

The Mercian Family Newsletter



Issue 4: October 2014

The Heart of England's Infantry

News

Regimental News – Happy 7th Birthday To The Mercian Regiment - The 1st September 2014 marked seven years since the formation of The Mercian Regiment. On the 1st of September 2007 at Tamworth Castle, it was formed in the presence of the Colonel in Chief, His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales. At this time, the formation saw three Regiments, each with more than 300 years' loyal and professional service to the Crown, merge into the Infantry's newest regiment.

The Regiments that formed The Mercian Regiment are The Cheshire Regiment, The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment, and The Staffordshire Regiment. These are still remembered today in the new official Regiment name which is:

The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire, Worcesters and Foresters, and Staffords)

Since 2007 the Regiment has spent almost four years in Afghanistan, completing seven tours. During the next year it will be deployed on exercises, while operating in Lithuania, Cyprus, and Canada. In future years, The Mercian Regimental Day will be an all ranks event celebrating sporting excellence at battalion level, and what it means to be part of The Mercian Regimental Family. We hope that everyone from The Mercian Family, both past and present had a wonderful day.

1 MERCIAN - Soldiers from 1 MERCIAN celebrated their 'Formation Day' on 19 September at Picton Barracks. The purpose of the day was to celebrate the formation of the new 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment (Cheshires, Worcesters and Foresters, and Staffords) and its move to its new home in Bulford.

Lieutenant General James Everard, Colonel Commandant of the Prince of Wales Division, and Commander Land Forces gave a speech to the soldiers of the battalion, congratulating them on their move to Bulford, and wishing them luck in their future endeavours. The battalion has now begun training for its new role, which will be as Armoured Infantry within 3rd (UK) Division.



The parade was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Mark Ellwood, Commanding Officer of 1 MERCIAN. It consisted of the Colour Party and seven Guards of the 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment. Private Derby XXX (The Mercian Regimental Mascot) was also in attendance, escorted by the battalion Pioneer Sergeant and Pioneer Corporal. Afterwards, there was a Families Sports Afternoon, before the day concluded with a combined Officers' and Warrant Officers' & Sergeants' Mess Dinner Dance.

2 MERCIAN - September saw soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, and reservists from 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment begin deploying to Cyprus on Operation TOSCA - a six-month United Nations peacekeeping mission.

62 soldiers from the Regiment's reserve battalion will join 213 personnel from 2 MERCIAN in patrolling the Buffer Zone known as the 'Green Line,' and keeping a watchful eye over the opposing Greek and Turkish Forces who have been at a stalemate since 1974.

The soldiers have received their United Nations blue beret, having finished a three-month training programme to prepare them for their mission. The training, under the watchful eye of UN assessors, included public order training for the worst-case scenario should they need to de-escalate tensions. When on patrol the soldiers will be talking to the local people of the island and helping to ensure that the UN mandate is maintained.

4 MERCIAN – Soldiers from 4 MERCIAN embarked on their annual summer camp towards the end of September, alongside personnel from 2 MERCIAN.



Deploying together to Brecon Beacons on tactical warfare training, the exercise was part of wider Regimental efforts to achieve Army 2020 and Operation FORTIFY; government plans to increase Reserve engagement and increase its capabilities.

Almost 180 soldiers from 2 MERCIAN and 4 MERCIAN have taken part during the past fortnight.

Soldiers spent the first week deployed in the field, conducting a variety of offensive and defensive operations 24 hours a day. This led into a four day live firing exercise to conclude.

National Memorial Arboretum Service - The Colonel of the Regiment, military representatives from The Mercian Regiment, and family and friends of the following soldiers attended a service at the National Memorial Arboretum on 1 September:

- Lance Corporal Jamie Webb
- Private Michael Ihemere
- WO2 Ian Fisher

The service was held to dedicate the new names that have been inscribed on the walls of the Armed Forces Memorial, thus commemorating the seventeen servicemen and women who were killed on duty in 2013. Families were invited to lay wreaths at the base of the Memorial's recently engraved walls.

