaboration.
- Virtual submissions must be pre-recorded and last between 15 - 25 mins.
- Essay submissions must be written in accordance with the Joint Services Command and Staff College Essay Writing Guide January Edition 2014. Essays not submitted in the correct format may be discounted. Please contact RHQ RA for a copy of the writing guide.
- The essay word count remains between 2,500 and 3,500 words in length and must be unclassified. An abstract is not required.
- All submissions illustrated with pictures, diagrams, charts and graphs must have the source stated for copyright purposes.
- To avoid a marking bias, all submissions must be anonymous and submitted using a nom de plume/pseudonym displayed in the top right corner of presentations and on the header on each page of essays.
- A covering letter must accompany each submission to include the rank, name, contact details and the author's chosen pseudonym which will be retained solely by the RHQ RA COS.
- Submissions must be received by RHQ RA electronically.
- All submissions will become the copyright of the RAI and may be reproduced in journals, magazines and presentations belonging to or associated with the RAI, at the discretion of the Regimental Secretary.

DUNCAN ESSAY COMPETITION TITLES 2024

1. In light of the proliferation of uncrewed threats from the air, where should the boundary between all-arms air defence and specialist air defence be drawn?
2. This is an era when significant additional resource (financial and workforce) is unlikely to be given to Defence. To generate resource headroom for investment in capabilities that will make the Army more lethal in the future, what Army capabilities should be retired from service now?
3. 'The first duty of the government is to keep citizens safe and the country secure.' Given the proliferation of long-range threats to the UK, is it time for a tilt away from expeditionary warfare to defence of the UK?
4. Fire or Manoeuvre? To what extent did firepower come to dominate British operational planning on the Western Front in the Great War?
5. "The art of science in the most demanding conditions imaginable." What lessons might we draw from the Falklands Conflict of 1982 which we would do well to recall today?
6. This matters to me?





Date	Event	Location
15 Feb	RA Gold Cup	Sandown
06 Mar	WO1 Convention	Plymouth
06 Mar	Master Gunner's Committee	Larkhill
07 Mar	Alanbrooke Lunch	London
13 Mar	RAA NEC Meeting	Larkhill
20 Mar	RACF Welfare Committee	Larkhill
21 Mar	RA Boxing Final	Larkhill
18 Apr	RSA Training Symposium	Larkhill
19 Apr	Gunner 24 (Regimental Conference)	Larkhill
19 Apr	Spring Dinner	Larkhill
20 Apr	RA Reserve Conference	Larkhill
21 Apr	Gunner Sunday	London
08 May	Charities Investment Committee	Larkhill
15 May	Charities F&GP Committee	Larkhill
17 May	RA Assembly	Blackpool
18 May	RA NEC Meeting	Larkhill
30 May	RAGCT	Larkhill
20 Jun	Hail & Farewell	Larkhill
03 Jul	Master Gunner's Committee	Larkhill
13 Jul	NMA Service	Staffordshire
18 Sep	RACF Welfare Committee	Larkhill
03 Oct	Alanbrooke Lunch	London
09 Oct	RAA NEC Meeting	Larkhill
16 Oct	Charities F&GP Committee	Larkhill
25 Oct	Alamein Dinner	Larkhill
06 Nov	Charities F&GP Committee	Larkhill
07 Nov	Field of Remembrance	London
10 Nov	RA Ceremony of Remembrance	London
01 Dec	St Barbara's Day	Larkhill
01 Dec	St Barbara's Day Lunch	Larkhill
12 Dec	Master Gunner's Committee	Larkhill



