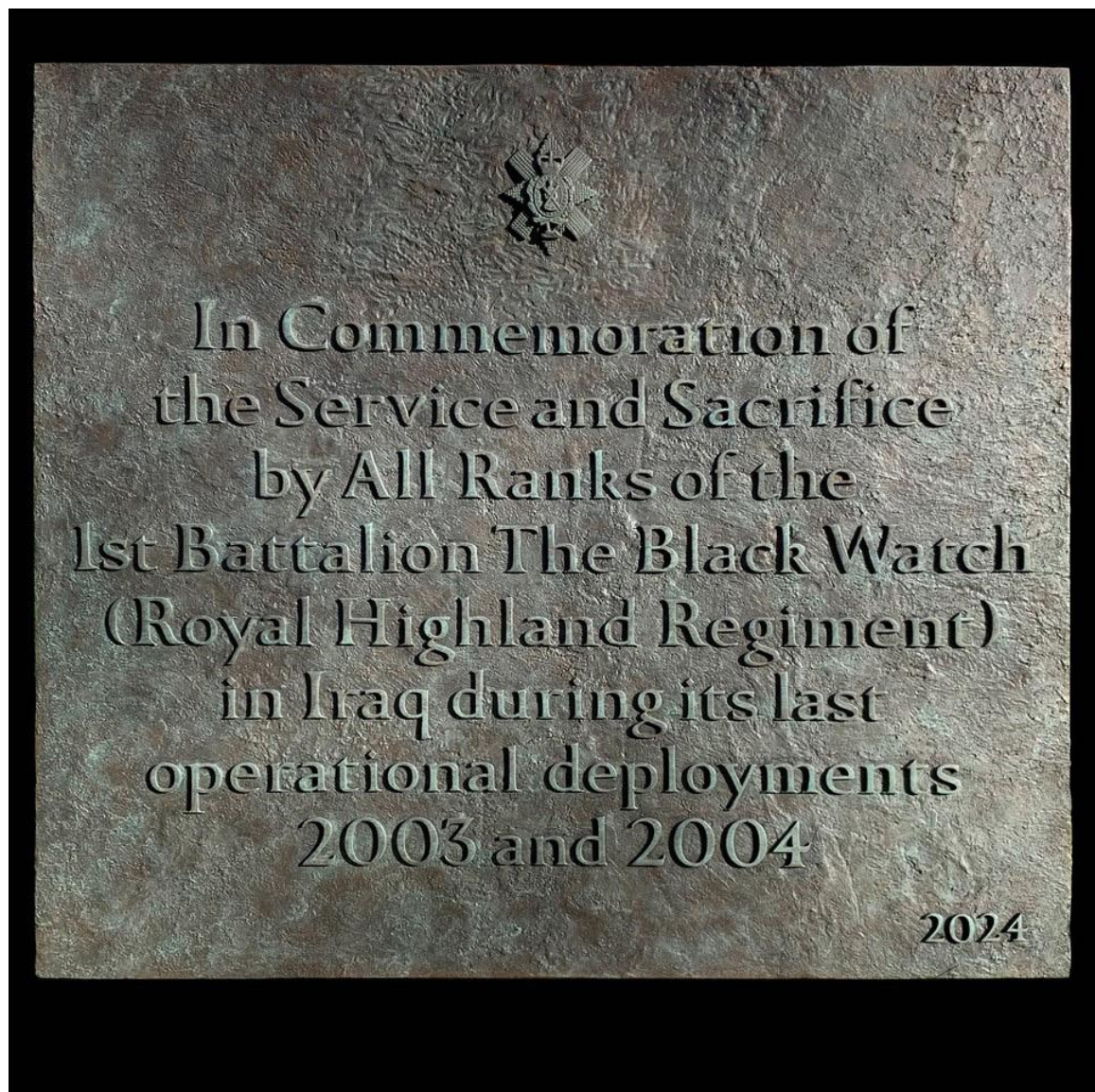




# THE RED HACKLE

*The Chronicle of  
The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment)  
its successor The Black Watch  
3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland  
The Affiliated Regiments  
and The Black Watch Association*



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The Black Watch  
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The Black Watch Association

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The opinions expressed in the articles of the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy and views, official or otherwise, of The Black Watch Regimental Trust or the Ministry of Defence. This publication contains official information. It should be treated with discretion by the recipient. The Red Hackle is published annually in December. Contributions large and small will always welcome. They should be submitted to the Editor via [projects@theblackwatch.co.uk](mailto:projects@theblackwatch.co.uk). Photographs, cartoons and sketches of regimental interests are also welcome; hard copy items will be returned if requested. All material for inclusion must reach the editor not later than 1 October.

## Contents

Frontispiece .....	1
Editorial .....	2
The Black Watch Regimental Trust – Chairman's Introduction .....	3
The Association .....	5
Welfare .....	15
Obituaries .....	16
Branch Notes .....	28
Memorials .....	41
Association Clubs .....	45
Museum News .....	50
Bistro and Shop .....	52
Friends .....	53
The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland .....	54
51st Highland, 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland .....	57
Affiliated Regiments .....	60
The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada.....	60
Correspondence .....	65
Articles .....	69
Other issues of interest .....	94

## Editorial

For the Association in 2024, the outstanding achievement has undeniably been the success of the Iraq Commemoration followed by the Reunion on 22nd June. The strength of comradeship as a force for good had been recognised and proved yet again as contacts were strengthened and friendships rekindled. It was a weekend acknowledging the complex service and sacrifice of those who had been there, for the full Regimental family to mark the last operational deployment of 1 BW.

Concerns and perceptions arising from that era had been discussed and the campaign to reconnect launched, undertaken by Alastair Aitken and his team. Their work enabled many who had served in Iraq to reconnect with their comrades, to feel valued and to identify with the Association for the long term good of the Individual and the evolving engagement of the Association with a new generation.

The morning was bright and sunny in Perth as men gathered, many of whom had not met for 20 years, in and around the city centre; perhaps unsure quite how the day was going to unfold but present and wanting to be part of it. As the hour for the kirk service at St John's, the first scheduled part of the Commemoration, approached at first a trickle, then a mass of our members and families, other veterans and well wishers filled the seating inside. Led by Padre Duncan Macpherson, the service brought veterans and the bereaved families together in poignant commemoration of their service and sacrifice given 20 years before. During it, a plaque was unveiled to mark it.

Elsewhere, you will read of the Commemoration and many of the other activities that make up Life in and around the Association and Balhousie through what is happening in our branches, the Army Cadet Force and in the 3rd and 7th Battalions of The Royal Regiment of Scotland. Our golden thread with the newest generation of soldiers is strengthened monthly by visits to us familiarising newly trained young men with what was, prior to 2006. Having looked at aspects of Comradeship, a reminder of what we are here for – the Welfare of our peers, is presented in a graphic form as we try to broaden our welfare reach. Finally, of our third pillar, Memorial, you will find progress of The Black Watch Walk memorial, in Dundee, being described and the vital need now for fund raising efforts to step up. In other sections, the red hackle and the Korean peninsula are described while others write of commemorations or incidents and a breadth of other eras. Correspondence brings in a still wider range of perspectives.

The Association, on behalf of the Trust, acknowledges the Perthshire Photo Agency and all other contributors for their continuing support and is grateful for the use of their photographs. Finally, the rapport with other departments of the Trust, with Association branches and with board members continues to evolve and strengthen. Needing to be expressed in all of this is particular thanks to all those volunteers at branch level and upwards who, through their dedicated time and effort, provide the heartbeat and enable this whole Association within the Trust to work; FTFT!



# *The Black Watch Regimental Trust*

## *Chairman's Introduction*

**Brigadier Ben Wrench**



**BWRT Chairman at Commemoration June 24**

Little did I know when I walked through the doors of Balhousie Castle for the first time, at the age of seventeen in 1987, that I would be invited to be the Chair of The Black Watch Regimental Trust. But back then, little did we all know the journey Balhousie Castle and the Regiment would go through over the next four decades.

You will read in the reports from both the Chief Executive, Douglas Walker, and the Chairman of the Association Major (Retired) Alastair Watson of the progress made by the Trust in taking the amalgamation and the Regiment's strategy of Welfare, Comradeship and Heritage forward over the past twelve months. It is all positive. All your Regimental interests are in good health and in excellent hands. Douglas has settled in very well and we are beginning to see a handing over of the guardians' baton to a generation that now needs to step forward.

Though the Trust would not be where it is today without the dedication and service given by Major (Retired) David Noble (and Squibbs firmly in the supportive driving seat). I know there has been a collective effort, but David's energetic and hospitable approach has got the Trust to where it is today. Mrs Anne Kinnes' eight years as Chief Executive Officer is also recognised – being at the start of any charitable project is always challenging and those involving hospitality and retail more so. Anne's achievements are numerous and we are grateful for what she gave the Regimental Trust. The Trust is a not-for-profit making organisation, but with the 2023/24 accounts now submitted and registered at Companies House, both David and Anne should be praised and thanked for seeing the Trust through to a year of breaking even.

I would also like to place on record the Trust's appreciation to Mr Graham Halstead, an appointed Trustee who has provided finance and investment advice to the Museum and Castle and latterly the Trust since 2016. He stepped down earlier this year and we are very fortunate to welcome Mrs Valerie Urquhart in his place. You will see in the list below, that we have the continuing wisdom and contributions of Mr Stephen Carter, The Earl of Kinnoull and Elizabeth Roads as Trustees. We are very fortunate to have this wealth of experience from other professions to balance out the 'leather patches and tweed'. So, we now look to the future. The most recent Chancellor of the

Exchequer's budget will have a negative impact with the raise in employers' national insurance contributions. Budgetary planning will factor this in along with other challenges presented by the opening of the Perth Museum and the closure of the Bell Sports Centre. The expansion of Events now being held at the Castle as Douglas describes below, is already having an impact. The staff at the Castle are being recognised for Excellence in Customer Service and Perthshire Community Engagement. If you look at Visit Scotland you will see The Black Watch Castle and Museum is listed 3rd, after Perth Museum and Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park, as the 'thing to do' when visiting Perth. Anyone who goes through the Castle doors will sense the positivity and comradeship on offer. This does not surprise any of us, as this was the experience when coming across the Regiment.

Over the next twelve or so months we will be developing our fund raising initiatives. This will be targeted to specific projects to help the Trust's strategy develop for the future, as originally envisaged by the Regimental Leadership back in the early noughties. We also want to exploit the success of the Iraq Commemoration and Regimental Association reunion held in June to engage with more of those who served. Now over twenty years on and looking back, if it had not been for the vision and drive from the likes of Lieutenant General Sir Alistair Irwin, we would not be where we are today.

So, as I walk through the doors of Balhousie Castle now for the umpteenth time, I feel a sense of positivity, warmth and comfort. It has a sense of returning home. If you have not visited recently, please try and make the time and excuse. If you are looking for a venue for a family or work event, please enquire on a booking. If you want to purchase Regimental items, please order online. If you would like to get involved, please volunteer.

Since assuming this role, I have not met another Regimental Trust Chair who does not envy our success. None of this is possible without the wonderful people working at, from and involved in the Regimental Trust, some of whom I have tried to mention above and below.

### **Board of Trustees**

Brigadier Ben Wrench	Chairman, Appointed Trustee
Major (Retired) Alastair Watson	Vice Chairman, Elected Trustee, Chair Association Committee
Stephen Carter Esq	Appointed Trustee, Chair Balhousie Castle Committee
Major (Retired) Colin Gray	Elected Trustee
Mrs Valerie Urquhart	Appointed Trustee, Chair Finance & Investment Committee
The Earl of Kinnoull	Appointed Trustee
Colonel Jules McElhinney	Elected Trustee
Mrs Elizabeth Roads	Appointed Trustee, Chair Museum & Archive Committee
Brigadier Alastair Aitken	Appointed Trustee

## *Chief Executive*

**Douglas Walker**

### **SENIOR EXECUTIVES**

Mr Douglas Walker	Chief Executive Officer
Major (Retired) Tim Carmichael	Regimental Secretary
Linda Campbell	Finance Manager and Company Secretary
Fiona Connah	Curator
Lorna Tunstall	Retail Manager
Debbie Owen	Bistro and Events Manager
Catriona Anderson	Marketing and Communication Manager
Andy Laycock	Head Chef

At the time of writing, I have been in post for almost a year and can report that the time has absolutely flown by! During my first year I have been honoured to be invited to several Black Watch Association events including the Red Hackle Dinner in Dundee, the Angus Branch 25th Anniversary Dinner and the Perth Branch Burns Supper. It was also an honour to attend the service for Iraq Veterans at St. John's Kirk, Perth, before hosting The Black Watch Reunion here at Balhousie



Castle. All of these events, and numerous others, have provided me with opportunities to meet many of The Black Watch Association Members, which has been a real privilege. Balhousie Castle is the home of The Black Watch and our staff and volunteers are here to extend a warm welcome to you all when visiting the Castle

(please also remember that everyone who has served with The Black Watch can visit the Museum free of charge).

Some of the projects that Team Balhousie have been working on during this year are detailed below; if you are visiting Balhousie Castle and we have not yet met, please let one of the team know when you arrive, and they can track me down to say hello. I look forward to meeting you over the coming months and years.

One of my key objectives as Chief Executive of The Black Watch Regimental Trust is to raise the profile of our charitable status through highlighting the key areas of the Trust's Mission – Providing Welfare / Promoting Comradeship / Preserving Heritage. All of the work we do falls under one of these three mission headings; it is important that everyone associated with the Trust has a good understanding of our objectives and, crucially, can communicate these clearly to anyone visiting the Museum and Balhousie Castle. The front page of the 'Our Mission' summary booklet (given to all staff and volunteers at Balhousie Castle) communicates our mission in 8 pages, explaining – who we are, what we do and why we do it.



**Our Mission BWRT front page**

You will notice that Providing Welfare is positioned top and centre. The graphic also aims to communicate that Providing Welfare, Promoting Comradeship and Preserving Heritage are all linked and inter-dependent on each other within the amalgamated Trust. (If you would like an electronic copy of the booklet please email [Marketing@theblackwatch.co.uk](mailto:Marketing@theblackwatch.co.uk))

Another key development that helps to communicate our charitable status is the introduction of the 'Support Us' section of our website. This section also communicates to the wider audience our mission and key objectives as well as detailing how visitors to the website can support the work we do which includes: volunteering, donations (financial donations as well as donations to the Museum and Archive), leaving a legacy, joining the Friends and Gift Aid information. As we develop our fundraising activities, the Support Us section of the website will serve as a good foundation to build from. Whether a visitor to the website is interested in supporting us through Providing Welfare, Promoting Comradeship or Preserving Heritage they will find the information they are looking for and how they can help and support us.

We have developed our online events brochures which can be found on the website and recently emailed 750 local businesses and organisations to share our new events brochure and Christmas menu in The Bistro. This has resulted in growth of the number of events booked at Balhousie Castle which is good for building income to support our charitable activities and also brings new visitors to the castle, who may eventually become museum visitors.

Another area that has been developed over the past year is the dedicated area within the Gift Shop for all things Black Watch. This area has been signed as 'Black Watch Corner' and provides a new and dedicated focus for regimental clothing, accessories, books and gifts. Lighting and layout have both been improved to give this area the presence it deserves within the Gift Shop. Black Watch Corner has proved to be very popular with visitors to Balhousie.



**Black Watch Corner**

We have also improved the online shopping experience by listening to feedback from our online customers and focused on the ranges that are most popular online – mainly Regimental and Black Watch items. These have been streamlined into five categories, so it is much easier for online shoppers to find what they are looking for.

The Team is working on developing some exciting ideas for improving engagement and storytelling within the Museum galleries. We are working towards replacing and improving the computer interactives which include oral histories contributed by soldiers who served with the Regiment. We are also looking into developing an audio guide to complement the excellent tours offered by our Museum volunteers, including foreign language translations for our overseas visitors as The Black Watch name attracts visitors from all over the world.

Both of these Museum initiatives will help us deliver another key element of our mission to 'promote the history of the Regiment and its values to the widest possible audience'. These projects will require fundraising which is another reason why it is important to raise our charitable profile and increase our fundraising efforts.

Thank you again for the warm welcome I have received and I look forward to meeting more Association members at Balhousie Castle soon.



# The Association

<b>Royal Patron</b>	His Majesty The King
<b>President</b>	Councillor Bill Campbell, Lord-Lieutenant of the City of Dundee
<b>Vice Presidents</b>	Mrs Pat Sawers, Lord-Lieutenant of Angus Mr Robert Balfour FRICS, Lord-Lieutenant of Fife Mr Stephen Leckie BA, Lord-Lieutenant of Perth and Kinross

## Association Committee

Chairman	Major (Retired) A A L Watson LVO
Member	Major (Retired) R J W Proctor MBE
Member	Major (Retired) C Gray
Member	Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) J A Menzies
Member	Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) M Smith MBE
Member	Colonel J R McElhinney
Member	Mr Gordon Kennedy
Member	Mr R Scott
Member	Mr P Tindal
Member	Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) D R Orr-Ewing OBE
Member	Captain (Retired) H D C Cannon
Regimental Secretary	Major (Retired) T J O Carmichael

<b>Welfare Committee:</b>	Major (Retired) R J W Proctor MBE - Chairman
	Major (Retired) C Gray - Deputy Chairman
	Major (Retired) B Dickson
	Captain (Retired) A McEwen MBE
	Mr W Barr
	Mr R M Scott JP
	Mrs M O'Brien
	Mr C Thomas

## REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION

*Major (Retired) Alastair Watson LVO*



2024 has been a year of consolidation in the Association, building on the progress from the foundation of the Black Watch Regimental Trust back in April 2022. Activities and outcomes can be seen from the contents of the magazine, and many initiatives are being driven forward, in support of all the Association membership.

There have been important changes in the management, with Douglas Walker having taken over as the Chief Executive in December 2023. He has been able to bring fresh energy, ideas and knowledge, to build on the good work which Anne Kinnes, who retired in November 2023 was able to accomplish.

The Chair of the Trust, David Noble, retired in April 2024, to be replaced by Brigadier Ben Wrench. I pay tribute to the significant role David has played in launching the Trust and binding the two elements, Association and Castle, together into an effective, collegiate and forward-looking organisation. His leadership has been very important.

I will be retiring, in April 2025, having completed three years as Chair of the Black Watch Association, from the start point in 2022 of the welding

together of the Museum and the Association into the Black Watch Regimental Trust. Having served previously for a number of years as a Trustee in the Association, which I have been delighted to see that our hopes and aspirations in combining together have proved to be justified. At the time, not all agreed that this was possible or desirable but, I hope, that we are now all in one team.

I am sure that my father, as a Black Watch officer, Commanding Officer of 1 BW and former Colonel of the Regiment would have been delighted with what has been achieved since the amalgamation.

These changes in key personnel are all for the good. The baton is being passed to a younger generation and, specifically, to those who have served in Iraq. Those on the Trust and Association committees have a closer connection and understanding of our members who fought in those campaigns and will be able to support our comrades in times of difficulties which may result from their service in those and other more recent campaigns.

The signpost of what we are beginning to achieve in support of those who served in Iraq - and Afghanistan, both in terms of comradeship and welfare, was displayed in full colour in June. The Iraq church service in Saint John's Kirk Perth, the unveiling of a plaque to those who served and fell in Iraq, a march through the city, a civic reception and then joining up with the wider regimental community in the afternoon, at Balhousie Castle, for the Regimental Reunion. It was quite an afternoon, with friends and comrades gathering together in the Black Watch way. It has been adjudged a great success, and I hope will be part of the process going forward to draw those who served in the two campaigns closer to the Association as a whole, to benefit from the welfare and comradeship which is offered. We are a family. I pay tribute to Brigadier Alastair Aitken and his team who played a key part in the success of this important day, through getting the message across and encouraging those to attend who had served in Iraq.

My replacement will be decided by the vote of all members of the Black Watch Association at the AGM in April 2025. I trust that we will have a strong list of candidates to fill this role. Bids from the membership will be called for in early 2025: for the Chair, a replacement Trustee on the Trust Board and an additional Black Watch Association committee member. Any member of the Association who has the skill, enthusiasm and energy to be involved should put their name forward.

I would also like to mention the efforts of the Dundee Branch, led by Major Colin Gray, in developing a plan to put a Black Watch Memorial onto the Esplanade in Dundee, close to V&A Dundee and the Discovery.

Since the update in the 2023 Red Hackle, significant work has been done and funds are being raised. It is anticipated that during 2025 the plans will be finalised and the proposed memorial agreed within the Association. So, perhaps we will see the memorial in place in 2026.

In terms of welfare, the Welfare Committee continue to do an excellent job. The Association Committee has agreed a clearer set of explanations for them about the rules relating to the various forms of welfare which are available to members of the Association. These are included in this Red Hackle. If there are any queries which arise from these details about welfare support, they should be raised in the first instance with the Regimental Secretary.