'Lest we forget'

Battle Of Mons Commemoration - On Sunday 7 September, soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, The Band of The Mercian Regiment, and veterans marched through the centre of Chester to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Mons.

150 members of The Cheshire Regiment Association (CRA) and 120 soldiers from 2 MERCIAN were led by The Band of The Mercian Regiment and the Regimental mascot, Private Derby XXX, as they paraded to Chester Cathedral for a service to commemorate the battle.

Following the service, The Mercian Regiment and CRA were joined by "The Great Send Off", over 700 people recreating the day, exactly 100 years ago, when 700 community and employees of Unilever Port Sunlight, undertook the same journey to enlist in the 13th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment. They were the largest group of volunteers from any works in the country to sign-up to fight in the First World War.

Battle Of Arnhem Commemoration - The Staffordshire Regimental Association commemorated the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem – which began on 17 September 1944 - last month. On 12 September, Moz Wilkes led a band of brothers, who ran from Lichfield to Arnhem to commemorate the battle. Various other Regimental associations also attended the commemoration in Arnhem.

The award of the Victoria Cross to two men from the 2nd Battalion, The South Staffordshire Regiment, made it the only British battalion to receive two Victoria Crosses during one engagement in the Second World War.

Staffordshire Regimental Association Reunion - The annual Staffordshire Regimental Association took place in Burton-upon-Trent on Saturday 13 September. Lieutenant Colonel Giles Woodhouse, president of the association addressed the reunion at Burton Town Hall, after a parade through the town centre, and church service to commemorate those who had fallen while fighting for the Regiment.

Barrow Upon Trent Great War Commemoration - On Sunday 19 September, a plaque was unveiled to commemorate those from Barrow that fought in The Great War.

Previously in 1916, Barrow was awarded a special memorial cross to commemorate the fact that amongst the villages of Derbyshire, it sent the largest proportion of its population to join up for World War One. Of the 58 households in the village, 36 had men who had signed up by 1916. As it turns out, Barrow sent one of the highest proportions in the whole country.

The men joined a variety of regiments including one of The MERCIAN's antecedent Regiments, The Sherwood Foresters. The Duke of Devonshire was in attendance to unveil the new plaque. Lieutenant Colonel Dawber, and Lieutenant Colonel Turner represented The Mercian Regiment.

MERCIAN Regiment Soldiers Shine At Invictus Games - Four Mercian Regiment personnel took part in the inaugural Invictus Games during September; a four day international Paralympic-style sporting event for wounded soldiers.

Lance Corporal Derek Derenalagi won two golds in the shot put and discus, with a silver medal in the 100 metre men's ambulant IT2. Derek also competed in the 200 metres, making the final.

Lance Corporal Seveci Navelinikoro and Private Frank Aveh took part in the sitting volleyball, winning 3 – 0 against the U.S.A in the final to secure a gold medal each. WO2 Paul Bennett

competed in the mixed individual archery novice open, finishing a respectable 18th in the qualification round.



Mercian Soldiers Attend Opening Of Memorial Garden For World War Casualties - Mercian soldiers attended the official opening of a memorial garden last Sunday (28 September), dedicated to soldiers who played for Chesterfield FC that were killed in both World Wars. The Regimental Mascot, Private Derby XXX, and 20 soldiers from 2 MERCIAN were at the unveiling.



Fred Greaves, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at the Battle of Broodseinde in World War One is named on a commemorative plaque within the garden. He was an acting corporal in the 9th Battalion, The Sherwood Foresters (The Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment.) On 4 October 1917 at Poelcapelle, east of Ypres, the platoon was held up by machine-gun fire from a concrete stronghold. The platoon commander and sergeant were casualties, and so Corporal Greaves followed by another NCO, rushed forward

killing or capturing the garrison and the machine-gun. Later during a heavy counter-attack, all the officers of the company became casualties and Corporal Greaves collected his men, threw out extra posts on the threatened flank and opened up rifle and machine-gun fire to stop the German advance. His daughter, Hazel Greaves was in attendance.

