



LEWES BRANCH ROYAL ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION



LEWES BRANCH Royal Artillery Association 29th November 2025 Ladies and Gentlemen, Honoured Guests

It is with great pleasure that we have with us tonight the Royal Artillery Sergeant Major, WO1(RASM) James (Alfie) Lightfoot.

Also in attendance we have two serving personnel from our affiliated Battery, 43 Battery, (Lloyds Company): Lt Rob Poulton, and Sgt Phillip Reed.

43 Battery once again provided four sentinels and a wreath layer for our local Remembrance Service on the 9th of November here in the town centre so welcome to you all. As you can see, we are back at this wonderful venue, of which I need to thank the chef and the staff for allowing us to return.

Well, what a year we as a branch have had. We had a good turnout at Blackpool for the RA Assembly, followed by our summer BBQ at which the ladies won the skittles for the second year running - well done ladies

We also had a trip to Newhaven fort, which was arranged by our very own Mr Vice, John Talmey. This was followed a tactical withdrawal to the Thai Elephant for a much needed replenishment of food and beverages.

I was going to say that on a recent trip to the Menin Gate and Tyne Cot cemetery in Belgium, I noticed that the spelling of the word sergeant is spelt with the letter J and not G. My brother told me that this is because it is from the French word *serviant*.

The spelling "serjeant" is an historical one used by some British Army regiments, while the more common spelling is "sergeant". The "j" spelling comes from older forms of the word and was the official spelling in some regiments until the 1930s. The word "sergeant" originates from the Latin *serviens*, meaning "to serve".

And today it is only the rifles who still spell sergeant with a J.

But moving on, so as not to bore you any longer, I have just one more thing to say. These events would not take place without the tenacity and dedication of one person, and you may be surprised

to know it's neither the President or myself. We have only one person who makes this possible, one person who badgers us all to read our emails, to reply with our menu choices and, to be honest I was thinking of blocking him.

But year on year, our branch Secretary manages to get the BBQ organised, then our annual dinner, and our Christmas meal.

On top of that he manages to represent not only the Branch, but also the whole of the south as a committee member of the RAA NEC.

I know I drive him insane with my challenges to things he wants to do. But without him we would not be as strong as we are, so thank you. Can I ask you to just raise your glasses to our Branch Secretary Mark Harding.