The Magazine includes details of all the activities and progress which has been made over the past year, so I will not steal their thunder. Much of what is described within the pages is due to the hard work and dedication of all the staff at Balhousie, the work in the Branches, the work within the Committees and the work of Major Tim Carmichael, the Regimental Secretary, Major Ronnie Proctor and Anne Amos who handle so much Association business which is not in public view. One of their main efforts is the Red Hackle Magazine itself which, while changing in part, is a valuable historic record of the work of the Association, Trust and the Black Watch Battalion over the last 12 months.

We would welcome any further comments on the layout and the content of the magazine. Major changes were made in 2023, incorporating the Trust and rationalising the content from the Black Watch Battalion. The comments which resulted about the layout and content have been incorporated into this magazine. This is an evolving process, so do let us have your views on the 2024 magazine.

## CONGRATULATIONS

His Majesty The King has approved the appointment of Major General RRE Lindsay CBE as Colonel The Royal Regiment of Scotland in succession to Lieutenant General Sir Nick Borton KCB DSO MBE. This appointment took effect on 22 March 2024.

Major General Robin's appointment as General Officer Scotland was confirmed last October.

## CONGRATULATIONS – PROMOTION

To Lieutenant Colonel J R P Bailey on promotion to Colonel in Jun 26 and selection to be the British Liaison Officer to United States Army Training and Doctrine Command

To Major A J Phillips MC on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and selection to command The Highlanders, 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland (4 SCOTS) from February 2026 until August 2028.

To Major R J Colquhoun MBE on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and selection to command The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland (3 SCOTS) from July 2026 until January 2029.

Lt Col J A Reid to command the City of Edinburgh Universities Officer Training Corps from July 2026 to January 2029. Commissioned into the Royal Highland Fusiliers he served with 3 SCOTS as OC B Company 2012-2014 and returned as Second in Command 2016-18. He has remained a close friend of those that wear the red hackle since.

## FORECAST OF EVENTS 2025

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
5 January	Fife Branch Red Hackle Day Breakfast	Fife
11 January	Edinburgh, Lothians' and Borders' Branch Red Hackle Night	BMC Club Gorgie, Edinburgh
24 January	Regimental Trust Board Meeting By Zoom	Balhousesie Castle
25 January	Angus Branch Burns Supper	Royal Hotel Forfar
31 January	Dundee Branch Red Hackle Dinner	Black Watch Club, Dundee
1 February	Perth Branch Burns Supper	Salutation Hotel
13 February	Curling Match v The Lowlanders	Kinross
22 February	Dundee Branch Annual General Meeting	Dundee
6 March	Curling Match v Highlanders	Perth
15 March	Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner	Kirkcaldy
21 March	Association Committee Meeting By Zoom	Balhousesie Castle
21 March	Highland and Lowland Brigades Curling Club Bonspiel	Perth
7 April	Angus Branch Annual General Meeting	Royal Hotel Forfar
12 April	Association Annual General Meeting 11am	Balhousesie Castle
12 April	Warrant Officers' and Sergeants Dining Club Dinner	Salutation Hotel, Perth
25 April	Regimental Trust Board Meeting	Balhousesie Castle
26 April	Edinburgh, Lothians' and Borders' Branch Al Basrah Lunch	Apex Hotel Edinburgh

9 May	London Branch Annual General Meeting	Army Museum
10 May	Highland Branch Aberfeldy Ladies Dinner	tbc
TBC May	Not Forgotten Garden Association Garden Party	London
TBC June	Royal Hospital Chelsea Founders Day	Chelsea
11-16 June	St Valery Battlefield Study	St Valery
16 June	Officers' and Ladies' Lunch	Cavalry & Guards Club London
20 June	Black Watch Regimental Golf	Balbirnie
20 June	Association Committee Meeting In Person	Balhousesie Castle
21 June	Regimental Reunion	Balhousesie Castle
25 July	Regimental Trust Board Meeting	Balhousesie Castle
2 August	Inter Branch Games Day	Highland Branch
14 September	Fife Branch Ladies Alma Lunch	Kirkcaldy
26 September	Association Committee Meeting By Zoom	Balhousesie Castle
28 September	Aberfeldy Muster	Aberfeldy
TBC September	Angus Branch Standard Rededication Commemoration Church Service	TBC Church, Dundee
TBC September	Dundee Branch Battle of Loos Commemoration Church Service	Congregational Church, Dundee
8 October	Ladies Lunch	Balhousesie Castle
11 October	Perth Branch Croix de Guerre Dinner	Balhousesie Castle
24 October	Regimental Trust Board Meeting Followed by AGM	Balhousesie Castle
24 October	Officers' Gathering Dinner	Balhousesie Castle
TBC October	Angus Branch El Alamein Dinner	Royal Hotel Forfar
1 November	Dundee Branch Laying of Crosses	City Churches Dundee
7 November	Balhousesie Castle Remembrance Service	Balhousesie Castle
8 November	Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey	London
9 November	National Service of Remembrance	The Cenotaph, London
9 November	Dundee Branch Remembrance Service	Powrie Brae, Dundee
11 November	Dundee Branch Remembrance Service	City Square, Dundee
15 November	Warrant Officers' and Sergeants Dining Club Dinner	Salutation Hotel, Perth
21 November	London Branch Dinner	Victory Services Club
1 December	Angus Branch Drinks and Widows Parcels	Royal Hotel Forfar
12 December	Association Committee Meeting In Person	Balhousesie Castle



## THE 22nd JUNE COMMEMORATION OF THE FINAL OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENTS and REUNION

This year's reunion, held at Balhousie Castle, was preceded by the regimental commemoration for the 20th anniversary of the final operational deployments of 1 BW. For the commemoration the preparatory aim had been to contact and invite as many as possible, through emerging small, online groups loosely based on their tactical groupings in the Battalion, to participate.



**How many years**

Within the same, we were also attempting to contact those who had lost touch. With that broader aim, a dynamic team of Iraq veterans coordinated by Brigadier Alastair Aitken, set to using social media and WhatsApp to contact and encourage participation. The result was a large contingent of a few hundred Black Watch soldiers, who had perhaps not visited Balhousie or Perth since they left the Army, coming together in a wonderful service of commemoration led by Padre Duncan Macpherson, Padre to 1 BW in 2003. Held in Saint John's Kirk, the service used the same readings and hymns as those used for the eve of battle service he had conducted in Iraq.



**Padre Duncan Macpherson: an inspiring leadership**



**Ecumenical; served with 1 BW in Iraq; buried our dead at home; all supporting us still; Macpherson, Evans & Forsyth**



**Unveiling the commemorative plaque by Iraq COs 1 BW**



**Fijian choir leads Commemoration Jun 2024 St John's Kirk**

The service also included unveiling (jointly by the Commanding Officers of the 2003 and 2004 tours) the 20th anniversary commemorative plaque for the service and sacrifice of those who had been there, two songs by the Fijian Choir led by "Q" and John Lawaci, the Collect of The Black Watch being read by Billy Coutts and the Roll of Honour read by Major Ronnie Proctor.





**Black Watch Collect being read by Billy Coutts**



**After the Commemorative service**



**Q & Bullet McNally**



**Bravery after the commemoration, meeting the then CO**

Crossing the threshold that morning and joining in was not easy for some after 20 difficult years, even though they had journeyed to Perth to be part of it; for those who were unable to that weekend, there will always be other occasions on which to share the load of that unperceived burden.

Participating, being at one with so many others who had been through the same mill, was said afterwards to have helped overcome many individual problems or concerns, liberating some from 20 years of stored up misunderstanding; it was a comradeship event that helped 'just step over that barrier'. The commemoration enabled our Iraq war veterans, whether wearing their red hackle in a ToS or a blue bonnet or coming from a Supporting Arm, to march in unity through Perth.



**United by the Red Hackle**



**Two major generals lead the Commemoration march past the Association President, the Provost of Perth, the Deputy Lieutenant, Lieutenant General Robin Brims, Lieutenant General Sir Alistair Irwin and the Association Chairman but it's all on Harry Hood**



**Reuniting at the Commemoration**





**On the freedom of Perth march with others**

Exercising the Freedom of the City granted to previous generations of our forebears, our veterans marched behind the regular army Royal Regiment of Scotland pipe band to the Provost of Perth's civic reception held in their honour at St Ninian's, there to gather and meet others again, to talk and share. An address about the link between Perth and The Black Watch, of public gratitude for service and dedication given was conferred by the Provost, Xander McDade. He was followed by the then divisional commander, Lieutenant General Robin Brims, who referred to and acknowledged the military and political debt, the sacrifice and service in a poignant and straightforward manner.



**Reflections during the Civic Reception**



**Lieutenant General Brims had praise for and gave empathy with all those at the reception, being frank in his descriptions**



**Lt Gen Brims was forthright in opinion and just what was needed on the day**



**Campaign info boards**



**Provost McDade addresses the reception in St Ninians**



**United by the red hackle across generations**





**The reunion marchers**



**Esava Ratumaisese, Joe Ravueta, Apisai Bavadra, Avimeleki Sautu, Josaia Ratukalou, Taniela Tamata, Irinale Soqeta**



**Reunited at the reunion**



**Messrs Wilson & ColeMac chat**



**A great reunion at the Reunion 20 years later at Balhousie**

There was a fine mix of generations, including serving and retired Fijians, who attended the Reunion due to the additional stimulus of the Commemoration.



**'Would you like to say a few words into the mic?'**



**Jimmy Williamson, General Sir Alistair and Garry Barnett**



**Not sponsored by Tennants**





**Tukatuka remembered by his fellow countrymen from that era and more recently**



**A fine TELIC grouping reunited**



**20 years on from Op Telic 4**



**There's something familiar about you, are you my long lost brother?!**



**Messrs Hay and Anderson chat about what's new**



**Another reunion at Balhousie**



**Was there a shaggy dog somewhere nearby?**



**Butter wouldn't melt ...!**





**The Soqeta family, Mrs Tamata, Mrs Ratumaisese and Mrs Qalobulawasaikabara**



**‘So, who’s round is it’**

Over the whole weekend there had been on the Friday, the golf match during the day, informal dinner groupings and entertainment at the Ex Services Club provided by Jock Menzies and Ally Alcorn. Then there was the camaraderie of the Reunion itself on Saturday afternoon followed by more informal evening entertainment at Saint Johnstone’s supporters club as they had the night before. All were thanked for their participation and positive comments from people from all quarters of all ages were received.

The administrative support to it, in preparation and on the day, had gone well and the delivery of it was well received; we, the Association, were immensely grateful to the other departments of the Trust, to Perth and Kinross Council, to the staff of Saints John and Ninian’s churches, to the Police and the public for the support and integration all gave. There was a good sense that this year boded well for the future; it was all felt to be going in the right direction.



**Branch Standards had arrived at Balhousie at the head of the parade not the tail of the photos**



**The 2024 Commemoration of Iraq plaque created by Robbie Schneider**



### The Officers’ Gathering

The 139th Gathering of The Black Watch Officers’ Dining Club and their guests met at Balhousie for the annual dinner on 25 October 2024. The Gathering was pleased to welcome as its guests Douglas Walker, the new Chief Executive of The Black Watch Regimental Trust and Stephen Carter, Trustee. Lieutenant Colonel Rob Smith, Commanding Officer The Black Watch 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, gave a résumé of the battalion’s current activities and the demanding training schedule the Battalion is delivering to the Ukrainian Army and its expected forecast of deployment. The delicious meal was appreciated and the tremendous piping entertainment by PM Duthie, too.



Kevin McHale remembered

### Remembrance Service

The Association Remembrance service was conducted by Padre John Duncan at Balhousie Castle at 2pm on 8th November 2024 in the presence of those of our bereaved families able to attend, our President, Lord-Lieutenant of Dundee, Bill Campbell, 3 SCOTS’ representatives and Association members. (On a related note, we were grateful to Alistair Duthie not only for the quality of his piping on the day, but also for the careful preparation under his guidance of the castle grounds for the occasion, by the Gardening Team.) After the service, all were well looked after in the Queen Mother Room by the Bistro team as that undefinable element of comradeship took place, chatting, sharing and understanding.



Black Watch Association Remembrance Service 8th November 2024

# KILT WALK

## 2025

Join SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity in Scotland’s most popular walking event and help raise funds for the Armed Forces community.

Glasgow	26-27 April
Aberdeen	1 June
Dundee	17 August
Edinburgh	14 September

[ssafa.org.uk/kiltwalk](https://ssafa.org.uk/kiltwalk)

LET’S GO!



# Cenotaph 2024

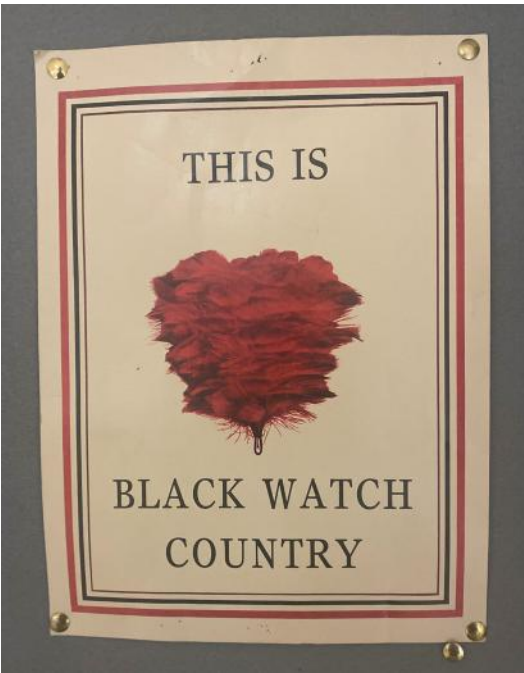
The Black Watch Association was again present at the Cenotaph for 2024, with members travelling from across the country. Messrs McCall and Dalton, of Perth Branch, travelled to be part of the commemoration.



Black Watch Association members at Horse Guards 2024



Black Watch Association members prior to the march at Horse Guards



Messrs Bell and Percy didn't need their phones



Donald Folly, 1BW Korean vet, and his grandson, Jake Fielding, with other BW marchers



# Welfare Notes

With expectations having moved on since it was formed in 1919, The Black Watch Association, now part of The Black Watch Regimental Trust (BWRT), delegates through its Welfare Committee its responsibility to support Black Watch veterans, widows and dependants who require assistance.

The Welfare Committee is neither qualified nor competent to assess welfare requirements. However, committee members can signpost those needing assistance either to the Soldiers' Sailors' Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA) on 0800 260 6767/6780 or through their website [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk) or to The Royal British Legion Scotland (TRBLS) Welfare Team both of which can make an assessment. They will then forward their report with recommendations to the Chairman of the Welfare Committee. Once the report is received it will be actioned as soon as possible, and other agencies will be called in to assist as necessary.

The Association can provide help with:

**Benevolence.** Giving financial, material or other assistance to those in need.

**Training.** Providing funding to improve existing skills or obtain a non-academic qualification to gain or change employment e.g. a forklift or HGV Licence, Health & Safety certification or academic courses such as Prince.

**Education.** Providing financial assistance to those who wish to enter further education once funding applications have been exhausted via Government funding agencies such as UCAS and, in Scotland, SAAS.

**Holidays.** Assistance with funding of a holiday to those who qualify.

**Military Pilgrimages.** Assistance to attend a Military Pilgrimage one per lifetime to those who qualify.

**Grave Visits.** As above.

Details regarding the above can be obtained by calling 01738 638152 or emailing [assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk](mailto:assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk)

Other agencies which support the Association in providing welfare provision, in addition to SSAFA and TRBL, are:

**The Army Benevolent Fund (Soldiers Charity) (ABF SC)**

**Combat Stress**

**Veterans First Point(VIP)**

**Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABs)** Many offices have a member of staff who only deal with veterans.

**Veterans Champions** are appointed by each Local Authority (LA) throughout the UK and can be contacted through LA websites.

**Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)** and Local Health Boards also have nominated Veterans' Champions whose role is to assist veterans when required.

All members of the Association are reminded that they should advise those who they think require assistance to get in touch with any of the agencies listed above and/or The Black Watch Association.

## SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR BLACK WATCH VETERANS & FAMILIES

Formed in 1919, The Black Watch Association encourage comradeship and support those who have served in the Regiment and their dependants. They provide support to veterans and their families, focusing on welfare needs.

### WELFARE ASSESSMENT AND ASSISTANCE

The Welfare Committee itself does not conduct assessments but refers individuals to qualified organisations such as Soldiers Sailors Airforce Families Association (SSAFA) and The Royal British Legion Scotland (TRBLS), ensuring that those in need receive proper evaluation and recommendations for further support.



### TYPES OF ASSISTANCE OFFERED

The Association provides various forms of financial assistance including benevolence, education funding, vocational training, holiday support, military pilgrimage assistance, and grave visits for qualifying veterans and their families.

### COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Beyond The Black Watch Association, several organisations like the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF), Combat Stress, Veterans First Point (VIP), Veterans Champions across local authorities and the Citizens Advice collaborate to offer comprehensive support mechanisms for veterans.



### ENCOURAGEMENT TO SEEK HELP

Members of The Black Watch Association are encouraged to refer veterans in need to the various agencies or The Black Watch Association to ensure they receive the assistance available to them through local and national resources.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR ASSISTANCE

Veterans or their families seeking assistance can reach out to the association via phone at **01738638152** or email [assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk](mailto:assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk) for more information regarding available services and support contacts.



# Obituaries

## MAJOR ALEXANDER BELL



Alexander (known as Sandy) Fulton Bell died at home on 24th December 2023, aged 86. His funeral took place on 10th January 2024 in Rescobie Church near Forfar and was well attended by family and friends.

He was commissioned into the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and was Adjutant of the 1st Battalion when Colonel Malcolm Wallace of The Black Watch commanded 1 A&SH in 1964 when the Battalion served in Borneo. Due to illness contracted in Borneo, Sandy's career was cut short, however he settled into civilian life and was successful at every employment he undertook. He latterly moved to Drumclune, outside Kirriemuir in Angus and for a time was the OC of Zulu Company Home Service Force 51 Highland Volunteers and was very proud to have worn the Red Hackle. A keen golfer he took part and often organised the Depot Cup Golf Match between The Black Watch and The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Although he suffered from declining health and had mobility problems he attended and enjoyed the Angus Branch 1st World War Battlefield tour of France and Flanders in 2017.

Sandy was a much-loved husband of Alison and the late Sophia and father of Harry and Thomas and a loved grandfather of six grandchildren to whom we extend our sympathy and condolences.

*R J W Proctor*

## MAJOR G W (GARRY) GARFORTH-BLES – 1941-2024



Major George William Garforth-Bles (always called Garry) served in The Black Watch from 1961 to 1984. His Blue Book entry (Officers of the Regiment 1725 to 1986) is very brief – 2Lt 22 Dec 61, Lt 22 Jun 63, Capt 22 Dec 67, Maj 30 Jun 74, Retired 24 Sep 84.

Editions of The Red Hackle covering Garry's years of service give much detail of his time with the First Battalion, but little if any detail is known of his time spent away from the Battalion at University and on the Staff and other appointments. However, it is clear to see that Garry remained closely in touch with the Regiment not only throughout his service but in the long period (nearly 40 years) after he left the Army. He always attended functions such as dinners and reunions, and he maintained all his Regimental friendships.

Garry was born in British India on 07 Oct 41. His father was an officer in The Guides Cavalry (10th Queen Victoria's Own, Frontier Force), and the family did not return to the UK, with a subsequent period in Canada, until after the 2nd World War. After attending boarding schools in England, Garry joined the Army and was commissioned from RMA Sandhurst into The Black Watch on 22 Dec 61, being posted to the First Battalion (1 BW) in Cyprus. Major (then 2Lt) David McMicking recalls Garry's arrival in Dhekelia the Easterly Sovereign Base Area, and his keenness for the excellent sports facilities such as swimming and Rugby.

From Cyprus 1 BW returned to Warminster in early 1962 to become the Demonstration Battalion. Garry, having spent a brief spell in that bitterly cold winter on Castle Guard in Edinburgh, joined D Coy commanded by Ian Critchley in Warminster. The newly arrived 2Lt Edward de Broë-Ferguson remembers Garry being very sporty and "making his mark quickly in the Battalion Rugby XV where he was the soundest full back, steady as a rock". Edward also recalls the occasion when Garry, squeezed into his Austin 10 and dressed in his Review Order, had a mishap on the road over to Knook Camp and had to hitch a ride in the Battalion duty truck to report to the Adjutant, Giles Le Maitre, for his Orderly Officer duties. Another of Edward's memories is the Battalion Boxing Competition where Garry was matched against the reigning light-heavy weight champion Big Jim Holderness. Garry took a beating, but he wouldn't go down and continued throughout the bout to advance on the champion. At the end, Big Jim crossed the ring and raised Garry's hand, and the Jocks all rose to their feet. Garry earned huge respect and admiration that day. The Red Hackle over the period 1962-63 speaks of Garry's dog Treacle being a "pocket sized nuisance" and tells that "Mr G-B gets up at 7 every morning for a Pentathlon dip in Frome baths". Later in 1963 Garry departed for Downing College, Cambridge, where he undertook a degree in Engineering and captained the Modern Pentathlon Team.