The £35,000 garden was funded by supporter donations.

Story of Lieutenant Colonel Griffith Powell Richards MC (Military Cross) – Died 15th April 1944 – Aged 37 - On a recent tour to one of The Staffordshire Regiment's two Commonwealth War Grave Cemeteries (Comilla and Chittagong,) Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Cattermul, (DA Dhaka, Bangladesh) saw a memorial plaque marking the grave of a STAFFORD. It belonged to Lieutenant Colonel Griffith Powell Richards.



Lt Col Richards was captured in Singapore on 15th February 1942, and imprisoned on the top floor of Gillman Barracks in extremely overcrowded conditions. After four days, he managed to escape with Lieutenant Bretherton during the night. For three days they travelled over the island looking for food, discovering that two Japanese soldiers were quartered in every village, and that daily house to house searches were made. On the 22nd February, they made their way to the River Pandan estuary, where they had arranged to wait for other escapees.

The following day, giving up hope of being joined by any other prisoners, they went upstream and found a 12 foot 'bedar (ship).' They took this downstream, aggressively boarding Chinese Schooners blocking the estuary. Around midnight they set sail.

Travelling across the Singapore Strait, they passed within 400 feet of a Japanese destroyer, and six mine-sweepers. Fortunately they were not stopped. At midday on the 26th February they reached Tenjong Balai on Marimoon Island, where they received assistance from the Dutch to reach India.

During the next two years, Lt Col Richards became commander of 1st Battalion, The South Staffordshire Regiment. This battalion was part of 'The Chindits,' a British India 'Special Force' that served in Burma and India in 1943 and 1944 during the Burma Campaign in World War Two. Sadly, he was killed leading a counter attack at Henu road block in Burma during the campaign.

Social Media Update - On October 7, pages for each of The Mercian Regiment's battalions will merge into one official Facebook page for the Regiment. This page will be available [here](#).

For those still wishing to receive internal and welfare updates on each battalion, there are now specific groups for this. Each group will be administered by that battalions Unit Welfare Officer (UWO). To join, please make the UWO aware by emailing the below with your email address, and they will add you:

- 1 MERCIAN - 1mercianwelfare@gmail.com / 2 MERCIAN - 2mercianwelfare@gmail.com / 4 MERCIAN - 4MERC-BHQ-ROSO@mod.uk

These groups will be a hub for the UWO to provide updates on welfare, alongside announcing internal only battalion and Regimental events for families. It will also be a place to raise issues and ask questions.

The Staffords Mailing List – The Staffordshire Regimental Association is compiling the first ever complete mailing list of all Staffords, supporters and friends of the Association. This is to ensure all events, museum updates, association news, and other important details can go to all members and interested individuals. To join this list, click [here](#).

Upcoming Events

Regimental & Association Events

Gheluvelt Parade, Dinner & Commemoration – Friday 31 October – Wider Mercian Regimental Family - On Friday 31 October, there will be a march by all three battalions of The Mercian Regiment to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Gheluvelt. 1 and 4 MERCIAN colours will be on display, and the Colonel of the Regiment will also be in attendance. During the evening, there will be a dinner at the Guildhall, High Street, Worcester High St, WR1 2EY. Professor Hew Strachan of All Souls, Oxford University, will speak on “The First World War: Commemoration or Celebration?”



The Worcester Branch will also be celebrating the centenary during the day, at Gheluvelt Park, Worcester. This will see the unveiling and dedication of a new memorial to The Worcestershire Regiment.

The Field of Remembrance - Thursday 6th November 2014 – Wider Mercian Regimental Family -The annual service at the Field of Remembrance outside Westminster Abbey will take place on Thursday 6 November. Entry is by ticket only, and numbers are limited. Associations are usually allocated 15 - 20 tickets each, so if you wish to attend, please bid early.