REUNIONS

ATTENTION ALL EX-25 ERS

2024 will see the 40th anniversary of the demise of the best gun Regiment of its day. We have just celebrated the 38th disbandment reunion in the usual fashion, kind courtesy of 204 Battery at Kingston Park, Newcastle, with circa 120 in attendance. There is still an intent to run the same again next year (Fri 16 and Sat 17 Jun 23). The planning dates are therefore Mon 24, Tue 25 and Wed 26 Jun 24. Indeed Tom Robson has managed to secure a number of quality rooms at the County Hotel and the Vermont and will underwrite the accommodation for the period through his company as a charitable benefit. We have made provisional arrangements with Newcastle's St Nicholas Cathedral, for a commemoration/celebration service hopefully supported by the Newcastle Scottish Pipes and Drums with 25 pounder gate guards and uniformed ushers provided by 101 Regiment RA, for 1500 hrs Wed 26 Jun. We will also be providing live entertainment and a finger buffet all at no cost to those attending. So at the moment participants should arrive on Mon 24 for a free day. Tue 25 you have the choice of afternoon tea for the ladies and a pie and pint for the men or whichever way round you prefer! Wed 26 Cathedral Service at 1500 hrs and as mentioned above this would be followed by a reception for our guests and a party in the evening as the main event. Come on boys and girls none of us are getting any younger and to aim off for a 50th celebration might be pushing it a bit so this is the big chance for one rememberable great reunion. Please sign in or request to join '25 Regt RA - 40th Anniversary' for further information.

THE ROYAL ARTILLERY BOYS AND JUNIOR LEADERS' ASSOCIATION

**34TH ANNUAL REUNION**  
The Royal Artillery Boys and Junior Leaders' Association will be holding their 34th annual reunion at Bosworth Hall Hotel on 12th October 2024. Full details including booking forms will be published in the January edition of "Trumpeter" which is issued to all members. Anyone who qualifies or wishes to become a member should contact The Secretary on exboysra.tm@gmail.com

SPRING DINNER

The Spring Dinner 2024 will be held in the RA Mess Larkhill on Friday 19th April at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm. The dinner will take the form of a Regimental Guest Night and is open to officers of the Royal Regiment, serving and retired, and their guests. There will also be some regimental guests. The Master Gunner St James's Park, Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Gregory KBE CB DL, will preside. Dress for serving officers is Mess Dress - ceremonial evening (soft shirt) and dinner jacket (black tie) with decorations for retired officers/civilians. The subsidised cost is £70 per head. For places, please apply to Jennifer McGrath either by email: jennifer.mcgrath924@mod.gov.uk or for further information please telephone 01980 845788. Places are confirmed upon receipt of payment as follows: BACS: RAI, 30-11-75, 00957269 (please prefix payment reference with SD24) Cheque: Made payable to the Royal Artillery Institution. Please note a first come first served basis applies.

ROYAL ARTILLERY OFFICERS' ALANBROOKE LUNCH  
THU 7 MAR 24



The next Royal Artillery Alanbrooke Lunch is on Thu 7 Mar 24 at the Army & Navy Club, St James's Square, London. Drinks 1200. Lunch 1245. The Alanbrooke Lunch Club is open to all Gunners officers, Regular and Reserve whether serving or retired. The lunches cost £70 and the price includes pre-lunch drink, wine and port. A cash bar is available after lunch. To attend the lunches you must be a member of the Alanbrooke Club. There is an annual membership fee of £10 but this is waived for serving officers. Members wishing to attend this lunch should make a bank transfer for £70 to the Royal Artillery Benevolent Fund (Sort code 30-11-75, Acc number 00568858) annotating your transfer with your initial and surname or send a cheque made to 'Royal Artillery Benevolent Fund' to the Regimental Secretariat Officer, Mrs Emma Pagan-Skelley. If you make a bank transfer please email the Royal Artillery Secretariat Officer on Emm.Pagan-Skelley100@mod.gov.uk to say that you have done so. Any excess of funds will be donated to the RACF at the end of the year. Do spread the message amongst your Gunner friends, and of course you may bring a guest (who may be non-military) should you wish, or bring a group of friends you served with. Commanding Officers are asked to encourage and facilitate attendance by their officers.





# LAST POST

Notification of Death:

Richard Sheridan 12 August 2023  
Graham Kelly November 2023  
Richard Self 23 November 2023  
Lt Col (Retd) John Ollerhead 16 November 2023  
Andrew Meikle 3 December 2023  
Barry Lane 5 December 2023  
Maj (QM) Eddie Mills 2 January 2024

**BIANCO** - Tony Bianco, Major RA (Retired) died peacefully at home in Warwickshire on 27th September 2023 aged 83 years, after a long illness. He served in 94 Locating Regiment, 3 RHA, 29 Commando Regiment, 19 Field Regiment and 27 Field Regiment. After leaving the army in 1977, he worked for a number of companies in the Defence Sector and spent much of his time in the Middle East and Scandinavia.