Garry returned to A Coy 1 BW in Cyprus on the UN Tour in 1966, before joining Sp Coy (OC Maj Colin Innes) in Minden in 1967 as OC Mortars. Also in 1967 he was Best Man at the wedding of his friend Edward de Broë-Ferguson. In 1968 Garry was posted to The Black Watch of Canada (2 RHC) where he filled several appointments; Chief Instructor at the JNCO School, 4 months instructing officer cadets on the West Coast at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Chilliwack, then in 1970 organising 2 RHC's move to Cyprus.

Garry rejoined 1 BW in Kirknewton later in 1970, becoming 2IC A Coy under Maj Duncan Cameron. How well Garry is remembered by the platoon commanders Messrs MacLeod, Osborne and Noble, and also never to be forgotten were CSM Joe Hubble and CQMS Big Jim Holderness. In Northern Ireland in 1971 A Coy was detached from 1 BW, under command of the 17/21st Lancers based in Omagh Co Tyrone, and the A Coy Base was at the very tightly packed Lisgoole School just outside Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh. The Officers' Dormitory consisted of double-bunked beds, and the Red Hackle reported that "Garry G-B has a Lancer on top of him!" In those days, astonishingly, officers were allowed to bring their cars on such a tour, and on one memorable occasion Garry's car appeared at Lisgoole School with its bonnet dented and covered in cow dung. Garry explained that without warning a cow had leapt out at him from a field, but that it had survived the encounter.

Later in 1971 Garry went to Vienna to marry Rosevita, whom he had met at Cambridge, and the happily married couple moved out to Hong Kong in 1972, Garry still being in A Coy. Whilst in Hong Kong, moving between Erskine Camp and Gun Club Hill Barracks, Garry was promoted to Acting Major, and at the Battalion Rifle Meeting



he was a very close runner-up to Mike Melville in the CO's Twenty Competition. In 1974 Garry was posted to the Staff at the MOD, but also that year he was given the honour of being HM The Queen Mother's Canadian Equerry at the Presentation of New Colours to The Black Watch of Canada.

Returning to 1 BW in 1976 in Colchester, in that very hot summer before the move to Ballykinler in Co Down, Garry took over command of A Coy. His Coy 2IC, Capt Donald Fraser, recalls that under Garry's leadership A Coy, with CSM Harry Berry, proved to be a very happy ship. There were frequent deployments away from Ballykinler, under the critical eye of other regiments and headquarters, in Belfast, Londonderry, the Maze Prison and South Armagh. Garry demanded and received a fine performance from his Company, but always with good humour, even when, as could happen, things did not go to plan. Back in barracks in Ballykinler, Garry (and Rosevita) did all that was possible to make life congenial for the married families, and Garry also ensured that the single men could enjoy life to the full, considering that their previous two summers (1974 and 1975) had been spent on operations in West Belfast. Donald Fraser remembers one occasion in South Armagh during a tense operation to protect convoys carrying construction materials running through that dangerous territory and into the Crossmaglen Base. The Coy HQ was in all-round defence in a hedgerow outside the base, and Garry disappeared unexpectedly only to reappear after a while carrying his bonnet full of mushrooms, which he proceeded to cook in a mess tin for his Coy HQ. Also on this tour in Ballykinler, Garry became the Battalion light-heavy weight boxing champion, and at another Battalion Rifle Meeting he was conspicuous for wearing white sticking plasters across his nose and cheeks, to protect himself from the sun. Also at Ballykinler, Garry was tasked with organising and running a most successful Northern Ireland Cross Country Championships. Later in 1978 he was posted back to the Staff, this time to MOD (D Mov).

For his final return to 1 BW in 1981, Garry was OC Support Coy in Werl where he also became Pipe President. There was more boxing, and Garry regained his light-heavy weight title in the Inter-Company competition. Garry and Rosevita lived in a flat down in Unna and Edward de Broë-Ferguson, in the flat below, recalls that they shared responsibility for cutting the hedge. Garry would remember "just in time" that it was his turn, and the quality and precision of his work was typical of him. By 1983 Garry had been posted back to the Staff in the MOD, this time for his final appointment before retiring from the Army on 24 Sep 84.

Nearly 40 further years of life remained for Garry. He and Rosevita kept closely in touch with the wider Black Watch family, as they made their home in Shropshire where Garry took up furniture making. His work was done meticulously, but tight timescales were not the order of the day. Garry also gave enormous support to Rosevita in the business she developed with Christian Hepburne Scott making Loden (Austrian style heavy woollen) jackets. Sadly, Rosevita died nearly 10 years ago, and Garry moved firstly to Eastbourne in East Sussex, whence he continued to attend Regimental gatherings and reunions. Donald Fraser went to visit him down there and recalls how much Garry enjoyed being taken for a spin in the car, up on the Downs, always wanting to go faster! Latterly, after a further decline in his health, Garry moved up to a care home in London prior to his death just short of his 83rd birthday.

A wonderful memorial service was held for Garry on 07 Oct 24 (his birthday) at the church of All Hallows By The Tower, London, the same church where the service for Rosevita had been held previously, and where there is a memorial plaque for his grandfather, George Marcus Garforth-Bles, in front of the fine altar mural. Garry's service, organised by his children, Melanie and George, was well attended by a sizeable Regimental and family contingent. It was a moving service, and Garry would have enjoyed the pipe tunes played by that fine Black Watch piper Chick Mackie. Finally, Donald Fraser recounts that one of Garry's Sandhurst chums, Nigel Chancellor of the Grenadier Guards, told him many years after those times in The Black Watch, "Always with Garry, the goodness just shone out of him".

**T J MacLeod**

## 2LT ANGUS HUGH GILROY



**Angus Gilroy died on 10th July 2024 aged 87.**

Angus served as a National Service Officer from 1956 to 1958 in the Regiment in Berlin and Edinburgh and was very proud to have served in The Black Watch, following in the footsteps of other family members.

A keen golfer, he played for The Black Watch in the Highland Brigade golf tournament at Panmure. He was also an active member of The Royal Company of Archers.

A Memorial Service was held on 5th September 2024 at St Mary's Church, Billingham, which was attended by his friends and family and some members of the Regiment.

We extend our sympathy and condolences to his daughter Margaret and son Fergus and their families.

**R J W Proctor**

## MAJOR STEPHEN GRAHAM



Cosmo Stephen Graham was born in 1927 and in 1947 he joined the first intake into Sandhurst after the War. His family were living in the Regimental area where his father was Bishop of Brechin, so he applied for a commission in The Black Watch - joining the 1st Battalion in Berlin. He moved to the 2nd Battalion when it was reformed at Colchester in 1952 and returned to Germany with it, initially in Hubbelrath. When the Battalion moved to Dortmund in 1953 Stephen became much involved in Battalion basketball and athletics. Eddie Orr-Ewing, later Stephen's best man, recalls "Our closest time was in the 2nd Battalion and especially during our training for the Army Athletics, which we won!! He was pretty good at the long jump. Just shortly before the actual competition he managed to spike his leg, quite badly and sufficient for the MO to put him on light duties. Stephen was au fait with the form, in other words he ignored the MO's orders and carried on; can't remember whether he won, but I expect he did; he was that sort of a person! But Stephen was a no-nonsense person and ran an efficient show in whatever capacity that may have been; he was also a man of God, which is becoming a rarity these days."

When the Battalion moved to British Guiana a couple of years later, Stephen was despatched to Bogota in Colombia to represent HM The Queen at a parade to welcome home Colombia's servicemen who had been on active service in Korea. Evidently, he so impressed the President of Colombia that he awarded him the country's highest military honour-the Cruz de Cordoba. Sadly, he was told he could



not accept the award as it had not been officially notified. Also while in Guiana on a butterfly collecting expedition with a brother officer they came across an alligator in a mangrove swamp which his friend shot. Seeing it lying on its back and thinking it was dead, Stephen went to retrieve it only to find that it was anything but dead!!! Finally, they despatched it and brought it ashore. They then managed to transfer it to the ornamental fishpond outside the Officer's Mess in Georgetown and set it up to look very lifelike where it had the desired effect of scaring their company commander when he came out for a 'sundowner'.

From Guiana Stephen was posted to the Depot in Queen's Barracks, Perth, as Adjutant and that same year at brother officer, Robert Gurdon's wedding, he met the bride's sister, Mary Terry. The romance blossomed and they were married in September 1957, a wonderfully happy marriage which was to last over 66 years. Stephen's next appointment was Adjutant of the 6/7th Battalion so he remained in Perth until posted to HQ North West District in Preston, an appointment which he did not enjoy. Two years later he was back in the 1st Battalion after an absence of 12 years to take over command of D Company in Warminster not long before it moved to Minden. It was at this stage of his life that Stephen decided upon a change of career.

The idea of being a schoolmaster had always been in the back of his mind. On 30th April 1965 he retired from the Army and on 1st May 1965 he started work at Ludgrove Preparatory School near Wokingham in Surrey. He was to remain there for the next 30 years rising to finish as Senior Master. It was a task at which he excelled and from which hundreds of boys benefitted including the present Prince of Wales.

When he retired from this second career he and Mary moved to Goodworth Clatford in Hampshire where he could indulge his love of gardening and take advantage of fishing on the unique chalk streams nearby. He also used his intellect to create fiendishly difficult quizzes requiring crossword skills rather than General Knowledge. Over the course of 15 years his annual Christmas Quiz raised over £100,000 for charity.

He died peacefully at home on 9 August 2024 aged 96. He was not just a gentleman but a very gentle man who lived an exemplary life and was proud of his service in the Regiment. Our sympathies go out to Mary, their three children and six grandchildren.

*Stephen Lindsay*

#### MAJOR JACK JONES MBE (known as Slim)



Slim Jones, another great regimental character, died near Colchester on 16th April, aged 92.

His father served as Warrant Officer Class two in the Worcester Regiment and Slim being the second son in the family decided that he also would make a career for himself in the army but chose The Black Watch instead of his father's regiment. On 10th January 1946, at the age of fourteen he enlisted into The Black Watch as a band boy and by 6th April was heading North on his way to Queen's Barracks Perth.

After basic infantry training Slim was selected to attend the Royal

Military College of Music, Kneller Hall from September 1947 until September 1948 where he graduated with Good Grades on both the Clarinet and Violin. He was then posted to the 1st Battalion in Duisburg and then moved with them to Berlin in 1950. Slim stayed with the 1st Battalion throughout his lengthy career but was not impressed when the Regimental Band were not deployed to Korea and asked on numerous occasions to go there, but each time he was turned down. He was happy however to move to Kenya and rejoin the Battalion there where he had many happy memories such as playing on Christmas Eve at Thika. Travel in the Regimental Band was like a worldwide tour as they visited South Africa, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Holland and Belgium.

Slim realised that promotion was slow in the Regimental Band and although he was by now a Sergeant he felt that if he wished to try for further promotion he should join a rifle company. After two years in Edinburgh he left the band and reverted to Corporal and joined D Company where he was employed as a Section Commander and in 1958 moved with the Battalion to Cyprus in that role.

Shortly after Slim was promoted to Sergeant again and employed as Intelligent Sergeant whilst the Cyrus Emergency was still in force. One year later his career changed direction when he was transferred to the Anti-Tank Platoon and when the Battalion moved to the School of Infantry, Warminster he found himself as a Sergeant in the Support Weapons Demonstration Platoon at Netheravon.

Moving to Minden, Slim again changed employment and became the Platoon Sergeant of 2 Platoon, A (Grenadier) Company in Minden, West Germany with Mike Melville as a fresh young subaltern out of Sandhurst as the Platoon Commander. He was later promoted to Colour Sergeant and moved to the Vigilant Anti-Tank Platoon Sergeant where his experience, gained at Netheravon, stood him in good stead. Following the Battalion's six-month UN tour of Cyprus from Nov 1966 to 1967 Slim gained promotion to Warrant Officer Class two and was appointed Signals Platoon Warrant Officer. On return to Scotland, he became CSM Support Company before being appointed RQMS. Later, he was selected to be commissioned and by the time the Battalion moved to Hong Kong in 1972 he was appointed Unit Families' Officer with responsibility for the welfare of some 200 Black Watch families and all the inherent problems encountered in the hot, humid and claustrophobic atmosphere of Hong Kong. Slim easily rose to this task and became a surrogate father figure to many of the young families who had never travelled far from their family home. They left Hong Kong in 1974 and, shortly after arriving in Colchester, Slim was appointed as Technical Quartermaster. Two roulement tours to West Belfast followed in 1974 and 1975 and then a resident 18-month tour in Ballykinler in 1976. Slim took all the movements and handover in his stride and then added another string to his bow by becoming the Battalion's travel agent, organising the travel arrangements for the R&R Leave during the seven-months unaccompanied tour in Belize from Catterick.

Promotion to Major and appointment to Quartermaster (Main) followed prior to the Battalion's move to Werl, West Germany as part of the BAOR. This was to be his last posting with the 1st Battalion. Throughout his service he had continuously remained with the 1st Battalion until his last two years in the Army when he was posted as Quartermaster of Head Quarters North East District at Catterick where he remained until he retired from Regular service in September 1983. Slim did not hang up his uniform completely as he served for a further six years as a PSAO with the Royal Scots Company of 2/52 Lowland Volunteers at Penicuik where he had set up home with his wife Cath. Slim and Cath moved to Spain where they lived for a number of years before returning to UK due to ill health in 2013.

Sadly Slim was predeceased by his daughter Elaine in 2010 and by his wife Cath in 2014.

He is survived by his daughter Jakki and his grandchildren to whom we extend our condolences and sympathy. A great regimental character sadly missed.

*R J W Proctor*



## MAJOR ROD MACONOCHIE



My first impressions of Rod were of a promising Front Row forward, someone of quick wit, with a great gift for comedy, plus being something of a self-appointed ladies' man. Over the years, my view of him changed very little.

I first met Rod at Bridge of Don Barracks, Aberdeen, when he greeted me with a smart 'Hello, MANONCHIE, Sir', 'Mac An' Ochie' I repeated, 'of Italian origin?' I queried. 'No Sir, Maconochie's Biscuits, Aberdeenshire - you obviously didn't fight in the First World War, Sir'. As I had only recently been commissioned, and was en route to join the 1st Battalion in Germany, I thought this a fair and reasonable assessment to make.

Rod said of himself: 'I failed the Commissions Board because I couldn't work out how to cross a pretend river with a couple of oil cans and a bit of rope! I thought they had made a bad mistake and I decided to give the army another chance and enlisted as a private soldier on an "S" type engagement.

'I was dispatched to the Highland Brigade Depot where Edward de Broë was my platoon commander. I passed out as best recruit and was promoted to post corporal whilst waiting to be sent to Mons.'

After officer training at Mons, Rod turned up in Minden in 1966, where he joined D Company under Alec Macdonald-Gaunt as a Platoon Commander. Here, Rod demonstrated his remarkable Rugby skills whilst playing for the Battalion 15, as well as showing off his military prowess on exercises, such as 'HellTank' and 'How to Float a 432 [an armoured personnel carrier] on the River Weser without Sinking or Drowning'. Always cheerful, Rod appeared to be completely undaunted by the Russian threat on our Eastern flank, or the tenuous situation surrounding Berlin at that time. He simply took Life in his stride and enjoyed every minute of it.

I had the good fortune to catch up with Rod again in later life, when he came to live in Bibury, Gloucestershire, quite near my mother's home in Wiltshire. By this time he had married Penny, who brought with her some excellent shooting in Cumbria and they had two delightful children together, Hugh and Elspeth, both of whom Rod adored. He took great interest, joy and pride in following the development of his four grandchildren, Alma, Lochie, Ludo and Rafferty, all of whom he loved very much.

By this time, he was devoting his time and boundless energy to training, and breeding gun dogs, and had established a successful Kennels business locally. As a mutual friend, a Russian girl indeed, remarked, citing his Bloodhound "Satchmo" as an example, 'Dogs think that Rod is another dog'. He had indeed a unique understanding and love of animals, of all shapes and sizes, and they in turn loved him, but Cocker Spaniels" were his favourite.

As the years caught up with him, as they do to most of us, so Rod's health began to decline. Several hip replacements were needed, until two years ago he suffered a bad fall on a newly replaced hip. It took his surgical team two months to prepare for the ten hour operation. But throughout this painful ordeal his spirits remained as indomitable as ever.

He was the Secretary of the local branch of The British Legion, organising events and fund raising. Indeed, it became an annual pilgrimage for me to join him on Remembrance Sunday at Bibury

Church, and at Ablington Village War Memorial where he read out the names of the all the glorious dead; so many souls from so tiny an English village - deeply moving. Rod sounded increasingly like the British actor the late Jack Hawkins, at his most resonant and fluent.

More recently, Rod enquired after the meaning of the pink list, the list of those selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel: '... On the contrary it is I who should apologize because I should have remembered that! I was thinking more in the terms of someone drinking too much gin!'

It was a privilege to know such a man, and to share in some small measure, part of his life - a great character of infinite charm - may he always be remembered.

*Hamish Gibson*

## LIEUTENANT IAN DOUGLAS McLEOD



Ian Douglas McLeod died on 12th February 2024 aged 85. Ian arrived at Queen's Barracks on a cold February night in 1956. On reporting to the Guard Room he was given temporary accommodation in a cell for the rest of the night. After basic training and participating on a Junior NCO's Cadre he was on his way to The Royal Academy Sandhurst. After being commissioned and passing out at Sandhurst he returned to Queen's Barracks which he left in January 1959 as Officer in Command of the first draft for 1 BW in Cyprus. After the train journey to Southampton he and his draft joined Her Majesty's Troopship Dilwara en route for Cyprus. Ian settled into Battalion life and after many interesting experiences and adventures, he took part in a small expedition to Libya to explore the Sahara Desert, south of Tripoli. Whilst there, he and a friend had dinner with two secretaries who worked for Shell Oil; this meeting was fateful and romance blossomed.

On his return to Cyprus Ian incurred a knee injury while playing cricket and underwent a successful operation. However, an infection had set in resulting in him being flown home for treatment at Hedley Court. He returned to Cyprus and continued as a Rifle Platoon Commander the duties of which were never dull. On return to the United Kingdom Ian was selected to be the Mortar Platoon Commander at the School of Infantry, Warminster. Back in England in 1961, Ian married Ruth (the secretary he had met in Libya). His son Andrew was born in 1963, after which he left the regiment in 1964 to work in the cement industry as a trainee manager. His daughter Julia was born in 1965.

His work with Blue Circle Cement took him around England to Westbury, Dunstable, Hull, Cambridge (including a year in Libya) and Plymouth, before moving back to Kent in 1983. He took up a consultancy role, travelling widely for work in Africa, the Baltic states, the Middle East and Far East.

Outside work, he enjoyed walking and game shooting with his faithful black labrador Ben. Indoors, Ian loved craftsmanship,



building model aircraft, then violins, and boats. He took up gliding and gained his private pilot licence. The culmination of his interests came in retirement when building his own powered light aircraft, a Pietyenpol 'Air Camper' a 1920's design monoplane. 'Dame Flora' was named after a past clan chief, painted in McLeod tartan livery, and represented his pride and joy.

Ian remained engaged and active in many local causes, and was also a passionate reader, and lover of classical music. He became absorbed in researching family history, and had a genuine interest in all his family, friends and acquaintances, also keeping in touch with former Black Watch contacts at regimental reunions. Although his time in the regiment represented a small proportion of his years, it was a formative experience for him, and he held on to the discipline and standards of the Black Watch throughout his life.

He was never happier than at home in Rochester with Ruth and, in December 2021, they celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary together, receiving a card of congratulations from HM Queen Elizabeth II. He leaves his beloved wife Ruth, his two children Andrew and Julia, and his four granddaughters.

**R J W Proctor and Andrew McLeod**

#### **JAMES (Jim) ANDERSON**



Jim Anderson was born on 21st November 1935 and died very suddenly at home on 25th October 2024 less than a month before his 90th birthday.

Jim lived with his two elder sisters on the Dundee Road, Forfar prior to moving to a flat above the family-owned bake house in West High Street. He was educated at West Primary School and Forfar Academy. On leaving school aged 15 he worked in the family bakery business but as soon as he was old enough, he decided to join the Army and enlisted into The Black Watch.

On completion of basic training at Queen's Barracks Perth Jim was posted to the 1st Battalion then serving in Kenya during the Mau Mau emergency in 1953. He enjoyed the independence that Army life gave him and the camaraderie and friendship of service life which was to remain with him long after he left the Army. Returning with the Battalion to Crail he enjoyed soldiering in Scotland before the Battalion moved to Wavell Barracks, Berlin. By now Jim, who was always immaculately turned out and showed leadership qualities, had been promoted to Lance Corporal and further promotion to Corporal soon followed.

Whilst serving in Berlin Jim met his future wife, Karin, whom he later married in Forfar in 1958, she sadly predeceased him in 2008 after fifty years of marriage

Returning to Redford Barracks in 1957 Jim was selected to take part in the Royal Guard at Ballater under Major Tony Lithgow. He was also selected to take part in the Royal Tournament in London where members of the Battalion dressed in Feather Bonnets and Scarlet Tunics performed in a tableau depicting the Battle of Tel El Kebir.