Former members are requested to bid through their respective associations, with serving members and The Mercian Regiment Volunteers Association requested to bid through RHQ MERCIAN. To contact RHQ MERCIAN, click [here](#).

WW1 Victoria Cross Winners Commemoration – Friday 7th November – Wider Mercian Regimental Family - As part of the commemorations for the First World War, the government has announced a campaign to honour all Victoria Cross (VC) recipients. Commemoration paving stones will be laid in or as close to the birth place of Victoria Cross recipients on the 100th anniversary to remember the act of valour which led to the award.

The first commemoration involving The Mercian Regiment is Captain John Vallentin, who was awarded the Victoria Cross at the first Battle of Ypres, whilst saving with 1st South Staffords, Further details will be released closer to the time, via the Regimental [Facebook Page](#).

Other Events

Staffordshire Regiment Museum Night in the Trenches Event – Saturday 8th November - One of the most popular events in the Museum’s calendar is ‘Night in the Trenches,’ which will be taking place this year in the new trench system. This is an opportunity to experience a soldier’s life in the trenches in WWI. Uniformed re-enactors take the public back to evoke the life lived and conditions experienced by troops during the Great War. Further information available [here](#).

Fundraising Update

MERCIAN Annual Charity Golf Match - On Wednesday 3 September, Lieutenant Colonel Keith. Seddon MBE held his annual charity Golf match at Rufford Park Golf and Country Club, Nottinghamshire. This was in aid of The Mercian Regiment Benevolent Fund. 140 players took part and raised over £2400 for the fund. The picture shows Keith handing the cheque over to Sergeant Watts at RHQ Lichfield. A sincere thanks goes to Colonel Keith, who goes to great lengths in organising this event each year, and all the players who took part.



Ex-Manchester City Players Raise Money For The Mercian Regiment Benevolent Fund – On 7 September, former Manchester City footballers took on a team of soap stars in a fundraising match for The Mercian Regiment Benevolent Fund.



In action on the day were former players Peter Barnes, Ian Brightwell, Steve Redman, Eric Nixon and Richard Edgehill, alongside Adam Thomas from Emmerdale, Will Rush from Waterloo Road, and Rhodri Giggs, the brother of Ryan Giggs. The soapstars won the contest 4 – 1. The match is part of several played by the former players this year to raise money for The Benevolent Fund. On 8 November, the players,

alongside 1 MERCIAN soldiers will attend an event at The House of Commons. Here a cheque presentation will be made to The Mercian Regiment Benevolent Fund.

A sincere thanks goes to Derek Partridge who has organised these events, and to the players who made the matches a possibility.

Obituaries

It is with regret we inform you that the below have passed away. Our condolences are with their families and friends. Full obituaries will be in The 2014 Mercian Eagle.

- Malcolm 'Casey' Hill - 28th August 2014 - Malcolm was ex Worcestershire Regiment and served in A Coy at Jamaica and Minden.
- WO2 Roy BURNAGE - 5 September 2014 - Roy enlisted into The Sherwood Foresters in 1962, and went on to serve with the 1st Battalion, The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters before leaving the Army in 1995.
- Major Kenneth Charles Frederick Bowmer TD - 7 September 2014 - Ken was commissioned into the 5th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters Territorial Force on 10 June 1951 and to the TA Reserve of Officers in 1960. He was Chairman of the Derby Branch for well in excess of 30 years and latterly was Branch President.
- Private Paul Jukes - 16 September 2014 - Paul served with 1st Battalion, The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment, from 1973 to 1980 in Belize and Northern Ireland.
- Grenville Easterbrook - 15 September 2014 - Grenville was Bandmaster of the Volunteer Band of 3rd Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment for many years.. After he retired from the Territorial Army, he joined The Staffordshire Regiment Association and went onto to become President of the Wolverhampton Branch.

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