**HORD** - Malcolm Hord, Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) late RHA died on Sunday 12th November 2023. Served in 1 RHA, apart from when he was Adjt KTRHA. He left after 20 years in service to pursue a career in the Arts/Antique world. RD appointments (Tp Comd Sahagun Tp, in Aden as a Capt, BC Chestnut Tp) MA to Comd 1 BR Corps (FM Roly Gibbs) and DS at Staff College as his final appointment. Was offered Command of 7 RHA, but decided to leave at that point.

**NAESMYTH OF POSSO** - Major (Retd) Richard William Naesmyth of Posso RA of Devizes, Wiltshire, aged 84 passed away on 7th November 2023.

**MCSHERRY** - Major (Retd) Thomas Edward McSherry MBE died on 4th November 2023. He served in the Royal Artillery from 1959-1992.

**ROBINSON** - WO2 BSM Leslie John Robinson passed away on Saturday 21st October 2023, aged 81 years. He is now at peace with his wife, Anne (WRAC), who left us in July 2023. Father to Paul and Fiona and Grandad to Laura, Grant, Hannah and Brice. He is missed by us all. Les enlisted with the Royal Artillery in 1960, trained as a surveyor, at Oswestry before his first spell in Germany stationed in Celle with Y troop. In 1966 he met Anne which was the start of 55 years of utter love and devotion



to each other. Whilst stationed with 94 (Locating) Regiment, Les did multiple tours of Oman and time in Northern Ireland. Both tours left their mark. His final posting was with 33 Bty, Junior Leaders Regiment, Bramcote where he retired after 22 years service. The photo shows Les Robinson, top right, 57 (Bhurtpore) Locating Regiment. Guard force at the Maze prison, Northern Ireland, 1977.

**WRIGHT** - Captain David Wright RA passed away, unexpected but peacefully on 3rd July 2023 aged 87. David was a National Serviceman in Korea. He also served in 292 Regiment RA and 289 Parachute Regiment RA. He will be sadly missed by his wife Gill and family.

## Subscription Price List

To addresses in the UK and BFPO:  
The Gunner - £24  
The Journal of the Royal Artillery - £10  
The Gunner and The Journal of the Royal Artillery - £34

To addresses in Europe:  
The Gunner - £39  
The Journal of the Royal Artillery - £14  
The Gunner and The Journal of the Royal Artillery - £53

To addresses in the rest of the world:  
The Gunner - £49  
The Journal of the Royal Artillery - £17  
The Gunner and The Journal of the Royal Artillery - £66



## Lieutenant Colonel John Gilmour Ollerhead



Lt Col John Gilmour Ollerhead died peacefully on the 16th of November aged 89. John was commissioned into the Gunners in 1954. Loving husband of Elaine, his late wife, Father to David and Fiona, and grandfather to Rufus, Barnaby and Oliver. Whilst at Sandhurst, with the legendary YOs course of 41, where he made lifelong friends, he took part in the late Queen's coronation parade, holding the line between Westminster Abbey and Parliament Square. Two memories from that day: firstly, that the late Queen gave the line a huge smile when she went passed and secondly having to dress out 'in good order' to let the

Archbishop of Canterbury prep school near Salisbury through, who was running before finally retiring with a late having got lost on the gift of a set of golf clubs and way to the ceremony. golf lessons to become part of

John saw active service in Korea and Malaya with 48 Field Regiment, from 1955-58 and was to return to Malaya in 1964, working with the Gurkhas in jungle patrols and earning himself an honorary "Kukri" as a result. Returning to the UK, he did a tour in Northern Ireland in 1971 during the troubles and two tours in Germany, firstly in Lippstadt, commanding 23 Battery (which he described as the best command of his life), then to 1 Division HQ in Verden. The Army asked him to stay on in Germany for a third consecutive tour, but John asked for a posting back in the UK and was rewarded with a posting as 2IC to Benbecula rocket range in the Outer Hebrides – technically in the UK, but not what John was hoping for. After, not what he was expecting further postings, including the MoD in London, John retired from the Army. He forged a new career as Bursar at a local

a well know golf four who had the combined age of over 300 years.

In retirement, he volunteered for the Citizens Advice Bureau, and Salisbury Cathedral as a tour, and tower guide, only stopping to show people up the Cathedral spire at the age of 80 because the insurance wouldn't let him. He was very proud that his son, David, followed him into the Army, serving with the Honourable Artillery Company in a sabre squadron in STA. He has variously been described by colleagues as having a great joie de vivre, lighting up the room and wonderful at telling his many stories from a long and well lived life.