After Jim and Karin were married, he left the Army, and they settled down in his hometown of Forfar. He initially gained employment as a booking clerk at Forfar station until its closure, due to the Beeching Railway reforms, and was then transferred to work in Dundee. Remaining with British Rail, Jim was appointed as a Permanent Way inspector with responsibilities that the rail network in his area was safe and met the required standards. Ultimately, he was appointed Station Manager at Dundee then Perth Railway stations before he retired on reaching state retirement age in 1995. Karin then suffered from a long-term illness and Jim visited her daily in hospital until she died.

Jim and Karin's family consisted of their son Colin and daughter Erika and later 4 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

A keen cyclist when younger, he kept himself fit throughout his life and was also a great supporter of Forfar Athletic Football Club and Strathmore Cricket Club. He also visited Berlin on numerous occasions keeping contact with Karin's family.

Jim was a founder member of the Angus Branch of The Black Watch Association and paid a full part in all Branch activities until a period of illness stopped him from doing so. Jim was a gentleman in every sense of the word, and he will be sadly missed by all those who had the pleasure of knowing him.

Our Sympathy and Condolences are offered to Colin, Erika and their families.

**R J W Proctor**

#### **WILLIAM BROWN**

William Brown died aged 74 in Kennoway, Fife on Christmas Day 2023. Bill served with 1 BW in the 1970s/80s in Hong Kong, Colchester, Ballykinler, Catterick and Werl, West Germany. He took part in unaccompanied tours in Northern Ireland and Belize. His funeral took place at Kennoway Cemetery, near Leven in Fife on 10 January 2024, which was attended by members of the Fife Branch of The Black Watch Association.

**R J W Proctor**

#### **CHRIS CATHRO**



Sergeant Chris Cathro died on 12th October 2024 aged 65, in Guyana. Chris' father, WO2 Charlie Cathro, who was a great regimental character, married Chris' mother, Mary, during 2 BW's tour of British Guyana from 1954-1956. Chris was born in 1959 and as soon as he was old enough, joined the Regiment and served in the 1st Battalion. He served numerous tours in Northern Ireland, Werl, West Germany, UK and took part in the Royal Guard in 1986.

**R J W Proctor**



## WILLIAM ERNEST COLE



**WILLIAM COLE 2BW and his GSM Palestine**

William Ernest Cole died in Ipswich on 28th March 2024 aged 99, William originally came from Grimsby and served in 4 BW during World War 2 and saw service in Gibraltar and latterly in Palestine with 2BW.

*R J W Proctor*

## JOE DEVLIN



Joe Devlin died on the 11th of July aged 84. Joe who came from Dundee served in the 4th/5th Battalion in the late 1950s and early sixties at Bell Street Dundee. He was very proud of his service in The Black Watch and being on parade when the Queen Mother unveiled the 4th/5th Black Watch memorial on its original site at Powrie Brae in 1959.

Joe continued his connection with the regiment by being a long time and active member of the Dundee Branch of The Black Watch Association. His iconic handlebar moustache and being always immaculately turned out made him the focus on numerous association photo shoots. His choice of waistcoats in The Black Watch Regimental Colours of Blue Red and Green made him the envy of many of his friends within the Dundee Branch and beyond and many copied his style of waistcoat elegance! Joe was also a much-respected member of The Black Watch Association Welfare committee, and his sage advice and compassion was greatly appreciated on numerous occasions helping to ensure that those in need were given help.

Joe was employed by Dundee City Council as a supervisor in the Cleansing Department where he continued to work until state retirement age. He was also very well-known and active in Masonic Circles in Dundee and elsewhere where he was a senior Office Bearer in some of the higher degrees.

Sadly Joe was predeceased by his wife Chrissy some years ago and is survived by his son Kevin and his wife, his two grandchildren and three great grandchildren to whom we extend our sympathy.

*R J W Proctor*

## WILLIAM FAULKNER



William (Bill) Faulkner aged 77 died peacefully at the Victoria Hospice Kirkcaldy on 13th April 2024 after a brave fight against a serious illness. He was born in Cookstown County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. He was the middle brother of three, both his elder and younger brothers predeceased him. Growing up in a rural area and he delighted in the great outdoors, helping on the farms and working on old cars, especially their old Morris Minor.

In 1957 the family moved to Hartlepool where Bill served his time as a baker but his baking career ended. In 1965 the family moved to Leslie where Bill worked in the local paper mill until retiring.

He served with The Black Watch in the Territorial Army in 1973-1975 and again 1977-1979, he was based at the TA Centre in Hunter Street, Kirkcaldy. He was very proud to have served in 1/51 Highland and its Black Watch connections and enjoyed the training camps and field exercises, the banter and camaraderie of Regimental life in the TA.

Of his interests, Bill was an avid reader who focused on military history, the troubles in Northern Ireland and The Black Watch. He took a great pride in his home, his garden and his vintage Morris Traveller that took him to his much loved Aberfeldy and throughout Scotland and Northern Ireland. He was deeply interested in music ranging from Country and Western, Irish Folk to Pipe Bands.

Bill met his future wife Olive in Cookstown Co Tyrone and they were married for almost 28 years, sadly Olive pre-deceased him in 2016. Bill is survived by his son Billy and his daughter Paula and their families, to whom we extend our sympathy and condolences.

*R J W Proctor*

## DAVID FINLAY

David Finlay known as Davie died on 28th July 2024 aged 67. He joined the 1st Battalion in 1975 at Colchester and served mainly with the Signals Platoon where he rose to the rank of Signals Sergeant. He took part in the various unaccompanied tours to Northern Ireland, Belize, and elsewhere, serving for a period as Signals PSI with 1/51 Highland at the Queens Barracks, TA Centre in Perth.

Davie had a very dry wit and sense of humour and got his point across and ensured that the men under his command were always well briefed to enable them to carry out any task given to them.

Retiring to Dundee at the end of his service, he continued his contact with the Regiment through his friends who served with him in the Regiment and attended Regimental events including the annual Black Watch Reunion.

Davie was a Regimental character who will be missed by all those who knew him.

We extend our sympathy and condolences to the family.

*R J W Proctor*



### PETER FOWLER

Peter Fowler aged 82 died in Dundee on 24th of May 2024 following a period of health complications. Peter enlisted in 1959 GED 18 and completed his recruit training at Queen's Barracks, Perth and was then posted to the 1st Battalion in Cyprus.

He remained with the 1st Battalion for the remainder of his twelve year engagement seeing service in Warminster, Minden, West Germany, including a UN tour in Cyprus and two tours to Libya and then to Kirknewton outside Edinburgh from where he served tours in Northern Ireland.

His funeral took place at the Dundee Crematorium on Thursday 20 June which was attended by members of the Dundee Branch.

We send our sympathy and condolences to his family.

**R J W Proctor**

### DAVID HODGE



**David (Taffy) Hodge died in December 2023 before Christmas aged 80.**

Taffy took part in the Piping Cadre prior to the Pipes and Drums tour in America in 1963. He played at the celebrated concert at the White House in front of President John F Kennedy, his wife Jackie and their family which was organised to raise funds for poor and under privileged children in The United States. Moving with the 1st Battalion from Warminster to Minden, West Germany in 1964, he later played at Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen during a pipe band tour of Denmark.

In 1965 he moved to the Anti-Tank Platoon and later served with them during the Battalion's United Nations Peace Keeping tour in Cyprus from November 1966 to May 1967.

He was very much a well-read individualist who had a keen sense of wit and humour and was a popular and well liked member of the Anti-Tank Platoon.

On leaving the Army he went travelling in Morocco and later worked for the Brighton company called Safara Village based in Asilah, Morocco. He later became co-owner of a small restaurant in Tangiers. He met his future wife, Maggie, a nurse, in Morocco and they moved back to work in the UK where he then trained as a Social Worker but took early retirement due to health issues.

He and some fellow pipers took to busking in London for tourists and piped at weddings and private functions. Taffy was well respected and liked by all those who had the pleasure of knowing him.

We send our sympathy and condolences to his family.

**R J W Proctor and John Alexander**

### NORMAN HUTCHISON



It was with great sadness that Norman Hutchison (known as Hutch) died on 30th July 2024 aged 76 in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary after a short and brave fight against serious illness. His private cremation took place shortly after he died.

He was born in Inverkeithing in 1948 and was educated at Inverkeithing School, initially working with his father at Burntisland Shipyard as a labourer. Although he enjoyed his work his ambition was to join the Army, although his father had served in The Royal Navy during World War 2. Hutch realised his ambition and joined The Black Watch in which he served for the next 25 years.

After a short period in the Rifle Company, he transferred to the Anti-Tank Platoon where he spent some time before taking up the role of Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess Regimental Silverman and Batman to the Regimental Sergeant Major. On assuming this appointment, Hutch was promoted to Lance Corporal and looked after eight successive Regimental Sergeant Majors, namely, Fred Beattie, Tom Duffy, Ronnie Proctor, Mike Smith, Jimmy Williamson, Bryan Dickson, Jock Menzies and Arthur Keith. Throughout his service he proved to be a thoroughly honest, trustworthy and reliable member of the Regiment. He was always polite, helpful and considerate and was greatly respected by all members of The Black Watch.

On leaving the Regiment Hutch found employment working in security in Perth, before moving to work at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary as a porter and remained working for the NHS until his retirement.

His kind and helpful character shone through during this employment and he was well liked by all members of the staff and patients with whom he came in contact with. On moving to Edinburgh, he initially lived in the Gorgie area of Edinburgh and latterly moved to a pensioner's house in Gilmerton where his kindness and generosity was greatly appreciated by his neighbours and friends.

Norman never married and was in fact married to the Regiment and to those whom he served.

He was a great Regimental character who will be sadly missed.

Our sympathy and condolences are offered to his surviving brother John.

**R J W Proctor**

### THOMAS INNES

Thomas Innes (known as Tam) died on Monday 10th June 2024 after a long and brave fight against serious illness. Tam was a well-known and well-liked Black Watch Regimental character from Fife who will be sadly missed by all those who had the privilege of knowing him. He served in a Rifle Company and attained the rank of Corporal.

His funeral took place on 5th of July at Dunfermline Crematorium which was well attended by members of The Black Watch Association.

We extend our sympathy and condolences to Tam's family.

**R J W Proctor**



### IAN LAWRIE

Ian Steele Lawrie died in Bedfordshire aged 86. After basic training at the Queen's Barracks, Perth, Ian served as one of the many National Servicemen in the Battalion in Berlin from 1955 to 1957.

Ian was very proud to have served in The Black Watch and we extend our condolences and sympathy to his wife Arlene and family. His funeral was private at Ian's request.

**R J W Proctor**

### GEORGE LUMSDEN

George Lumsden died on 9th of January 2024 aged 97. George joined the Regiment in 1946 and reported to the 1st Battalion. He was an accomplished piper and was promoted to Pipe Corporal in 1948.

He returned to the Depot at Queen's Barracks in 1950 and was selected to play at the funeral of King George the VI in February 1952. He joined the reconstituted 2nd Battalion in Colchester in April 1952 and later returned to the Depot to be discharged at the end of his engagement in September of that year.

George then joined the City of Edinburgh Police in 1955 and joined their Pipe Band, which latterly became the Lothian and Borders Police Pipe Band where he served for 30 years. During his last 4 years he held the appointment of Pipe Major from 1984 to 1988. George was well known and respected within the piping circles in Scotland and beyond.

**R J W Proctor**

### IAN MACDONALD



**Ian MacDonald died on 7th January 2024 aged 79.**

Ian originally came from Perth and joined the 1st Battalion at Warminster in 1962, spending most of his time in a Rifle Company and in training. He also spent time as an Instructor at The Scottish Infantry Depot, Bridge of Don and as a PSI with 1/51 Highland. Due to his height he was always known as "Big Ian" and because of his turnout and bearing he was selected as the Senior NCO and latterly Warrant Officer in Quarter Guards and Colour parties. He was also a renowned shot and was selected to be the Warrant Officer of the Regimental Shooting Team at Bisley in 1983.

He served a full 22-year career until 1984. Ian was an active member of the Freemasons and took part in the numerous visits to the United States of The Black Watch masonic degree group.

His funeral took place at Kirkcaldy Crematorium which was well attended by members of The Black Watch Association and former members of the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess.

We send our sympathy and condolences to his sons David, Iain and their families.

**R J W Proctor**

### HENRY ROSS McINTOSH



Henry Ross MacIntosh died on 31st May 2024 Aged 84. He completed recruit training at Queen's Barracks in Perth in 1956 and was then posted to the 1st Battalion stationed at Redford Barracks, Edinburgh. He then moved with the Battalion to Cyprus during the latter part of the EOKA Campaign. Henry's leadership qualities were noticed by his superiors and he gained promotion to full Corporal and had he remained in the Regiment he no doubt would have fulfilled his full potential.

Henry was very proud of his Black Watch service and passed on the standards that he had gained while serving with the Regiment to his children which resulted in his son and grandchildren joining and serving in the Armed Forces.

**R J W Proctor**

### IAN McKAY

Ian McKay died at Perth Royal Infirmary on the morning of 9th June 2024, aged 72. Ian served with the Scots Guards from 1971-1974 and was based in Pirbright where he completed two Op Banner tours in Northern Ireland. He then served with The Black Watch from 1978 to 1981 whilst the Battalion was serving at Catterick, and on an unaccompanied tour in Belize and Werl, West Germany where he was medically discharged due to an injury obtained on operations.

After his discharge from regular service Ian served as an Adult Instructor with The Black Watch Army Cadet Force and he and his wife Anne settled in Scone. His other extracurricular activity was that he carried out the duties of hall keeper for the Robert Douglas Memorial Institute. Ian and Anne had been married for 54 years and had three children Ian, Shaun and Sammy.

Ian's Memorial Service took place on 26th July 2024 at the Tulloch Institute in Perth which was well attended by his friends and family and members of The Black Watch Association.

We extend our sympathy and condolences to Ian's family.

**R J W Proctor**

### SANDY McLAREN

Sandy McLaren died on 13th January 2024 aged 90. After completing his basic training, Sandy was posted to the 1st Battalion who were serving in Korea and took part in the Battle of The Hook in 1952, he then moved with the Battalion to take part in operations in the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya before returning home to the UK.

**R J W Proctor**

### JOHN McLEAN



John McLean died on 20th November 2023 aged 91. After basic training, John was posted to the 1st Battalion in Berlin, 1951; he subsequently fought in the Korean War. He was very proud of his service in The Black Watch and, featuring in The Iron Claw by Jim Halley, was one of the last Black Watch veterans in the Crieff area to have fought in the Korean War. He loved music, particularly Scottish songs and the pipes and drums.

On leaving the Army John returned to the Crieff area, working for Perth and Kinross Council. After his death his family generously donated roses for The Korean Garden to the front of Balhousie Castle.

*T J O Carmichael*

### DAVID McLURE

David McLure died on 25th of June 2024 Aged 81. He served from 1972-78 in Hong Kong, Ballykinler and Colchester reaching the rank of Colour Sergeant. He was a very accomplished footballer and played at Company and Battalion level.

Davie, as he was known joined 1 BW at Knook Camp Warminster in November 1962 after completing recruit training at the combined Black Watch and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Depot at Stirling Castle. Davie was a very accomplished footballer and played at Company and Battalion level. He spent some time in B Company in a rifle section but soon moved to Company HQ where he was employed as a Company runner then Company Clerk. After promotion to Corporal he moved to the Mortar Platoon where he was promoted to Sergeant. He served for a time in Hong Kong as Provost Sergeant and on the Battalion's move to Colchester in 1974 was promoted Colour Sergeant and appointed CQMS Admin Company. He returned to B Company as CQMS in Ballykinler in 1976 where he served until his discharge from the army in 1977.

*R J W Proctor*

### GEORGE MYLES



George Myles died on 16th February 2024 aged 91. He was a native of Forfar, was called up for National Service and was enlisted into The Black Watch. After completing training at Queen's Barracks he joined the 1st Battalion prior to its embarkation for Korea in 1952. George a quiet, steady, reliable and fit man whose great passion was cricket settled down well in the battalion and was singled out for promotion in Korea and served as a full Corporal both in Korea and the Mau Mau Emergency

in Kenya thereafter. Like most of his fellow National Servicemen of that era he was continually on active service throughout his engagement. He completed his period of National Service when the Battalion returned from Kenya to Crail

He continued his great passion of cricket and was a member of Strathmore Cricket Club both as a player and supporter in his later years.

George was a founder member of the Angus Branch of The Black Watch Association and was a regular attender at all Branch meetings and functions until he was unable to do so through deteriorating health. His quiet and no-nonsense approach to life made him a much respected and popular member of the branch.

He is survived by his wife and son to whom we extend our sympathy and condolences.

*R J W Proctor*

### PETER PENDLEBURY



Peter (known as Pete) Pendlebury died on 1st October 2024 aged 69. He was a former member of the Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion, Shorncliffe and rose through the ranks within the Regiment and was promoted to WO2, CSM of Charlie (Fire Support) Company. He had spent several years in the Mortar Platoon as 2IC and was seconded as an Instructor to the Omani Forces. His last tour before completing his engagement was as Warrant Officer IC of the Regimental Recruiting Team at Balhousie Castle in Perth. He was well known in Perth through his taxi business and was a great supporter of the Regiment through the Regimental Association and the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Dining Club.

His other great interest latterly, apart from The Black Watch, was his dog, Brad, which Pete could be seen walking daily on the North Inch.

Pete and two comrades made a commemorative visit to Belize in 2023 and he subsequently wrote an article on his visit. The first part was in last year's Red Hackle and the second half is to be found in this year's magazine.

A great Regimental character who will be sadly missed.

*R J W Proctor*

### WO1 (RSM) KEN PRESCOTT



I first met Ken in November 1962 when I joined 1 BW from the Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion, Oswestry. All new arrivals to 1 BW, which was at the time currently stationed as Demonstration Battalion at the School



of Infantry, Warminster had to undergo two weeks Draft Training. It was run by A (Grenadier) Company which was based in the hatted accommodation of Knook Camp some three miles East of Warminster. The CSM of A Company was Ken Prescott who was known in the battalion as Sash, as he liked to wear his scarlet Sergeant's sash as often as he could.

Ken came across as a very smart and quite fierce CSM who expected those under his wing to achieve the same high standards that he set, and woe betide anyone who did not make the effort to do so.

Looking at his row of medals, I as a young soldier could see that he had served during the Second World War which had ended nearly 18 years previously and looking at his record of service in his wee Red Book confirmed what I had known about Ken. He had literally served across the world.

Born on 11th January in Lancashire, Ken enlisted into The Black Watch at Liverpool on 11th August 1944 aged 17. He served for a time in the UK with the 10th (Young Soldiers/Training) Battalion before being posted to Palestine which was a very dangerous place to be prior to the formation of the state of Israel, many British servicemen lost their lives during that turbulent and violent period.

During his 4 years in the Middle East Ken had been promoted and on his return to the UK was appointed as a Sergeant Instructor at the Regimental Depot at Queen's Barracks Perth where he met Connie, his future wife who worked in the NAAFI. Sadly, Connie predeceased Ken after a long and happy life together. After a two-year tour at the Depot Ken was on the move again and was posted to 2 BW who were stationed in Dortmund and during this time he was selected as a Sergeant Escort to the Regimental Colour Parties of both First and Second Battalions, The Black Watch at Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. Ken was the last surviving member of the Colour Parties who took part in that historic occasion on a very wet and windy day in 1953. After a short spell at Crail in Fife, Ken moved with the Battalion to British Guyana in the Caribbean for another two-year tour before returning to Redford Barracks in Edinburgh where the 1st and 2nd battalions were amalgamated. He had by this time been promoted to Colour Sergeant and soon settled into the amalgamated battalion where inter battalion rivalry continued for many years to come. Ken continued serving with the 1st Battalion in Berlin then Edinburgh before heading abroad again to Cyprus towards the end of the EOKA campaign. By now he had been promoted to Warrant Officer Class Two and was posted once again to the depot and was the last CSM of the Depot at Queens Barracks when the Depot closed in 1961. He then returned to Cyprus as CSM, of A(Grenadier) Company before moving back with the Battalion to Warminster. His final move with 1 BW was to Minden in West Germany in 1964 and he was reappointed as CSM D Company before being selected for promotion to WO1 where he became the RSM of 4/5 BW then the short lived 3rd Battalion (V) The Black Watch at Rodd Road, Dundee.

Ken then was selected to serve on extended service where he served in Hong Kong as Garrison RSM, and then Queen's Messenger, prior to be appointed Garrison RSM in Cyprus where his leadership, organisational and management skills came to the fore and were noticed and appreciated by all those he was involved with during the Turkish invasion and partition of the island. His final appointment was as Garrison RSM at Rhinedahlen prior to his retiral from the regular army after serving for 34 years and 136 days.

On his retiral from the Regular Army he was employed as an MOD Security officer at HQ BAOR in Rhinedahlen. During this time he kept in touch with the 1st Battalion who were then stationed in Werl by attending WOs and Sgts Mess functions. On his state retirement he and Connie moved to the village of Ardersier, where he continued to be a valuable and much liked and respected member of the community.

I said that when I first met Ken, he was a smart and fierce Black Watch CSM, this outward appearance belied a heart of gold of a man who took a real interest in the wellbeing of his men throughout his long career.

Ken was awarded the Long Service Medal with bar and the Meritorious Service Medal which was a great testament to his service to our country. I feel that the final sentences written by his last Commanding Officer in Ken's "Red Book" before he retired from the regular Army summed

him up very well "He is a great character with a lively and pleasant personality, One moment he is the person in authority immaculately turned out and the next he will roll up his sleeves and do whatever is required. He is a great loss to the army and an asset to any future employer.

His passing is a great loss to all those who had the privilege of knowing him, and I am sure that he will be happy to be together with Connie and his son Robert who predeceased him.

**R J W Proctor**

#### DAVID STARK



David Stark died suddenly at home in Arbroath in Feb 24 age 65.

After completing basic training at Penicuik David joined the 1st Battalion in Catterick and then moved with them to Werl, West Germany where he trained to be a competent and professional AFV 432 driver in D Company. He also took part in training at BATUS in Canada and served on an unaccompanied tour in West Belfast. David completed his service whilst the Battalion was serving at Kirknewton outside Edinburgh in 1985.

On returning to civilian life David and his family set up home in Arbroath where he lived and worked until retirement.

**R J W Proctor**

#### IAN SUTHERLAND



Ian Sutherland died on 30th March 2024 age 77. His elder brother, Jim, also served in the regiment and was nicknamed Chiel as he was a countryman who came from Brechin in Angus. Ian grew up and was educated in Brechin and enjoyed outside pursuits and it was only natural that although he had gained work after leaving school, he followed his brother Jim into The Black Watch. After recruit training at The Highland Brigade Depot, Bridge of Don, he joined the 1st Battalion in Minden in 1964; the family nickname was passed on to him. Ian completed a full 22-year career with the Regiment and served in Minden including a six-month UN Peace Keeping tour in Cyprus. He then moved with the Battalion to Kirknewton with deployments to Malaysia, Gibraltar and Northern Ireland. Moving again with the Battalion to Hong Kong followed by Colchester, including unaccompanied tours to West Belfast. The family had further moves to Ballykinler in Northern Ireland then Catterick and Werl where he was appointed Provost Sergeant and later SP Coy MT Sgt, his last appointments with the 1st Battalion.

Ian completed his service as a Recruiting Sergeant in Dundee where his immaculate turnout and bearing made him an ideal choice for this post. He was a great ambassador for The Black Watch and no doubt ensured

numerous recruits joined the Regiment.

He is survived by his wife Evelyn and family to whom we send our condolences.

*R J W Proctor*

#### WO1(RSM) BARRIE SWINBURN



Barrie Swinburn died on the 24th of June 2024 and his funeral took place at Porchester in Hampshire on 16th August. Barrie, who originally came from Halifax in Yorkshire, was the brother of Darrel and Bessie whose parents were Jack and Violet Swinburn, a close-knit Yorkshire family.

Barrie decided he wanted to see a bit of the world further than his native Yorkshire and joined The Black Watch. After completing basic training at Queen's Barracks Perth, he was soon on his way to join the 1st Battalion who were currently serving in Kenya during the Mau Mau emergency from 1953 until 1955. Returning home in 1955 he served in Crail in Fife prior to the Battalion moving to Berlin then returning again to Scotland at Redford Barracks where public duties including the Royal Guard at Ballater were the order of the day.

By now Barrie's leadership qualities were noticed and he had established himself as a thoroughly reliable and competent Junior Non-Commissioned Officer who was earmarked for further promotion. A tour in Cyprus towards the end of the EOKA campaign in 1958 followed where the onus was on patrolling and training instead of the public duties of Edinburgh however the Battalion was still called upon to supply ceremonial quarter guards for visiting dignitaries including Archbishop Makarios when he returned to the island as president elect. Barrie being always smart and well turned out was selected on numerous occasions to be part of these guards.

By the time the Battalion were serving in Minden, West Germany in 1964 Barrie had gained promotion to Sergeant and was a well-respected and popular member of the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess. His quick wit and dry Yorkshire sense of humour went down with his peers and those who served with him.

On returning to Scotland in 1968 the Battalion was stationed at Ritchie Camp Kirknewton and took part in an overseas exercise in Malaysia, an unaccompanied tour in Gibraltar, several short tours and one four and a half month tour in Northern Ireland and Barrie was promoted to Warrant Officer Class Two. Before the Battalion moved to Hong Kong at the beginning of 1972 he was appointed Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant. This was an appointment at which he excelled as his easy going and helpful nature and attention to detail, made him respected by those within the Battalion and the numerous outside agencies with which he had to deal. Promotion to Warrant Officer Class One then followed and he took up the appointment of Regimental Sergeant Major of Glasgow University Officer Training Corps where he remained until the end of his service.

Barrie then worked until his state retirement as a Prison Officer and specialised in rehabilitating young offenders, many of whom benefited from his advice.

Barrie is survived by his daughters Fiona, Karen and Nicolla and other family members to whom we offer our sympathy and condolences.

*R J W Proctor*

#### JAMES WILLIAM HUNTER TAYLOR



Big Jim Taylor was born on 26th November 1928 and died on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2024 aged 96. Hailing from the North East of England, Jim had several employments varying from farm work, being a blacksmith, miner and a lumberjack in Somerset before going to Bristol to enlist into The Black Watch in August 1952.

After completing basic training at Queen's Barracks, Perth, Jim was posted to the 1st Battalion in Germany before deploying to Korea with the battalion where he took part in all major operations in that theatre. Jim's leadership potential was soon noticed, and he soon gained promotion to Corporal. The Battalion were then redeployed to Kenya in July 1953 where Jim was fully engaged in operations against the insurgents.

Later, he was transferred to the MT Platoon and was favourably reported on as being an excellent driving instructor who also had a sound knowledge of maintaining the vehicles on which he taught. In April 1955 the battalion returned to Crail where Jim, having completed his engagement, left the Regiment in August then served on the reserve until 1959.

In 1956 Jim met Margaret at the Alnmouth Dances and after a two year engagement they were married in February 1958 and spent 57 happy years together until she sadly passed away in April 2015. Jim and Margaret raised their family of Christine and David and later enjoyed the close family ties with their son and daughter in law, Wayne and Kim and their children and grandchildren.

Jim worked hard throughout his life to support his family after he left the Regiment and turned his hand to many employments and continued to help with farm work until he was 75. He enjoyed a full social life and was a keen gardener, loved cycling and driving.

He latterly could be seen on his electric powered scooter, driving around the local and sometimes not so local area.

He was very proud of his time in The Black Watch and as his last Commanding Officer wrote in his testimonial: "Had he decided to remain in the regiment he had the potential to gain further promotion as he is a thoroughly professional and reliable NCO."

Our sympathy is offered to his family.

*R J W Proctor*

#### ROY TODD

Roy Todd died on 16th April 2024 age 75. He served in the 1st Battalion from 1966 until 1978. After some time in a Rifle Company, he attended a driving cadre and after passing his test joined the MT platoon where he rose to the rank of Corporal and was an accomplished driving instructor teaching many men in the Regiment to drive and pass their driving test. Roy had a great sense of humour and had an affectionate nickname to differentiate between himself and another Corporal in the MT platoon with the same sounding name but was spelt with only one d.

Had Roy decided to complete a full career in the Battalion he would have gained further promotion and reached his full potential.

We offer our sympathy and condolences to his family.

*R J W Proctor*



### PETER WHITE



Peter Donald Stewart White, born in 1927 in Dunkeld, the last surviving piper of The Black Watch Pipes and Drums which played on the victory parade of 1946 in London, died on 2nd October, 2024 at the age of 97.

Despite having passed the old Higher Leaving Certificate at Perth Academy, Peter chose to do his National Service instead of going straight to university. He completed his training at a Young Soldiers' Training Battalion at Hollywood, County Down. While stationed in Ireland, one of the highlights of that posting was to be selected for the guard of honour inspected by General Montgomery. From Hollywood he progressed to the 8th Infantry Training Centre at Queen's Barracks in Perth. With a strong piping background acquired in the 6th Company, Perth Boys Brigade and the Army Cadet Company of Perth Academy, it was no surprise that he rapidly became a Piper in The Black Watch under the ever-watchful eye of Rob Hill, then Pipe Major at Queen's Barracks. As part of the Pipes and Drums one of the regular events was to play the recruits out to Arnbathie Farm for firing practice with the sten gun, PIAT anti-tank weapon and to practice grenade throwing. Peter was also permanent orderly piper at Scone Palace before the old training camp there was demolished and on one occasion as orderly piper he was told by the Pipe Major to get into full dress uniform to be photographed. The photograph appeared in a lengthy article on The Black Watch in an as yet unidentified American magazine.

Peter remained a staunch Black Watch man to the end and perhaps never more so than when he visited Fort George in 2022 and struck the Serai Ghat gong just as he had done so many times when on duty at Queen's Barracks.

In civil life Peter worked in a number of Perth businesses and was both director and secretary of Richard Voigt and Company on Shore Road in Perth then later was office manager at The Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society. He spent his last years at Hillfoot Farm outside Coupar Angus with his daughter Elaine. Peter was predeceased by his wife, Mabel, in 2015.

*N F Brown*

### WO2 (RQMS) DAVE WINNING

Dave Winning died on 1st September 2024 aged 86 at the Royal University Hospital Bath.

Dave originally served in the HLI and then re-enlisted into The Black Watch some time after the amalgamation of the HLI and RSF in 1958 which saw the formation of Royal Highland Fusiliers.

Initially serving in a Rifle Company when posted to the 1st Battalion in Cyprus Dave was selected to join the Signals Platoon but did not manage to complete formal Signals training on a Signals Cadre due to the Battalion's impending move back to the UK. After arriving in the UK and completing a Signals Cadre, he spent most of his service in the Regiment in the Signals Platoon. However, he was posted for a time as an Instructor at the Signals Wing, School of Infantry, Hythe and also was selected to be a Rifle Platoon Commander within the Battalion. Dave went on to become Technical Quartermaster Sergeant in the battalion before being appointed Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant on an ERE posting prior to the completion of his service. He then continued to work for the MOD as a housing warden.

Dave was predeceased by his wife Meg some years ago; we offer our sympathy and condolences to his daughter Alison.

His funeral took place on Tuesday 1st October 2024 in Wiltshire.

*R J W Proctor*

### GRAHAM WOOD



Graham Wood died at home in August 2024 after a brave fight against serious illness.

Graham joined the Battalion at Warminster from the Highland Brigade Training unit at Fort George in 1962 and later joined the Signals Platoon where he rose to the rank of Signals Warrant Officer. All members of the Signals Platoon of that time were given a nickname and because of his surname, Wood the nickname "Cluggie" was given to Graham and successive members of the battalion named Wood. He served with the battalion for most of his career and took part in all the operational tours of Cyprus, Gibraltar, Northern Ireland, and others. His final appointment in the 1st Battalion was as RQMS (Tech) in Werl, West Germany where the 1st Battalion was deployed in an extremely busy role as an Armoured Mechanised Battalion. Graham completed his military service with the Regimental Recruiting Team in Perth, and on leaving the army he was employed as a Families Housing and Welfare Officer in Edinburgh where he was a great success and liked and respected by his peers and the families for whom he was responsible.

We offer our deepest sympathy and condolences to Jeanette and the family.

*R J W Proctor*

### The following deaths have also been recorded:

**Norman Chalmers** died on 10th July 2024 aged 91.

**Kris Cruden** aged 49 died suddenly on 22nd February 2024 at his home in Paisley. Kris served in the 1st Battalion from 1995 to 2006 as a Piper in the Pipes and Drums.

**Jimmy Herd** died on 2nd October 2024 aged 88. As a National Serviceman, Jimmy joined the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) and after completing his National Service enlisted into the 4th/5th Black Watch. He was a member of the Dundee Branch of The Black Watch Association.

**Steven Scott Innes** died on 6 December 2023 aged 55. He served in the 1st Battalion from 1989 at Ballykinler, Tern Hill, near Market Drayton, Hong Kong, the UK and Fallingbowl before leaving the Regiment in 1991.

**George MacFarlane** died on 25 July 2024. He served in 1 BW from 1967-71.

**Ronnie Maxwell** died on 3 November 2024. An obituary will follow in the 2025 Red Hackle.

**Bill Parr** died on 17 February 2024. He served in the 1st Battalion in Korea and Kenya and was a stalwart member of the London Branch.

# Branch Notes

## ANGUS BRANCH

President	Major P W Burnet
Vice President	Colonel D M Sheldrick
Chairman	Major R J W Proctor MBE
Vice Chairman/Secretary	Mr P Tindal
Treasurer	Mr Millar
Membership	Mr Billy Whytock

It hardly seems a year since I sat down to write up the Angus notes for 2023. The branch has been very active since then, conducting our monthly Hybrid Meetings which in the most have been successful however the occasional gremlin has invaded our cyber space and in the language of a veteran member of the Signals Platoon "we did not get through". It is great however to meet up with Branch members from Northern Ireland, West Germany, Burnham on Sea and Bannatyne House in Newtyle when comms are perfect!!

Over the last year we were busy, firstly with our annual Burns Supper which as usual was most enjoyable and well attended. Peter Tindal enlarged his already wide Burns Supper repertoire by taking on the Soldiers Return which in the past had been the party piece of Billy Whytock.

A dinner was organised to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Founding of the Branch in early 1999, Branch members and their wives and partners who attended the event enjoyed an excellent evening. It is worth noting however that the number of original branch members are now few in number. We were all very grateful to George and Zandra Eaton's daughter Emma for making a beautiful and delicious Anniversary cake.



Top Table Guests at the dinner



Bruce Tyrie, Branch member



Major Ronnie Proctor and George Eaton cutting the cake



Pipe Major Alistair Duthie toasting the 25th Anniversary

Our main activity for the year was the Branch Battlefield tour to commemorate the 10th anniversary of unveiling the Black Watch Memorial at Black Watch Corner in Belgium. Gordon Millar, our Branch Treasurer, masterminded the event and we opened the invitation to the Western Front Association and some well-known local worthies. Eventually, a group of twenty assembled whose ages ranged from late forties to the oldest who was 93. All three branches of the Armed Forces were represented with a Commander from the RN, nine from The Black Watch, a Gordon Highlander and a member of the RAMC and a Group Captain from the RAF, with five ladies also being part of the group. On a very wet and drier morning the Kirriemuir contingent was picked up at Kirriemuir Golf Club at 0525 then to Forfar and on to Dundee and Perth to collect more of the party before moving via Halbeath to Edinburgh to collect the last of the Scottish contingent. Our last group member was former Band Master Norman Rogerson who met us at Hull prior to sailing overnight to Rotterdam. During the bus and ferry journeys everyone got to know each other, and we were ready to hit the ground running as soon as we arrived in Belgium.

Accommodated throughout the tour at the Novatel Centrum Hotel in Ypres we made daily excursions according to our programme. We were fortunate to meet up with members of The Canadian Black Watch Association who were also living in the hotel and managed to share two days together and the odd Ceilidh in the evening when we were entertained by Jock Menzies and guitar along with Peter Snaddon who played his 'small pipes' to the delight of all. Ronnie Proctor even managed a couple of songs with Jock who accompanied him with his guitar. Gordon Millar had organised a full and eventful programme which covered a wide area of the battlefields, Commonwealth War Cemeteries and the German Cemetery at Langemark which was quite sombre and dark compared to our own.

The highlight of the tour however was taking part in the Ceremony at the Menin Gate; with it currently under canvas and being repaired the



evening Ceremony is carried out on the square next to the monument. The Black Watch Associations from Scotland and Canada were given pride of place, and the author of these notes was given the honour of Reciting Exhortation (Binyon's Lines) at the beginning of the very moving ceremony. Wreaths were laid on behalf of the Regimental Association by the Angus and Fife Branches and by the Canadian Black Watch. After a group photograph we then marched behind the Canadian Black Watch piper back to our hotel much to the appreciation of bystanders and others who had taken part, to carry on the movement with the impromptu Ceilidh mentioned above. Sadly, we had to say goodbye to our Canadian comrades the next day before we took part in a most evocative and memorable commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the unveiling of our Statue at Black Watch Corner.

We had contacted our old friend Erwin Ureel prior to our visit, who had arranged for the Field Marshal Haig Pipes and Drums to support the event; two Aldermen from Zonnebeke Council were also present to cement the affiliation of their Local Authority and The Black Watch Association. Before the ceremony some 90 visitors from Scotland arrived in two white buses and asked if they could join our act of remembrance which they duly did, swelling our ranks enormously. The last post was played on the violin by a member of the Field Marshal Haig's Pipes and Drums. The notes played on the violin spread across the audiences and there were many eyes being dried by the end of the haunting music. All in all, it was a great tribute to those who had served in the Regiment during the Great War.

We also had a promise from the Aldermen that the local authority would maintain the wooden benches surrounding the memorial.

On our last day whilst moving back to the ferry, we again met up with Erwin on the Frezenberg Ridge at the Scottish Memorial which commemorates all the Scottish regiments which had taken part in that battle. Erwin's knowledge of the ground and of both the British and German troops is immense and made us feel as if the battle had only just happened.

A short stopover in a delightful Dutch village which was commemorating VE DAY by having people dressed in period costumes, with numerous WW2 reenactors was a fitting end to what was a most enjoyable and busy battlefield tour.



**Norman Rogerson, Major Ronnie Proctor and Bruce Tyrie wreath laying at the Menin Gate**



**Black Watch and Canadian Associations representatives at the Menin Gate**



**The group commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the unveiling of the Memorial at Black Watch Corner**

Getting back to the present, Branch members have taken part in the Dundee Branch Red Hackle dinner, the annual Association Reunion and our very successful Branch Standard Rededication which took place in Carnoustie Parish Church, superbly led by the Revd Mike Goss, the local minister. Following the service a wreath was laid at the Carnoustie War Memorial and was followed by lunch in the Carnoustie Legion where our old friend Kirsty MacDonald and her team produced an excellent lunch. Our Guest of Honour was Major Tim Carmichael, the Regimental Secretary.

Our annual El Alamein dinner took place on Saturday 26th October in the Royal Hotel Forfar which was the original venue for our main events when we first started the branch. The food and the service were first class, Pipe Major Alistair Duthie regaled us with his excellent piping and the Branch Chairman gave a short talk on the Battle of El Alamein and how it related to D Day in this 80th anniversary of the allied invasion which liberated Europe. Some nine original Branch members took part in both battles.



**Mr and Mrs Jock Torrie at the dinner**





**Mr Ian Heron**



**Mr Peter Tindal and Major Ronnie Proctor**



**Major Malcolm and Mrs Helen Taylor**

We are currently now holding our monthly meetings in the Royal Hotel and plan to use it for the Burns supper on the 25th of January 2025.

At the moment we are gearing up for the forthcoming Remembrance weekend where members attend the various parades and services throughout the County.

Christmas parcels for our widows and senior branch members are at the forefront of our mind and these will be distributed before Christmas.

Sadly, we have lost some of our members, and their obituaries are shown elsewhere in the magazine. Tom McCluskey, a long-time stalwart of the branch, has moved out of the local area and left the Branch; we wish Tom, Anne and their family every good wish for the future and thank them for all their work on the branch's behalf.

Lastly on behalf of the Angus Branch I would like to wish all our members and friends every good wish for Christmas and 2025.

## DUNDEE BRANCH

President:	Major (Retired) Colin Gray
Chairman:	Mr Chris Thomas
Secretary:	Mr Colin Adam
Treasurer:	Mr Graham Angus

As always during the period of Remembrance in November 2023, many Branch members attended the various parades across the City of Dundee and beyond. These were mainly the Laying of Crosses at the City Churches on Saturday 4th November, the Mains Parish Memorial Service at Caird Park on Thursday 9th November, the service at Balhousie Castle on Friday 10th November and the service on the City Square on the morning of Saturday 11th November.

On Sunday 12th November, Joe Devlin, representing the Dundee Branch and our Chairman, Willie Barr as Chairman of the City of Dundee Combined Ex-Services Association, attended the Remembrance Service at the City Churches.

The Dundee Branch Remembrance Service at Powrie Brae on Sunday 12th November was, as is always the case, extremely well attended by members of the Branch as well as members from the Angus Branch and relatives of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, alongside relatives of Black Watch Veterans and various other ex-service personnel and local dignitaries.



**Larry Hutchison, Alfie Docherty, Ray Lawson and Charlie Barron**



**Angus and Dundee Branch members show their respects**





**Reverend Bob Wightman, Colin Adam, Andy Robson and Colin Gray**



**Reverend Bob Wightman and the late Jimmy Killorn**



**Andy Robson the Dundee Branch Piper**

The re-scheduled Angus Branch El Alamein Dinner was held in Forfar on 17th November and Jim Crawford, Joe Devlin, Jimmy Killorn, Dave Ritchie, Chris Thomas and Davie Young attended.