## The Reverend Paul Abram MVO

### The Parachuting Padre and Chaplain to HM The Queen

21 July 1936 - 28 September 2023



Photo courtesy of Soldier Magazine

The Reverend Paul Abram was initially commissioned as a National Serviceman in 1956 into The East Yorkshire Regiment. Having obtained his degree at Oxford, and having passed the parachute course (the Teddy Bear Course) with OUOTC he relinquished his commission as a Lieutenant to join the Artist Rifles (21 SAS TA) as a trooper in 1960, where he passed the SAS selection course. He attended a Theological College in Chichester, rejoined the regular army in 1965 in the RACHD, and was posted to 3 Para as their

padre, also taking on C of E Padre responsibility for 7 RHA.

In 1970 he recalled that he was due to take part in a parachute drop in Cyprus when a soldier who had been given the number 13 in the stick asked if he would switch places with him. He was thrust out of the Hercules with some gusto and as a result his chute was hooked on to the body of the parachutist exiting from the other side of the aircraft. When he looked up he noticed that his parachute was a single strip of material. Together they fell supported by only one parachute. He pulled his reserve just before landing and thumped into the ground hard. On inspecting his parachute later he was horrified to see several tears and broken rigging lines. He said that he felt rather weak in the knees!

Paul was posted to the Junior Leaders Regiment RA in September 1970, subsequently completing

several tours in Northern Ireland and returning to 3 Para in 1973.

Between 1976 and 1979 Paul was the Padre of 12 Lt AD Regt in Dortmund. One Christmas morning in Dortmund he went to the guardroom, told the Regimental Police that he would take responsibility for the sole prisoner who he took home, where the prisoner was surprised to join several other guests for Christmas lunch with the family!

Paul subsequently completed tours at the RMCS followed by a tour in Hong Kong. After a tour in the Falkland Islands, which he initially described as: "a Godforsaken spot", he became the Senior Padre in HQ Northern Ireland, followed by the Senior Padre in Wales, where he also had responsibility for 100 other padres. In addition he held the roles of Assistant Chaplain General and Chaplain to the former Bishop of London.



He left the army in 1989 after three decades of distinguished service and having completed 78 jumps!

Following retirement from the military in 1989, Paul took up the post of Vicar of Salcombe in Devon until November 1995. However, he was recalled to be appointed Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth II and priest-in-charge of St Peter Ad Vincula, the former parish church of the Tower of London. In 2007 he was made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order (MVO) for personal service to the

monarch. In his retirement he was also active in airborne commemorations in Normandy and the Ardennes, where he led many services. He died of cardiac failure on 28 September 2023 in a hospice near his home.

On once being asked what he felt his role was as an army padre he replied:

War is a vile business...but the chaplain does not use the vileness of war as an excuse to opt out of it, and instead elects to serve his fellow men because as soldiers they need God".

With acknowledgements to: Airborne Network Airborne Assault Archive Paradata.org "Lower than the Angels" by Paul Abram Professional Security Magazine Online article written by Una Riley



The Rev Paul Abram on exercise in Cyprus







## Lieutenant Colonel Ian Branton OBE

### 22 October 1935 - 19 June 2023



Ian spent his wartime childhood in Coventry and North Wales before being sent to Warwick School in 1947 where he immediately joined the Combined Cadet Force. Volunteering for regular service straight from school, Ian was commissioned into the Royal Artillery from RMA Sandhurst in July 1955. Following young officers' training at Larkhill and Manorbier, Ian joined 56th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment at High Leigh in Knutsford, and was soon appointed Regimental Signals Officer.

Ian loved his time as a Gunner officer, enjoying the opportunity to stretch his capacities and learn a variety of skills, not least being interested in and getting the best out of his men. Imagination, drive

and initiative, combined with a sense of humour, were also to serve him well in his second career.

In the decade from 1960 Ian was serving in 11 locations, including Singapore, Hong Kong, Shoeburyness and Dortmund with 14 Regiment alone. He served with field and air defence, and also an Army Youth Team in Chester and 1st Artillery Brigade in Dortmund and Hildesheim. In this latter role he clearly found working with NATO allies on security issues preferable to the daily checking of classified documents.