**Jim Crawford, Jimmy Killorn and the Late Joe Devlin at the Angus Branch El Alamein Dinner**



**Davie Young and Chris Thomas at the Angus Branch El Alamein Dinner**

Willie Barr, Chris Thomas, Jim Crawford, Colin Gray and Hugh Cameron an Associate Member, attended the annual Angus Branch Burns Supper on Saturday 27th January 2024 and as ever, was an extremely enjoyable and entertaining evening.



**Willie Barr, Jim Crawford, Colin Gray, Chris Thomas and Hugh Cameron along with Peter Snaddon and Ronnie Proctor at the Angus Branch Burns Supper**



The Branch annual Red Hackle Dinner was held in the Black Watch Club, Dundee on Friday 2nd February and was extremely well attended and enjoyed by everyone including our senior Branch member, Lt Gen Sir Alistair Irwin KCB CBE and our great friends from Liverpool, Mick Molyneux, Hughie Campbell and Jonny Hesp. Our guest speaker was Mr Douglas Walker, the CEO of The Black Watch Regimental Trust (BWRT). Douglas, as well as informing the audience about his life before the BWRT, spoke about the way he intends to operate as CEO and in particular, how he sees himself working with and interacting with the Association and its Branches. Douglas also took the opportunity to speak to many of those members and visitors attending the evening.



**Gus Angus, Chris Thomas, Douglas Walker (CEO) and Colin Gray**

During the Dinner, Graham (Gus) Angus presented Sir Alistair Irwin with an engraved Salver to thank him for everything he has done for the Regiment, the Association and the Castle & Museum. It was a wonderful gesture by Gus and thoroughly appreciated by Sir Alistair.



**Gus Angus and Sir Alistair Irwin at the Red Hackle Dinner**

The following night, a number of our members along with our Liverpool Pals, attended the Perth Branch Burns Supper and were treated to a wonderful night of entertainment.



**Willie Barr, Mick Molyneux, Alan McEwen, Colin Gray and Maj Gen Mike Riddell-Webster at the Perth Branch Burns Supper**



**Sir Alistair Irwin, Willie Barr, Colin Gray, Douglas Walker and Chris Thomas**

At the Dundee Branch Annual AGM on Saturday 24th February, both our Chairman and Treasurer stood down from their respective Office Bearer posts. Willie Barr had been the Branch Chairman for 29 years and over that time had been responsible for organising many fantastic events acting not only as Chairman, but as the Branch Standard Bearer and Duty Cook.

Willie's Steak Peh Night has reached legendary status. Willie was most graciously thanked for his loyal service, hard work and dedication to the Branch. Len Mitchell had been the Branch Treasurer for a number of years providing accurate accounts of the Branch finances while receiving glowing reports from the Financial Auditors during their annual inspection of the Branch Accounts. Len was also thanked for this devoted service to the Branch. Chris Thomas was voted in and duly elected as the new Branch Chairman and Gus Angus was voted in and duly elected as the new Branch Treasurer, both assuming their posts immediately.

11th March saw members of the Branch meeting with Officials and Players from Dundee Football Club (DFC) at Powrie Brae, where the new 3rd strip for DFC was launched with certain proceeds going to The Black Watch Association and SSAFA. The strip had a stripe of Black Watch Tartan extending down its left side and the Black Watch badge was super imposed on the back.



**Alex Beattie and Gordon Kennedy from the Highland Branch alongside Douglas Walker**





**Dundee Football Club launch of their 3rd Strip at Powrie Brae**

The Victoria Hotel in Kirkcaldy was the venue for the Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner on 22nd March at which the Dundee Branch was extremely well represented by Colin Adam, Bill Adamson, Charlie Barron, Jim Crawford, Colin Gray, Larry Hutchison, Jimmy Kidd, Jimmy Killorn, Mike Lindsay, Dave Ritchie and Chris Thomas.



**Jim Crawford and Brian Rumgay at the Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner**



**Bill Adamson and Jimmy Kidd at the Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner**



**Colin Adam and Mike Lindsay at the Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner**



**Larry Hutchison and Chris Thomas at the Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner**



**Charlie Barron and Dave Ritchie at the Fife Branch Rhine Crossing Dinner**

On Saturday 6th April, DFC wore the strip for the first time during a match against Motherwell at Dens Park. Many members and their families attended that game, courtesy of DFC.





**Dundee Football Club Poster for their match against Motherwell**

The Highland Branch Aberfeldy Dinner, held on Saturday 4th May in Inverness, was attended by Chris Thomas, Willie Barr, Colin Gray and John Myles and all accompanied by their lovely wives and partner, Frances, Christine, Maureen and Michelle. A truly fantastic evening.

Many Branch members attended the Regimental Reunion at Balhousie Castle on 22nd June which was preceded by a wonderful Commemorative Church Service for the Iraq Campaigns in 2003 and 2004.

The Inter-Branch Games Day was held in the Black Watch Club in Dundee on Saturday 3rd August and was won yet again by our Branch. This event was very well supported by the Perth Branch, with the Angus Branch, Highland Branch and Fife Branches being represented.



**David Jenkins, Jimmy Killorn Chris Thomas and Sandy McDuff at the Inter-Branch Games Day**



**John Myles and Pete Tindal at the Inter-Branch Games Day**



**Gus Angus dressed for Duty Waiter at the Inter-Branch Games Day**



**Dundee and Perth Branch members at the Inter-Branch Games Day**



**Perth Branch members Scott Dalton and James McColl at the Inter-Branch Games Day**

We joined the Angus Branch for their Branch Standard Rededication Service in Carnoustie on Saturday 22nd September with Willie Barr, Chris Thomas, Jimmy Killorn, Colin Gray and Hugh Cameron attending.

The annual Battle of Loos Commemoration Service was held in the Congregational Church on Sunday 6th October, and was led by Rev Bob Wightman who as always provides great support to the Dundee Branch. Colin Adam and Colin Gray gave the readings with the latter giving a brief talk on the Battle of Loos, whilst Chris Thomas delivered Binyon's Ode and Andy Robson our Branch Piper gave his usual stirring performance. Thank you to everyone who attended.



We, as a Branch, continue to hold monthly meetings in the Black Watch Club, Dundee on the last Sunday of each month (unless notified accordingly) commencing at 1200 hrs. If you have served in the Regiment and are not currently a member of a Branch, why don't you come along to one of our meetings and join in with like-minded people who will have loads in common with you. We also continue to attend the Veterans Breakfast held at 1100hrs every 2nd Saturday in a calendar month in the Market Bar, Dundee. £5.00 for a full Scottish, a brew and a guid blether, priceless. Come along and join us, just turn up, no need to book.

## Death Notices

Even now at this time of writing these notes, I am filled with so much sorrow that our dear friend and extremely active Dundee Branch member, Joe Devlin, passed away on 11th July 2024 at the grand old age of 84. Joe was a huge character who was loved and respected by all his fellow Association members and is greatly missed by us all. The very large turnout at Joe's funeral was testament to how popular he was. RIP Joe.

## EDINBURGH, LOTHIAN'S AND BORDERS' BRANCH

President:	Colonel Julian McElhinney
Chairman:	Lieutenant Colonel Jock Menzies
Secretary:	Major Alex Stewart BEM
Treasurer:	Captain Ramsay MacDonald
Events Coordinator:	Mr Rory McIntyre

The Edinburgh Branch is now well established in the local community and regularly supports the military and veterans major events. In the past twelve months members have attended: Scottish American Memorial Day, Anzac Day, Armed Forces Day, Korean Memorial Service and the opening ceremonies at both the Edinburgh and Glasgow Gardens of Remembrance.



**Left to right: Corporal Tom Wallace, Mr Allan Smith, Mr Callum Robson and Mr James Campbell**

To kick off the new year in style members and guests gathered at the BMC Club Gorgie on Saturday 13th January to celebrate Red Hackle Night. With a good mixture of music and dance to suit all ages, everyone enjoyed the opportunity to meet up and reminisce about the good old days.

Branch members, Callum Robson and Tom Wallace organised and took part in a sponsored charity walk from Dundee to George Square in Glasgow. Their route included visiting selected War Memorials in towns and villages. They completed the 78 miles in 24 hours and for their gallant effort they raised £1,100 for Combat Stress.



**Left to right: Corporal Tom Wallace and Mr Callum Robson  
Sponsored Walk Dundee to Glasgow**

The annual Al Basrah lunch was held in the Apex Hotel Waterloo Place on 27 April 2024. We welcomed the newly appointed Chairman of the Black Watch Regimental Trust, Brigadier Ben Wrench, who gave an update on the Trust. The branch was also honoured to have Korean War Veteran Mr Bill Hall in attendance. Mr Hall's stories relating to National Service and the Korean War were very much appreciated by members and guests.



**Korean Veteran Mr Bill Hall and Mr Rab Walls at the Al Basrah Lunch**



**Captain Ramsay and Mrs Ann MacDonald at the Al Basrah Lunch**



**Left to right: Colonel Jules McElhinney, Mr Rory McIntyre, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Jock Menzies, Captain (Retired) Ramsay MacDonald, Major (Retired) Alex Stewart and Brigadier Ben Wrench at the Al Basrah Lunch**



A small group of branch members are slowly going through the process of reviewing memorials with Black Watch connections throughout the Lothians and Borders area. Details are listed below for readers who may wish to visit the sites:

- 42nd Royal Highlanders The Black Watch, St Giles Cathedral, High Street, Edinburgh.
- Black Watch Monument (Boer War), Market Street (The Mound), Edinburgh.
- Lieutenant Frederick Guthrie Tait, St John The Evangelist Church, Princess Street, Edinburgh.
- Frederick Millar, Portpatrick Cemetery, Portpatrick EH1 1BL.
- Alex and James Scott, Minnigaff Parish Church (Near Newton Stewart) DG8 6SH.
- Brigadier Charles E Stewart, Sweetheart Abbey Burial Ground, New Abbey DG2 8BY.
- Gilnockie School Memorial (World War One), Gilnockie, Claygate DG14 0SG.
- Lockerbie World War Two Memorial, Town Hall, Lockerbie DG11 2HE.
- George Wilson Gordon, Buittle Churchyard, Buittle (Near Dalbeattie) DG7 1NP.

Branch membership has increased on a regular basis. We welcome the following new members to the branch: Lt Col (Retd) Lorne Campbell, Mr James Campbell, Mr Daniel Clark, Mr Jim Conway and Mr Geoff Menzies. Regular meetings take place in the Scots Guards Club Haymarket. Main events for the next twelve months are: Red Hackle Night 11 January 2025 and Al Basrah Lunch 26 April 2025.

Anyone wishing to join the Branch (Serving or Retired) is more than welcome to do so and should make contact through a branch member or by clicking, request to join on the branch social media web page. Officers and Soldiers (Past and Present) of the Black Watch 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland who are living in the local area, are particularly welcome to join.

## FIFE BRANCH

Chairman and Secretary: Mr Rob Scott JP

It has been a fairly busy time for the Branch this year starting in November, with the 1739 Club. We met in the Salutation Hotel in Perth on 25th November 2023, with 38 in attendance. As is our custom we meet and greet on the Saturday lunch time, the movement is then carried on into the evening with the dinner and entertainment part of the event. We conclude with the meeting for Breakfast and it is then we say our farewells to all and hope to meet yet again one year hence.



**The Black Watch, 1739 club dinner**

The Red Hackle Breakfast is our next gathering and a popular event in the Dunnikier Park Golf Club, Kirkcaldy on 5th January 2024.



**Fife Branch - Red Hackle Day Breakfast**

Staying in Kirkcaldy, the Rhine Crossing Dinner was held in March with guests from other Branches making it a first class Black Watch gathering. The Piping and entertainment during the evening was second to none.



**Glenn Simpson, Bob Henry, Maj Colin Gray, Rob Scott, Lt Col Jock Menzies and Pipe Major Robert Barnes**



**Charles Scott, Colin Ballantyne and Norman Ednie**

It was our chance to travel next, to the Edinburgh and Lothian Branch El Basra Lunch. There was a good turnout and lunch with a good catch up with some we hadn't seen for some time.

It was back to Fife and a meeting at the Kirkcaldy War memorial to commemorate D-Day, a Tri-Service affair.

An invitation from the Markinch People brought us together yet again, to commemorate a Plaque that had been lost listing those who had fallen during WW1. Tullis Russel had built a hall (252 Hall) to honour those who failed to return but during renovations the said plaque was lost, so it was our pleasure to be invited along to reinstate the new plaque.

Fife Forces Day in Methil was our next event and was well-attended with the streets heavily lined to thank all who served. The Provost, wearing our regimental tie, spoke very highly of the Forces but in particular the County Regiment, the 42nd.

Perth and the Reunion was looming and the usual high attendance from all Branches. I was absent for the first time since 1983 due to a family bereavement, but will be, God willing at the next one.

It was another invite that saw us travel yet again, this time to the Korean Monument in West Lothian. It was a day for Veterans of the war and



it was good to see our contingent there. One of our Members, Jimmy Dean, had lost his medals but all was not lost. We met in the local British Legion Club and it was then we were happy to award him replacements. Lawrence (Jimmy) was over the moon and thanked all who had worked to replace them.



**Bob Henry, Lawrence (Jimmy) Dean, Gavin Hunter-Mills and Rob Scott**

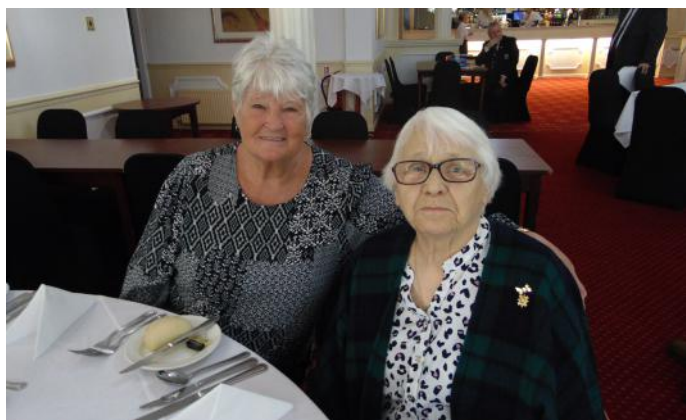
A few weeks later we found ourselves back at the same venue at the request of the Korean Ambassador. It was a multi service meeting at which the Ambassador thanked all for his freedom, quoting that if it weren't for our forebears he would not have the freedom he has today and would not have known what Democracy was. He made a point of going round those who attended and shook their hand.

Another invitation, through HQ, was in the form of the Kelty Coal Carrying Competition. It has been, I think, 18 years since we laid Paul Lowe to rest and this was a wee reminder that in his day he participated in the village event. Thank you Kelty, for our invite.



**Glenn Simpson, Gavin Hunter-Mills, Bob Henry, Front Row - Korean Veterans Bill Hands, Bill Hall, Lawrence (Jimmy) Dean**

Last, but not least, the Ladies' Alma Lunch will be held in the Victoria Hotel, Kirkcaldy on 15th March mainly for our widows and Members' Ladies.



**Marie Ireland and Betty Beattie**



**Ladies enjoying the lunch**

Like all else, our numbers are getting smaller every year but our memories remain high on our agenda.

Unfortunately we have had our sad moments as well. The local Crematorium has been well attended saying our farewells to many characters who will be sadly missed by all.

## HIGHLAND BRANCH

Chairman: Mr Alec Beattie  
Secretary: Mr Gordon Kennedy

Another reasonably quiet year for the Highland Branch due to members' commitments outside branch activities. However, we have managed to represent the Branch with attendees at our sister Branch hosted activities as follows:

- The Dundee Branch Annual Dinner
- The Black Watch Association Games Day

It was a great pleasure to be able to reconvene our annual Aberfeldy Dinner this year which was also attended and supported by members and their wives/partners from associated branches. It was fantastic to learn the most appreciated and positive feedback from our guests attending. Its date for 2025 has been set and confirmed, 10th May 2025. We look forward to hosting another successful dinner evening in the company of affiliated branches and invitations will be sent out in due course.



**Enjoying the dinner**

Inter Branch Games Day. The Highland Branch will have the great pleasure of hosting the 2025 Inter - Branch games day. It is planned to



hold this event in the 3 SCOTS' Community Centre. Please keep an eye on the Forecast of Events and we hope to host as many visiting branches as possible to the Highland Capital.

The Branch continues with arrangements for our bimonthly meetings being held in local public houses around Inverness to promote a more social environment and hopefully gain a better interest in attendance. We have now actively opened up and are inviting any serving/ex serving members of The Black Watch 3 SCOTS Royal Regiment of Scotland to join our local branch in Inverness.

Over the next couple of months, representatives from our branch will be visiting, Black Watch affiliated memorials in Ardersier (Fort George), Loch Kinellan (Strathpeffer) and Lossiemouth. The aim of these visits is to review the present state and upkeep of the memorials whilst laying a cross of remembrance by the Highland Branch.

As a small Branch of 25 members in the Highland Capital, we are always on the lookout for new members to come along and join our branch. Our branch members are reaching out to all ex Black Watch and Black Watch associated veterans to come along and join us, with a view of being in a position to arrange more social gatherings.

## LONDON BRANCH

President: Brigadier (Retired) E N de Broë-Ferguson MBE  
Vice President: Brigadier (Retired) D R Wilson CBE  
Chairman: Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) D E J Kemmis  
Betty MBE DL  
Vice Chairman: Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) R C Cole-Mackintosh  
Secretary: Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) M Smith MBE

As I write, early November, the London Branch has its two major events of the year approaching fast with about 30 members due to represent The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) at the Cenotaph Parade on Sunday 10th November followed by lunch in a nearby pub and then our annual dinner planned for Friday 22 November at the Victory Services Club where we hope to have a good turnout from all former Red Hackle wearers based in the South (and friends who wish to join from Scotland).

On 15 May, we again held our AGM followed by drinks and lunch at the National Army Museum in Chelsea with about 25 in attendance. I would encourage all those in striking distance or living in London to come along next May (and if you are busy working and can't make the AGM then just come for lunch). Talking of Chelsea, I would like to remind all readers of that amazing institution next to the Army Museum, The Royal Hospital Chelsea. The Black Watch have two In-Pensioners, John Nicoll and Peter Fullelove, who enjoy what they describe as their life 'in a 5 star hotel'. Do please look out for other candidates who might be suitable to represent The Black Watch there. Details of the joining requirements are provided separately in a letter from the Admissions Secretary.

On 3 August, a number of Branch members and current or former members of 3 SCOTS, The Black Watch Battalion played and attended the annual cricket match at Burton Court (behind the Royal Hospital) between The Guards and The Highland and Lowland Brigade Cricket Club (HLBCC). This year was the inaugural 'Nick Coles Memorial Cup' in memory of Maj Nick Coles who had captained the HLBCC. A very fine Cup was presented by Lt Col Tim Coles to the winning team, this year suitably and skilfully captained by Nick's brother, George. Notable performances were played by Andy Colquhoun taking 5 wickets, George Coles scoring 89, Richard Martin 24, Brig Rob Hedderwick 23 and Tim Towler 35 not out. It was lovely to see old friends there, including Richard Nunneley, Piers Bishop and Nigel Laughton. On a very fine sunny day, in the stunning setting of the Royal Hospital. The Guards set a target of 210 runs all out and HLBCC reached the target with 4 wickets in hand. It was a fitting and memorable way to remember someone so passionate about cricket and loved by so many.



Major Tim Towler (35 not out)



Members of the Highland and Lowland Brigade Cricket Club (HLBCC) and Guards Cricket Club with Lt Col Tim Coles, Tom Callard and George Coles in the centre at the inaugural Nick Coles Memorial Cup, Burton Court, Chelsea



The Nick Coles Memorial Cup, Burton Court, Chelsea 2024



The Branch has lost a number of old friends and former members in the past year, including Garry Garforth-Bles, Stephen Graham, Rod Maconochie, Bill Parr, Slim Jones and In-Pensioner Alex Lackie. Our Branch Honorary Pipe Major, Chic Mackie, has done a stalwart job playing at a number of regimental funerals. We very much look forward to welcoming new and honorary members from all ranks living in the south and hope to see many of them at dinner on 22 November 2024.

## PERTH BRANCH

President:	Major (Retired) Tim Carmichael
Chairman:	Mr Sandy MacDuff
Secretary:	Mr Pat McLinden
Treasurer/Membership:	Mr Scott Dalton

Perth branch continues to meet on the third Tuesday of the month at the Perth Ex Services Club, to which all members of the regiment would be welcome. It has held several well supported events throughout the year, and indeed has joined in many other branches events and provided support to others as well. Burns night 2024, another tour de force organised by our Secretary, Pat McLinden, at which, of particular note amongst the tremendous line up of performers, was another legendary rendition of Tam o Shanter by Jock Gilfillan, preceded by an epic Holy Willie's Prayer from Peter Snaddon. On the afternoon 3rd August, it engaged in immortal combat at the inter-branch games night, held in Dundee.



**Stalwarts of our conceding team not observing the instructions**

It was an excellent meeting of the different branches and, although we were not successful in winning, we were very pleased to have taken part! Collectively, we looked at how we can support Highland Branch in hosting the Games in the future.

Perth Branch participated in the annual PKC organised Perth Salute, a mini tattoo taking place on the North Inch, after which many punters go up to the castle for refreshments.



**Sandy Clephane and others watching the Perth Salute**

We have been pleased to welcome new members to our numbers and have had to bid goodbye to those who have died over the year whether through old age, illness or other causes, not least of whom most recently was Pete Pendlebury. We will remember them.



**Birds of a feather**

When branch members are passing through Balhousie they often interact with visitors. On this occasion, our Branch Secretary couldn't resist posing in work mode with a visiting piper from the Normandy Highlands (an elusive range of hills) Pipe Band who plays at the Battle Field memorials.

Our branch members, who are the Gardening team, continue to do a tremendous job; it's a fun weekly or twice-weekly joining up for the stressful tasks of gardening followed by the even more demanding 'kaffe und kuchen' - provided on the house, in the bistro; all BW/ 3 SCOTS Association members, spouses/partners or off-spring who may have



the odd morning to spare who'd like to join in, just get in touch with Alistair Duthie. The team also assist significantly in so many small but significant ways at Balhousie Castle, being known by all and part of that home-team, too.



**Some of the Gardening team finding out how it really works**

Our Croix de Guerre dinner was held in October in the Queen Mother room at Balhousie Castle. Our principle guest was the head of the new Perth Museum, Helen Smout, continuing our idea of inviting prominent people around Perth from the Armed and Emergency services and the civic authorities. Again, the staff laid on a superb dinner for us with excellent service at which PM Duthie played tremendously.



**The Fergusons at the Croix de Guerre**

For Remembrance in Perth, Branch members were very active. The Association Remembrance service on Friday preceding Remembrance Day had been a very moving occasion and was well supported by the branch. At the Polish War Commemoration on 3rd November, Greg MacGillivray laid the Association wreath as part of the witness attended by Polish children, parents, veterans, others associated with the community and by British ex-servicemen and women. At it, their Consul General, Lukasz Lutostanski, expressed his gratitude to fellow veterans for marking the sacrifice by his countrymen in WW2. Commemorations over the weekend of 9 - 11 November followed; fitting tributes were laid in Perth and its surrounding towns and villages; at services in St Ninian's and St John's and finally at the 51 Highland Division memorial on the North Inch wreaths were laid on behalf of the Association. On the morning of 11 November, the president and chairman spoke at Perth Grammar School about The Black Watch and why to remember. Later, at Perth prison - where there are a few broader Association members, the president participated in their remembrance service conducted by the Chaplain, Deidre Yellowlees.

Future event dates for Perth are our Burns night on Saturday 1st February and the Croix de Guerre dinner on Saturday 11th October 2025 to which all Association members and their guests will be welcome.

## STOKE ON TRENT



**Stoke on Trent Pipe Band**

The Stoke on Trent Black Watch Association Pipes and Drums continue to perform at various events in the Stoke on Trent area and are pictured above leading the annual Remembrance Day Parade at Newcastle under Lyme on the 10th of November 2024. They have led this parade since 1990 to the present day, a total of 34 years.

Although the Branch is currently in the process of being dissolved through lack of members the Pipes and Drums are very active and keep The Black Watch profile alive in the Midlands.



# Monitoring Memorials in the Branch areas

The Association is responsible for the Welfare, Comradeship and Memorial of our members. To meet part of that third column, through activities coordinated by each branch, it is conducting a survey of all monuments dedicated to the Regiment and of as many commemorations to our men in their areas as is possible. The aim of instigating this now 5-yearly survey is to establish a record of their location and condition across the country in order to prompt those responsible for their maintenance - the local council or, exceptionally, a private owner of the site, to meet their responsibility.

Each branch was sent a separate spreadsheet in January showing the known memorials relevant to their area. They were asked to identify suitably motivated members, perhaps nominating a leader per branch, who, armed with the information on the spreadsheet could interrogate the internet, ask locally and then visit, photograph and closely inspect these monuments, recording what they have found.

Branches will be sending back their completed reports by 31 January 2025. If additional memorials bearing the names of BW men are identified- which is highly likely over the first few years of the survey in such as churches, graveyards or civic buildings, the details are to be submitted via the Branch to the Association office for incorporation into subsequent iterations of the survey. If you, as a Branch Member, are not aware of this initiative or as an Association member or reader of the magazine are wanting to ensure that a BW site of commemoration or memorial you know of is recorded please go first via your area branch and then to the Association, contacting [assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk](mailto:assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk) with its location details and a description for subsequent follow through.

The original plan had been to repoint the Statue plinth and walls and clean the statue professionally, which is on hold until at least the Spring of 2025, however, the wait will be well worth it.

As stated, the work has gone on during the year but at the end of July, we decided to have a wee treat, therefore Ray Lawson brought along his BBQ and spoiled us with Bratties, Burgers, Sausages and Beers as well as soft drinks and water for the more health-conscious members of which there are very few. It was a great few hours spent together in glorious sunshine.



Barry Mason giving the grass another cut

## REFURBISHMENT OF THE BLACK WATCH MEMORIAL AT POWRIE BRAE, DUNDEE

The refurbishment of The Black Watch Memorial at Powrie Brae, Dundee, is a task that requires constant work throughout the year. It is especially demanding during the growing season in a fight to keep weeds and grass at bay. However, thanks to various members of the Dundee Branch, the areas leading to and surrounding the Statue are looking much better than they have been previously.



The Statue



The Late Jimmy Killorn



Chris Thomas





**Jim Crawford and David Jenkins**



**Davie Young**

This Gardening Team consists of Chris Thomas (Branch Chairman), Jim Crawford, Jimmy Killorn, Davie Young, David Jenkins and Colin Gray. John Myles has also joined us on a couple of occasions during his lunch hour and even chipped in with a bit of work. Barry Mason has been cutting and keeping the grassed areas in excellent condition. It is hoped that other Branch members will join the team and assist in continuing to keep this memorial to the 4th and 5th Black Watch Battalions in the very best of condition and presentation.



**Ray Lawson setting up the BBQ**



**Jimmy Killorn, Davie Young, Ray Lawson, Chris Thomas and David Jenkins after an enjoyable BBQ**



Members of the Gardening team hard at work and the areas they have been maintaining:



John Myles



Right side of the monument



Bottom of the steps



Left side of the monument



# THE BLACK WATCH (ROYAL HIGHLAND REGIMENT) MEMORIAL - BLACK WATCH PARADE, DUNDEE

*By Major (Retired) Colin Gray*

Colonel Alex Murdoch had a desire to erect a Memorial in Dundee to commemorate the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) 1739-2006. It was agreed with Dundee City Council that, to blend in with the more modern surroundings on Black Watch Parade, we were charged with developing something different. Over the last year or so, the process of agreeing a concept for this memorial has been evolving.

A Working Group was set up comprising Chris Thomas (Chairman Dundee Branch), Fiona Connah (Curator of the Black Watch Museum), John Gray (retired member of Dundee Planning Department), Gary Fitzpatrick (local Black Watch historian) and myself Colin Gray (President Dundee Branch and Trustee of the Black Watch Regimental Trust) which later welcomed Tim Carmichael (Regimental Secretary) and Ronnie Proctor (expert in all matters Black Watch).

They met on Black Watch Parade, Dundee, so named after a campaign by Black Watch veteran Charlie Reid to whom we, as the Association, are grateful for his tireless campaigning. It extends right along the waterfront between V&A Dundee and the Tay Road Bridge.

From that meeting, John Gray wrote a brief to the artists showing an interest in developing a concept for the memorial. The artists then met the Working Group at Balhousie Castle during which they were given a guided tour of the museum and invited to revisit at any time as part of their concept building.

A few weeks later, the artists met the Working Group there again, each gave a short informal presentation on their initial ideas and group feedback was given. They were to develop concepts further for a final presentation to the Working Group after which a decision would be made on the best presentation and therefore the concept Presentation. After two excellent presentations and subsequent lengthy group discussion, the concept best fitting our remit was given by Ailsa Magnus MRSS (Member of the Royal Society of Sculptors).

The written element of Ailsa's winning concept was:

## Black Watch Parade

From the time of its formation in 1739 to the amalgamation of the regiments in 2006 one thing is clear, the Black Watch was steeped in a history of honour, gallantry and devoted service to King, Queen and country. A history started by the clansmen: Campbells, Grants, Frasers and Munros continued through the centuries as son followed father, nephew followed uncle and grandson followed grandfather into the regiment. A long tradition of following in the footsteps of those who had gone before them to serve their country.

My concept design focuses on the footsteps of these gallant soldiers.

The paving, stretching the length of the recently named Black Watch Parade, will feature incised footprints sandblasted into the existing stones. These footprints will have been taken from a boot of a marching soldier (serving or retired) and paced at 76cm which I believe is the length of a marching pace. Therefore, when traversing Black Watch Parade you are actually walking in the footsteps of a member of the regiment.

At each end of the parade the words BLACK WATCH PARADE will be set into the paving, cast in cast iron. The regimental badge will also feature on these castings. The footsteps will begin here in the walkway and meet at a central point. In wet weather the footprints will gather water and reflect the sky. Children can hop from footprint to footprint whilst taking in the story of the regiment. As the footsteps travel along the waterfront and strategic points, small cast insets will feature the words "EYE LEFT/RIGHT" (depending on the direction of travel). At these points over by the railings adjacent to the River Tay will be granite/stone blocks; these could be seating elements if felt appropriate. The

stone block will have cast or carved elements relating to the regiment and its history. If the blocks are felt too obtrusive to the walkway/cycle-path the cast/carved features will be set into the paving.

- A block may feature an image of a music score. A QR code could be used to hear the music of the pipes played by the Black Watch.
- A block may feature a piece of regimental dress, left for passers by to find: a boot, a Tam o' Shanter or a kit bag. A QR code could be used here to describe the uniform and its significance to the regiment.
- A block may feature an inscription relating to the history of the regiment. A QR code could be used here to expand on regimental history.

Since taking the decision on 25th July the Working Group has further developed the regimental elements to be included within Ailsa's concept. These include what links and therefore what information will be provided via QR codes and how best to develop access into the Trust website.

By the time this magazine is published, Ailsa will have received our final remit to then produce her ultimate plan with costings. Once she has produced a Visual Plan, we can cast our fundraising appeal further to obtain grants, funding or donations from those Organisations and Individuals that choose to support this project.



**Ailsa's impression of Following in the Footsteps on Black Watch Parade**



# Association Clubs

## CURLING REPORT 2023-2024

By Major (Retired) J M K Erskine MBE

### MATCH v ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS

As has become a tradition, the annual match against the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders took place early in the season. This time we were the hosts for the match, held in Perth on 2 November 2023. Pulling together a team was slightly more difficult than normal because, for various reasons, a number of those who were originally due to play had to withdraw. It was not until 9pm on the evening before the match that we had 8 curlers, and only because Jamie Hope-Thomson (late RHF) agreed to play for us with little notice. However, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders also had a ringer and he had not even been in the Army. He was an ex-matelot! The match itself really was one of two games. The 'A' rink had a convincing win over their opposing rink and won 12-2 while the 'B' rink lost 3-12. As a result, the Regiment retained the Macrae Cup by the slimmest of margins of 15-14. After the match we went to Balhousie Castle for lunch where we were looked after very well by the Bistro team. The rinks were:

#### 'A' Rink

Jamie Montgomery  
Will Henderson  
Mike Riddell-Webster  
Bruce Osborne

#### 'B' Rink

James Duncan Millar  
Jamie Erskine  
Jon Twine  
Jamie Hope-Thomson

### MATCH v LOWLANDERS

The second match was against the Lowlanders, held on 15 February in Perth. Each side fielded two rinks and this time each rink played four ends against one of the opposing rinks before playing a further four ends against the other rink. In the first four ends the BW 'A' team won 4-3 while the 'B' rink lost 1-5. In the second session of four ends the 'A' rink peeled 4-4 while the 'B' rink beat their opposition 4-3 so the overall result was 15-13 to the Lowlanders. Once again, the teams had lunch at Balhousie Castle. The rinks were:

#### 'A' Rink

Jamie Montgomery  
Hugh Rose  
Jon Twine  
Jamie Farquhar

#### 'B' Rink

James Duncan Millar  
Will Henderson  
Mike Riddell-Webster  
Bruce Osborne

### MATCH v HIGHLANDERS

The third inter-regimental match was against the Highlanders on 7 March in Perth. Again, each regiment fielded two rinks, each one playing four ends against each of the opposition rinks. At the end of the first four ends, the Highlanders were 7-2 up and the signs were even more ominous when the BW 'B' Rink lost their fifth end by 5 shots. However, there was a bit of a fight back and, while the Highlanders were the overall winners, the final score was 12-14. Lunch was held at Balhousie Castle. The rinks were:

#### 'A' Rink

Jamie Montgomery  
Alan McEwen  
Tim Carmichael  
Jamie Farquhar

#### 'B' Rink

Will Henderson  
Jon Twine  
Bruce Osborne  
Jamie Erskine

### HIGHLAND AND LOWLAND BRIGADES CURLING CLUB BONSPIEL

The final competition of the year was the Highland and Lowland Brigades Curling Club (HLBCC) Bonspiel which was held on 22 March

in Perth. The Regiment fielded two rinks and each rink played three matches of five ends. In the first session the 'A' rink lost 3-5 to a very strong Highlanders 'A' rink after losing 3 shots at one end which made a recovery difficult as the match was only played over five ends. As a result, for the second match they went into the 'Low Road' of teams that had lost their first match. They played against the Kings Own Scottish Borderers and won comfortably 10-3. They then played the Royal Highland Fusiliers and lost 0-5, losing each of the 5 ends by one shot. The 'B' rink won their first match against the Royal Highland Fusiliers in a closely fought contest 3-2. They, therefore, went into the 'High Road' of winning teams and in their next match beat the Highlanders 'B' rink 7-0. As an unbeaten team they then played their third match against Highlanders 'A', the other unbeaten team in the competition. Sadly, they lost this game 1-8. When all the scores were put together and, taking into account the total shots up and ends up, the overall winners were the Highlanders 'A' while the Black Watch 'B' rink was 4th and the 'A' Rink was 6th. The rinks were:

#### 'A' Rink

Jamie Montgomery  
Will Henderson  
Jon Twine

#### 'B' Rink

James Duncan Millar  
Jamie Erskine (first match)  
Mike Riddell-Webster  
(last two matches)  
Alan McEwen  
Bill Wood (Late GORDONS)

A week prior to the Bonspiel, on 15 March, the HLBCC played the annual fixture against the Royal Company of Archers in Kinross. Each side fielded 4 rinks and The Black Watch provided 4 curlers for the HLBCC, namely Jamie Erskine, Jamie Farquhar, Alan McEwen and Mike Riddell-Webster. In addition, James Duncan Millar curled for the Royal Company. After a very good series of games which were played in very good spirits, the match was peeled 27-27.



The successful rinks and their opponents in March 2024

### 2024-2025 SEASON

The matches in the 2024-2025 season, each of which will be played between two rinks per team, are currently planned as follows:

7 November 2024 – Match v A and SH (Stirling)

**Editor's afternote:** This has been another glorious victory in 2024:



Beating the Argylls, again!



13 February 2025 – Match v Lowlanders (Kinross)

6 March 2025 – Match v Highlanders (Perth)

21 March 2025 – Highland and Lowland Brigades Curling Club  
Bonspiel(Perth)

There is also an aspiration to play a match against The Royal Scots  
Dragoon Guards, probably in January, but this is to be confirmed.

In conclusion, I would like to express my thanks to all those who have  
curled for the Regiment this year and, on behalf of them, I would like to  
express our thanks to Debbie and everyone who has looked after us in  
the Balhousie Castle Bistro for the lunches following the matches. They  
could not have been more helpful. And, of course, we would all like to  
thank the Association for the support it gives to the curling. It really is  
so much appreciated.

## BLACK WATCH ASSOCIATION GOLF

Balbirnie Park 21st June 2024

**SPONSORED BY BLACK WATCH ASSOCIATION, SIDEY LTD  
AND RED HACKLE CLEANING SERVICES**

*By Rory McIntyre and Dougie Morgan*

Rory, Dougie and the admin team would like to thank Alex and Kath for  
the many years that they have planned and run the annual Regimental  
Golf Matches.

An extensive handover was carried out at Downfield Golf Club Dundee  
where Alex welcomed Rory, Dougie and Davie Smith for a round of  
golf and the handover. 'Duties' and detailed notes allowed us to plan  
successfully 2024 and it was decided, given the timescales, to again  
play the competition at Balbirnie Golf Club, following a number of  
successful years there.



**On Course – Rory McIntyre, Dougie Morgan and Brian Gilfillan**

The Black Watch Association Golf Meeting was held at Balbirnie Park,  
Markinch, on 21st June 2024 which represented the first event of the  
Reunion weekend. This year's competition was played in mixed weather  
conditions and was a good test of stamina, especially in the afternoon  
Texas Scramble round for some of our more mature players. This year  
we were close to the maximum (40) we can accommodate. Due to some  
unforeseen circumstances a few colleagues had to drop out, but we  
still managed a very healthy 37 players on the day. It was good to have  
the continued support from 3 SCOTS colleagues, led by Major Paddy  
Marshall and some returning "weel kent" faces (Bill Nicolson, Davie  
Paton and Geordie Dyce just a few to mention).



**First Tee – Jimmy Grover, Dougie Morgan, Mike Carstairs**

There were some great individual and team scores throughout both  
rounds of golf with a share of the 'Two's' pot being shared 6 times (to  
5 players) but also with an outstanding 'ace' by James Muir on the Par  
3, 183 yd 14th Hole and, from all accounts, an excellent shot by James.  
James was presented with a lovely bottle of Old Pulteney 12-year-old  
malt kindly donated by our own Billy Whytock and presented by Arty  
Keith (Red Hackle Cleaning Services).

Full results from the morning competitions were:

- **Gross competition**
  - 1st James Muir - 69
  - 2nd Billy Ramsay - 73
  - 3rd Jimmy Grover - 77
- **Net competition**
  - 1st Kev Wann - 68
  - 2nd Alastair Todd (3 SCOTS) - 71
  - 3rd Billy Whytock - 72
- **Stableford competition**
  - 1st Billy Johnston - 38 points
  - 2nd George Dyce - 37 points
  - 3rd Iain Coupar - 35 points



**Scratch Winner – James Muir**



**Net Winner – Kev Wann**





**Combined winners – James and Kev**

Unfortunately, this is now the 3rd year in a row that Billy Ramsay has been pipped at the post for best scratch, despite having played excellent consistent golf throughout. Maybe 2025 is your year, Billy! Again, there were serious countbacks going on for the prizes and a number of votes of sympathy go to those who just missed out on the prizes following those countbacks. It really does show the standard of the golf played this year.



**Runner up Scratch – Billy Ramsay**

The Texas Scramble competition in the afternoon is extremely popular and was, as in previous years, keenly contested, for the secondary prizes anyway. There was only 0.01 between the 2nd and 3rd placed teams, however, the clear winners, with a hugely impressive 18.38, had an even more impressive 8 birdies in their 9-hole scramble. Huge “well done” to the winners:

#### **1st Place**

Gary Liddell  
Pete Moran  
John Waddell

#### **2nd Place**

Gordon Kennedy  
Alex Merritt  
Toosh McCarrol



**Texas Scramble Winners - John Waddell, Gary Liddell and Pete Moran**

Other prizes were won by Jimmy Grover – Nearest the Pin, Barrie Fraser (3 SCOTS) – Longest Drive, and Davie Paton ‘won’ the prize for most golf played ... welcome back Davie! Having featured in the winners’ list last year, it was obviously an off day for Arty, having picked up Two’s prizes and ‘Best Net’ last year.



**Most Golf – Davie Paton**

The prizes were presented by our co-sponsor, Arty Keith (with our own Rory McIntyre not missing an opportunity to get his photo taken) and we are grateful to both Red Hackle Cleaning Services and Sidey Ltd for their continued support of this important Regimental event.

Following the prize giving, we held the obligatory raffle due to the generosity of our players who brought along a variety of items to be used as extra prizes. Colin Gray kindly provided a voucher for a 2 Ball round at Pitreavie Golf club, and it was decided to open this one up for bidding to raise as much as we could for Colin’s work to raise funds for The Black Watch Memorial in Dundee. This bid was won by Dougie and Rory who are looking forward to their round at Pitreavie (which just happens to be Dougie’s old club). Many thanks not only to all who contributed those additional prizes but also to all the players for continuing to attend, play some excellent golf and also to catch up with old pals.



So, to next year. The date is set for 20th June 2025 which, as usual, is the day before the Regimental Reunion. We will continue to use the great facilities at Balbirnie Park for 2025 who have provided excellent service and first class catering to us over the past four years. This was our first year “holding the reins” and hope everyone attending had a cracking day. Dougie and Rory would also like to pass on big thanks to Davie Smith, Gary Liddell and Stevie Thomson for their support in getting this year’s successful competition “in the bag”.