As a newly promoted Captain based in Singapore in 1962 responsible for troop training, Ian devised two team building exercises in Terengganu, Malaysia, involving tough river crossings, leeches and arduous jungle trekking. These were later written up by some of the participants both in this publication and "The Soldier" magazine. The intrepid captain also found time to attempt to hunt down a marauding tiger in the Terengganu jungle, thankfully with no success.

During this busy decade Ian was selected for the Staff College course Division 3, starting at Shrivenham in October 1967. Promoted the following year to major, he then spent a year as the Battery Captain of HQ Battery 24th Missile Regt in Paderborn, pending his "black bag" appointment as assistant to the Director of Equipment Management in Whitehall, then the largest directorate in the MOD.

Early in 1972 Ian was posted back to Hong Kong to command 3rd Light Battery, 47 Light Regiment, supporting the Black Watch and 2/2 Gurkha Rifles with whom he had a particularly close affiliation. The regiment then moved back to the UK and prepared for an Op Banner emergency tour in Northern Ireland. Ian's success as a battery commander was confirmed when his CO selected his battery to go to the Bogside, the most demanding sub-unit area.

Ian went onto study at the National Defence College Latimer in Sept 1974, and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel the following year.



His last posting was commanding 102 Light Air Defence Regiment (Ulster and Scottish Volunteers). Logistically a very difficult command, with three batteries spread across Scotland and Northern Ireland, he led with his usual unstinting enthusiasm, energy and high standards while still maintaining the respect and esteem of his soldiers.

For family reasons Ian left the army in December 1978 and began a whole new career for which his 25 years in the Royal Artillery had amply prepared him, in particular his organisational skills and ability to think outside the box. Under his imaginative leadership the tiny British Trust for Conservation Volunteers was transformed into an established and substantial UK charity that eventually earned him an OBE. He went on to start up his own freelance environmental auditing consultancy which led to employment by The Prince's Trust, directorships in both The Green Alliance and the Tree Council, and managing the Forestry Trust,

sensibly enabling it to become subsumed into the Woodland Trust. These different roles brought him into a whole new world of activities. He had to become practiced at public speaking, giving lectures in the US, the United Nations' 1984 environmental conference in Madrid and the Guildhall. He also had contact with a wide variety of political and public figures including Mrs Thatcher and Richard Branson.

Ian's interests were wide ranging, paramount being his passion for the Peninsular War and admiration for the Duke of Wellington, a fascination stirred since his days of war gaming at the NDC; his hand painted collection of model soldiers of the period, was impressive. After his retirement early in the new millennium, he helped organise and joined several trips to Spain and Portugal under the aegis of the Royal Artillery Historical Society. Ian also visited a number of the Peninsular War battlefields with family over the years and during the bicentenary commemorations.

At home he played a key role in ensuring that the hugely important historical accounts of General Alexander Dickson (Wellington's senior Gunner officer) were published as the complete version of 13 volumes of the 'Dickson Manuscripts'. These works were compiled and edited by his friend Lieutenant Colonel Desmond Vigors, just before Desmond's sad demise in 2022. Prehistoric and Roman Archaeology and culture were other enthusiasms and explored on holidays in the UK, Brittany and in the Mediterranean.

Ian is survived by his beloved three children Ath, Tim and Veronica and his second wife Jessica. He is enormously missed.







## Lieutenant Colonel John Robert Montgomery Pitt RA

### 22 July 1943 - 1 July 2023



John Pitt was a vivacious and engaging character, and above all a fiercely proud Scotsman.

John was at least a 3rd generation Gunner. His father, Major John William Sydney (aka Archie) Pitt MBE had been a regular officer in the Royal Regiment and his grandfather, Major John William Pitt MC, had deployed to Mons in 1914 with The Chestnut Troop. It is therefore little surprise that he served with The Royal Regiment of Artillery.

On completion of his schooling at George Watson's College in Edinburgh, John had aspirations to become an architect. But he soon discovered that there was no great demand for Cathedrals or such other monumental buildings. Despite this disappointment, John displaying his practical and resilient qualities applied to be

and was accepted as a Trainee at The Bank of Scotland. He became a member of the Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland; a qualification that would latterly stand John in very good stead and prove to be very useful on retirement from the British Army after some 30 years of service.

Whilst at the Bank of Scotland and in pursuit of some adventure John joined the local Royal Artillery Territorial Army Regiment and was commissioned. John was then persuaded to apply for a Regular Commission and on successful completion of RCB, John gained a Regular Commission.

John attended the YOs Course in 1967, and his first posting was to 2nd Field Regt, in Munster, North-West Germany. Due to Defence savings measures in 1968, it was announced that the Regiment would relocate to the UK whilst remaining part of BAOR. The UK destination was Barford Camp, a semi-derelict WW2 sheep infested wooden hutted camp some 5 miles outside Barnard Castle on the edge of the Durham moors.

In 1969 he attended the Long Gunnery Staff course and was

then posted to the team tasked with setting up the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) in Alberta Canada. BATUS was to replace the Libya training area which was lost when King Idris was deposed. This new training area was soon a vital British Army training area for All Arms and John was the first BATUS IG, serving from 1971 to 1973. On brief return to the UK he got married to Ellen in December 1973; they almost made it to 50 years together.

Following BATUS John was posted in 1974 back to 2nd Field Regt as Adjutant in Germany in Iserlohn. During this time the Regiment completed a tour of duty in Londonderry in 1975, deploying shortly after the birth of his first son. During this tour, John combined the duties of Adjutant and Ops Officer, and he also had to contend with studies for Staff College and promotion to Major. His first son John-Paul followed in the family "tradition" of Army but in the Scots Guards and not the RA.

Having completed this tour in Germany, including a NI tour, John, with a young family headed back to Canada as a student at the Canadian Staff College in Toronto.



In 1977 he was posted to Warminster as a member of the DS for Potential Battlegroup Commanders Course. The family welcomed another son, Robert who pursued a career as an Investment Banker, which pleased John as by not following the "family tradition" at least one of his sons would be solvent!

In 1979, John posted to 27 Regiment as BC 56 Bty, an M110 equipped, nuclear-capable battery in Lippstadt where he took pride in the men under his command. The command included an Emergency Tour to Belfast in 1980, where John was awarded an MiD in support of a 22 SAS operation in which Capt Richard Westmacott was tragically killed. Years later John was to be called as a witness to an extradition trial in Dublin for one of the killers. John regarded the MiD as an award to all the excellent men of his Battery. A mark of the high regard in which he held the men of 56 and they him, is shown by the attendance of 56 members at his funeral having travelled from Hull and Skye. They remembered sending John-Paul to Nursery behind the Battery gun sheds with cam cream on his face, which

brought a lighter moment to the wake; something of which John would heartily have approved!

In 1982 he was posted to Herford to take up the appointment of G2RA in 4th Armoured Division. John found this "Desk Job" challenging in some respects, from a personal respect but he was fortunate in his bosses Brigadiers David Quayle and Richard Mountford. The daughter of the former becoming an excellent Au Pair for the growing family.

John's next posting was to the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) as the Training Major where he formed a strong working relationship with the Training Captain, Capt (now Lt Col Sir) Andrew Ford Grenadier Guards, which was fortunate as younger son Robert had managed to glue Andrew to his office chair one day. Many years later, John-Paul was to serve briefly as 2IC 1 Sqn HAC and invited Sir Andrew, his father John and, the CO HAC from that era, Geoffery Godbold to the 1 Sqn Annual Dinner. The three failed to stop their conversation to listen to the Dinner Speaker, which caused a minor kerfuffle.

John was a gifted linguist, fluent in French, German and

Polish, which led to him being posted to Cologne as the Corp Commander's Liaison Officer to 1(Belgian) Corps. C-in-C BAOR was Gen Sir (latterly FM Lord) Sir Peter Inge, who had commanded the brigade in Belfast when John was awarded the MiD. His almost final posting was Naval and Military Attache at the British Embassy, Warsaw and has to be considered as the "highlight of John's life" as he was a natural Diplomat.

In retirement John served initially as a desk officer with the Defence Intelligence Staff in the Old War Office. Then, subsequently, as Secretary of the Special Forces Club in London and finally as Diocesan Curia Administrator of the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia. In these last two roles, John's Bank of Scotland professional credentials came into their own. What defined his success in these roles was his sharp intellect, sense of fun and his ability to work with others.

John sadly passed away in NNUH Norwich leaving Ellen, his 2 sons and 5 much loved grandchildren. Sadly a Coroner's Inquest in to his death is to be held in January 2024.



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