Anyone who would like to take part in next year’s event, who is not already signed up to our website, should contact Dougie Morgan on djgraham61@gmail.com. There is a limit on the number of players (40) but a reserve list will be kept in case of any cancellations.



The Inaugural meeting of the Black Watch Association Hillwalking Club was held in the Wavell Room at Balhousie Castle on Wednesday 20th March 2024.

The meeting was to agree the suggested Club Constitution. After discussing its contents in great detail, a few amendments were proposed, duly agreed and the Constitution was thereby adopted for the good and benefit of the Club and its members.

The Black Watch Association Hillwalking Club was then officially formed on 1st April 2024 and currently has 19 members.

**OBJECTIVES** The Club is established to pursue the following objectives:

- a. Enjoyment of and participation in Hillwalking within Scotland and in particular, the mountains described as Munros, Corbetts and Grahams.
- b. The organisation, management, and development of Hillwalking for all members of the Club to the full extent possible considering their own ambitions and abilities.
- c. To provide a structure to promote Comradeship amongst the Club members.
- d. The sharing of knowledge and experience to support skills development, progression, risk awareness, safety, and self-reliance among its members.
- e. The promotion of respect for and responsible access to Scotland’s Mountain environment, minimising our impact on the landscapes we explore.

**AFFILIATION.** The Club is affiliated to Mountaineering Scotland, the recognised representative body for hillwalkers, climbers and mountaineers in Scotland and the body that provides the Club’s Insurance cover.

**MEMBERSHIP.** Membership of the Club is open to all Black Watch Association members, their spouses, widows, widowers, children, Trustees and employees of the Black Watch Regimental Trust, Friends of the Black Watch Museum and anyone who has a Black Watch connection as verified and agreed by the Committee.

**Membership categories will be:**

- **Full** – Members of the Black Watch Association; i.e. those who served in the Regiment.

- **Adult** – all others over 18 years of age
- **Youth** – all under 18 years of age

**Fees** Annual Fees pay for the Club’s Insurance cover with Membership running from 1st April of any year until 31st March of the following year. The cost of Annual Fees is;

<b>Full member</b>	-	<b>£30.00</b>
<b>Adult member</b>	-	<b>£30.00</b>
<b>Youth member</b>	-	<b>£20.00</b>

**OUTINGS** The Club outings are held on the 1st Sunday and the 3rd Wednesday in every calendar month. Any changes to that are agreed by the members.

The first Club Outing was planned for Sunday 7th April and Schiehallion was the destination; however, owing to Storm Kathleen battering the country, that outing was postponed until Wednesday 17th April. So, it was then that Paul Baxter, Stewart Carson, Colin Gray, Alan McEwen, Chris Thomas, Fiona Tindal and Pete Tindal took on the ascent of Schiehallion on a rather cold and blustery day but nevertheless reached the summit in 3hrs 42 mins.

Some may say that the time taken was quite slow, however, our outings are there to be enjoyed, therefore we stop frequently to catch our breaths, chat, take in the views and snap some photos. Of course, what also made the outing thoroughly enjoyable was the constant banter between members.

At the time of writing this article, the Club has conducted a total of 10 outings, it would have been 11 but an outing to Glencoe to ascend Buachaille Etive Beag was also cancelled due to extremely high winds and torrential rain.

The outings conducted were:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Members who attended</b>
5 May 2024	Ben Ledi	Stewart Carson, Laura McKay, Fiona Tindal & Pete Tindal.
15 May 2024	Meall nan Tarmachan	Paul Baxter, Colin Gray, Chris Thomas, Fiona Tindal & Pete Tindal
2 June 2024	Scald Law	Ian Bayne, Paddy Hughes, Jock Menzies, Fiona Tindal & Pete Tindal
19 June 2024	Ben Vrackie	Ian Bayne, Paul Baxter, Colin Gray, Jock Menzies & Chris Thomas
7 July 2024	Cairnwell Munros	Ian Bayne, Stewart Carson, Colin Gray, Paddy Hughes, Laura McKay, Fiona Tindal & Pete Tindal
17 July 2024	Ben Chonzie	Stewart Carson, Colin Gray, Laura McKay, Fiona Tindal & Pete Tindal
4 August 2024	Ben Vorlich (Loch Earn)	Ian Bayne, Colin Gray, Paddy Hughes, Fiona Tindal & Pete Tindal
31 August - 1 September 2024	Buachaille Etive Mor & Pap of Glencoe	Ian Bayne, Colin Gray, Alan McEwen, Chris Thomas, Fiona Tindal & Pete Tindal
18 September 2024	Ben Lomond	Paul Baxter, Alan McEwen, Rory McIntyre, Jock Menzies, Chris Thomas & Pete Tindal

All those outings provided many talking points, like Chris Thomas going Bog Diving, Jock Menzies falling like he had been shot by a sniper, Pete Tindal selecting a route that Sir Edmund Hillary wouldn’t have undertaken and Paul Baxter running out of Jelly Babies. Although Hillwalking can be very arduous we, as a Club, strive to ensure that our outings are enjoyable and fulfilling.



By the time this magazine is published we would hopefully have conducted these further listed outings:

5 October 2024	Geal Charn & A'Mharconaich
16 October 2024	Stuchd an Loachain & Meall Buidhe
3 November 2024	Ben Tirran & Loch Brandy
20 November 2024	Creag Leacach & Glas Maol
1 December 2024	Meall Ghaordaidh
18 December 2024	Kings Seat

We are also considering taking on the West Highland Way in the summer of 2025. This would probably take place over 5 or 6 consecutive days; however, Members would be able to participate for either the whole length of the walk or join us for a day or 2 or 3 days. A full report will be produced in the 2025 Red Hackle Magazine.

Are you Interested in joining this Club or want more details? If so, then please contact Colin Gray the Club Secretary, via the Club email address at [bwahc42@outlook.com](mailto:bwahc42@outlook.com)





# Museum News

Since last year's Red Hackle, the museum team have been working on multiple and varied projects, from our new temporary exhibition to the production of a children's comic book.

We continue to benefit from the work of our Project Archivist, Ollie Topel, and were delighted to secure funding extending his contract to the end of the next financial year. Currently, there are 239 completed catalogues the value of which cannot be underestimated. As well as providing an excellent resource for visiting researchers, they are used daily for enquiries, exhibition planning and as a source of material for events and schools' programmes. One interesting catalogue currently in production focusses on a collection relating to William 'Tug' Wilson, who served in both the First and Second World Wars and then went on to become the Curator of the Museum in 1946.



**Ollie Topel, Project Archivist working through photographs from the collection of Colonel Christopher Gerald Stephen**

Ginat Salman, our Museum and Collection's Assistant, has worked tirelessly on our continuing collections' review in addition to ensuring that we have had a smooth transition to our new collections' database. The review ensures that our records are as up to date as possible while highlighting any potential conservation or storage issues. Concurrently, she has been auditing our library collections; some of this work can be seen in the creation of the Waterloo Library. We are also seeing the benefit of her auditing in our new reference library, created with the assistance of one of our volunteers, Evelyn Radford, with reference materials now much easier to find.

We continue to be grateful for the work of all our archive and collections volunteers who have been assisting the team with the review and archive audit and we have been delighted to welcome some new younger volunteers to this team, who are keen to gain experience in the world of archives as they work on their undergraduate degrees. Our archivist, Jennifer Marshall, manages this work and is able to pass on her advice and expertise to these students.



**Donald Robertson, Archive and Collections Volunteer, working on photographs in a collection**

Some of these students have also been researching the backgrounds of prominent members of the regiment in the context of empire and colonialism. This work is being done purely as an information gathering process as part of our response to a recent paper produced on behalf of the Scottish Government, Empire, Slavery and Scottish Museums. Alongside this, we are also checking that our catalogues, databases and labels are consistent in their language and terminology. Consequently, as an important tie with the Curriculum for Excellence, we are intending to create a new schools' programme that will examine The Black Watch in the context of Empire.

This year sees the first applications for The Black Watch Regimental Trust Scholarships; we look forward to starting work with the three students who have been awarded these. Through these scholarships, the museum team will help support the students access archives relevant to their undergraduate dissertations and we are excited by the range of periods and topics they plan to explore.

Our new special exhibition Captive Voices opened in May; this was the first time that visitors have been able to explore our larger temporary gallery space. This change incorporates a second cabinet and an additional wall which has provided the opportunity to explore new themes in greater detail. Focussing on the experiences of POWs during the Second World War, the exhibition was inspired by the recent donation of a portrait of George McCulloch painted by The Earl Haig during their time at Colditz. For the planning of this exhibition we were joined by three S6 students, all of whom are now studying history at university. Two of the students are cousins and their great grandfather was one of the many Black Watch men captured at St Valery in 1940. We were delighted to be able to include photographs of him in the exhibition in conjunction with a panel written by the girls on his experiences.



**Special Exhibition - Captive Voices**



**Items in the Special Exhibition - Captive Voices**

Generally, our special exhibitions run for about 9 months, but our intention is to retain this until the end of summer 2025, so that we can mark the 85th anniversary of the surrender at St Valery. Considering this, we plan to refresh the exhibition in the New Year. In this way we can share more of the stories kept in our collection stores; we are fortunate that the museum holds an extensive collection of artefacts and archives relating to those soldiers held captive during WW2.



Madeline Greene, our Learning and Audience's Officer, as well as all her work with crafts and events and the many schools who have visited this year, found time to work on the panels displayed during the Reunion in June. These panels focussed on the 20th Anniversary of the Iraq War and were very well received. In addition to this, Madeline was an integral part of our Museums and Galleries Scotland (MGS) funded project 'Workforce of the Future', in which we worked with local school children to create a comic book of Black Watch stories (see other article for details).

The museum continues to receive a wealth of artefacts and archive material as donations to the collection. This year, the family of Lieutenant Colonel Adrian Grant-Duff, killed in September 1914, donated a picture of him that had hung in their family home for over 100 years. This will be hung in the First World War gallery above his dirk and medals.

Grants provided by the West Stormont Historical Society and The Friends of The Black Watch have enabled the preservation and digitisation of two delicate objects in our archive. Copyright reasons mean that we cannot make the digitised pages public, but they will help reduce handling by museum staff and researchers and thus further ensure their preservation.

Although much of our day to day work is quite serious, events held at the museum give us the opportunity to let our hair down a little and I, myself, have worn a myriad of costumes this year! These events have included our annual Winter Festival, a children's Burns' Event, a Second World War themed day and we were joined by the Prestonpans Historical Society for our 'Georgians, Jacobites and Redcoats Day' this August. In June, we marked the D Day landings with a special concert which included readings from our archive and music from local musicians. We ended the evening lighting a beacon as part of the national celebrations.

We are looking forward to the many new projects planned for next year. These include marking the anniversaries of the surrender at St Valery in June and VE Day this May, as well as it being 300 years since the creation of the Independent Companies that went on to form The Black Watch.

## MUSEUM GALLERIES SCOTLAND PROJECT

*Fiona Connah, Curator*

This year, the museum was delighted to see the fruition of a project first conceived in autumn 2022. Markus Offer, Skills Manager at Museum Galleries Scotland (MGS), had contacted us to investigate us taking part in their 'Developing the Young Workforce' programme. Working with the organisation Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), the concept was to work with local school children from a school with a view to increasing their employability skills. The scope of the project ranged from creating an exhibition to learning how to be a tour guide. With the funding provided by MGS, we now had to conceive something that would be exciting and engaging for the young people involved that could also have a real benefit to the museum.

When we started considering options, we identified that we would like to create a resource that would have a legacy. With this in mind, we investigated whether we could produce something that would engage all our young visitors and, mindful that the museum is generally aimed at an older audience, we arrived at the idea of creating a comic based on stories in the museum after which we created a potential programme.

It was now for DYW to identify a local school for us to work with. Helped by local DYW Co-ordinator, Jade Montgomery, a group of S1 pupils at Perth Grammar School was chosen to take part in the project; Madeline Greene, our Learning and Audiences Officer, and I met with them for the first time early this year.



### Brilliant Black Watch Stories Comic Book

We wanted to ensure that the children had the opportunity to develop as many new skills as possible while gaining an understanding of the many varied roles that exist in heritage and culture. Our first session, which took place at the school, acted as an icebreaker and I think it is fair to say that everyone was feeling a little shy to start but with their first visit to the museum everyone soon warmed up.

It was important to us that the young people chose the objects and stories that they felt the most connected to as this would mean they would be more likely to engage the interests of other young visitors. During their first visit to the museum, the children went on a tour of the museum, met our First World War soldier, Private McNiven, took part in one of our schools' drama workshops and had a behind the scenes tour where they saw our collection and archive. This provided the opportunity for different members of staff to share their roles with them and for the children to see the many elements that make up a working museum.

Split into groups, their first task was to choose the story they wanted to illustrate after which they worked with us to research the history behind it. One of the wonderful aspects of this project was that the funding provided enabled us to engage a local artist, Jon Hoad, to work with the young people to develop their ideas. We were also fortunate to have one of our own staff, Morgan, volunteer to come and help them too. I must admit that I was a little nervous about allowing a group of 12-13 year olds create their own drawings but I was blown away by the quality of their work. It was also inspiring to see how engaged and invested the pupils were in their ideas. One example of this was the group that chose the story of David Finlay's Victoria Cross, gained in May 1915, producing a beautifully drawn account of why he was awarded his medal. In their illustration, however, the soldiers were depicted wearing helmets and I was forced to point out that they would not have had helmets at that time. The children then went off and researched it, coming back to me saying they had found information that helmets were first issued in 1915 to which I had the unfortunate task of pointing out that this wasn't until September! [But, what learning]

Over the next few weeks, the pupils worked on their designs and then returned to the museum where they met our Marketing and Communications Manager, Catriona Anderson. She described to them the work she does for the museum after which the groups worked on blogs and social media that could be used to accompany their project. Catriona was also responsible for assembling their illustrations into the final comic, together with photographs from throughout the programme; in May this year the completed project was sent to the printers.

To mark the culmination of the project, we held a Celebration Day and, again, we tried to involve the children as much as possible in its planning. Requests were made for cake, Private McNiven, a tobacco pipe and even a ghost; I am pleased to say that all were provided. Each of the completed seven designs – six stories and the front cover, were framed and mounted and we hung these gallery style beside the initial designs, in the Queen Mother Room. Every child was able to invite a member of their family, in addition to us inviting representatives from local schools



and all those involved with the project. We even welcomed a camera team from STV who covered the event in their evening bulletin. The atmosphere was amazing; we were delighted to hear from the parents how much their children, beyond a usual level of engagement with visits, had enthused during the preparation and how, over all, they felt they had gained from the project.



**Comic Book Celebration Day**

We have had numerous requests from other schools about taking part in similar projects and we hope that we can source funding that would allow this to happen.

The legacy of this project is that every visiting child, be that with their family or as part of a school or youth group, receives a copy of the comic. Featuring stories as diverse as the Ghost of Ticonderoga to a long-travelled biscuit, it is our hope that the comic brings to life some of the amazing stories behind the collection of The Black Watch.



**Group Photo of Perth Grammar School students in front of Balhousie Castle**

## ***Bistro and Events*** ***@ The Castle***

This year in the bistro has seen the introduction of our head chef, Andrew Laycock, to Balhousie Castle. Andrew comes with considerable experience, panache, enthusiasm and practical commonsense. In the few months he has been here, he has done an outstanding job not only in the bistro but also in improving the prominence and content of our events' portfolio.

As I write these notes, we are shaping up to what promises to be our busiest December yet for Christmas lunches with a wonderful menu on offer every day, from 2nd through to 24th December! In addition to such daily opportunities and our privately catered parties or lunches, there are lots of our own upcoming in-house events such as carol singing, Michael Ellacott and afternoon tea with Santa to name just a few. The point about mentioning these is how they each, in their own way, enhance our reputation to different sectors of the community while generating income for the maintenance and upkeep of the castle, the ultimate monument to the regiment.

Many will be aware of the lecture cycle run monthly throughout the year at the Castle, currently covering WW2 with occasional sorties into relevant BW history. With the ever-improving and evolving menus on offer as bookable, after-lecture options more of those attending are also staying for dinner to meet others, discuss and make a full evening of it. Again, we are grateful to the impetus that Andy is bringing here.

In October, for the second consecutive year, we held the Croix de Guerre dinner for our Perth Branch in the Queen Mother Room. It was a great success with our Regimental family in terms of the positive feedback we received, and we enjoyed hosting it. Later on, on the Thursday before the Association Service of Remembrance, we held our now annual evening of remembrance to commemorate those lost in conflict. The evening is a full Balhousie-team event with contributions and participation from all our departments. Through material drawn from our archive by Fiona Connah and presented in readings, poetry and song performed by staff members at intervals between the courses of a delicious, formally served dinner, it aims to kindle a thoughtful awareness of how and why we remember those killed or injured in the service of our country. In 2024, its theme was the pressures on the Padres, from WW1 to the modern day, both professionally and personally. In the words of one of our guests, it was "world class with great food and service creating a fitting ambience" - prior to acts of Remembrance the following day.

For those who may be reading this who have not yet attended one of our events, please do consider them for this coming year; there is such breadth I am sure you, too, will find at least one to enjoy! And, finally, if you are popping into the bistro for a cup of coffee or some lunch, the team and I are always happy to see you.

*Debbie Owen*

Bistro and Events manager



# Friends of The Black Watch

Bill Macpherson  
Chairman

Following changes in Friends' Trustees, this year saw a further adjustment with the retirement of Anne Kinnes; the CEO being an ex-officio Trustee we welcomed Douglas Walker to the Board. I was very pleased to welcome him at our AGM in November 2023, even though he hadn't yet started in his new position!

The main function of the Friends is to support the Museum. There are individual benefits by being a Friend, but our main goal is to support the Museum. We provide grants to it, primarily from income from the membership fee, so thank you to all our members for their continued support. Last year we donated over £8,500 including a contribution to the cost of employing the Project Archivist. Our fund is there to help and support the Museum when need arises, we have a broad remit and so can help in a variety of different ways

Probably the most visible aspect of the Friends committee's work continues to be organising and running the monthly Lecture programme. This last year it has focused mainly on the major battles and events that led to the end of WW2.

In November Lt Gen Sir Alistair Irwin covered the Black Watch's experiences during deployment to Korea in 1952/53. The Korean War is often referred to as "The Forgotten War". For the Regiments deployed it is far from forgotten.

For the January lecture Dr Robert Lyman spoke on the Burma campaign from a Japanese Perspective. The Battles for Imphal and Kohima are well documented but rarely are they looked at from the enemies' perspective, so it was a very interesting evening.

In February Prof Evan Mawdsley covered the Battle of the Atlantic, crucial in the winning of the Second World War and 1944 saw the culmination of the Allies efforts to dominate the Atlantic.

March's Lecture had Lt Col David Harrison speaking on the battles (there were actually 4) around Monte Cassino, aka The Battle for Rome, in which 6BW fought. The lecture covered this crucial aspect of the final months of the Second World War in Italy.

In April Prof Niall Barr covered US relations in the build up to D-Day and beyond. The successful invasion of northern France in June 1944 would never have been possible without the participation of the United States. Largely carried on in the background, planning for their arrival started over two years earlier. The preparatory coordination to this momentous operation was fascinating.

For May, Dr Andrew Jeffrey spoke about Operation Neptune: blitzkrieg from the sea. This was the seaborne element of the D-Day invasion, from the start of planning in May 1942 to the landings two years later.

In June Prof Gary Sheffield covered D-Day and its aftermath. This talk picked up the story as the landing craft approached the beaches on 6 June 1944, and discussed the key points of the US, Canadian and British landings right through to the beginning of the end in Normandy.

July gave us Geordie Fergusson and our own Maj Hugh Rose speaking about Burma 1944: the 2nd Chindit Expedition (Op Thursday). The talk not only covered the tactical debate about Long Range Penetration behind enemy lines but also on the detailed experiences and hardships that our soldiers suffered while fighting in the jungle.

August's lecture was full of music as Lt Col Hamish Clark explored the Musical Heritage of The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Music can lift spirits and inspire and this lecture looked at how one Regiment's music does just that.

Coinciding with the 80th anniversary of The Battle of Arnhem: Operation Market Garden Maj Gen Adrian Freer covered how Montgomery envisaged the task could be undertaken by the British 2nd Army. It also covered the formulation of allied strategy north of the Seine and south of the Loire following the breakout from Normandy towards the end of August 1944, the actions of the 1st Airborne Division at the Arnhem road bridge and at Oosterbeek.

In October, Maj Gen James Cowan spoke about 1st Battalion The Black Watch in Iraq 2004. Part of their tour include serving under American command in the north. James reflected on this unique military operation 20 years after it finished.

Next year's lectures will largely again follow the course of WW II and full details of each month's lecture and how to book can be found on the Museum website at [www.theblackwatch.co.uk](http://www.theblackwatch.co.uk). As a taste of the what the coming year will bring some of the topics are: Strategic Bombing, The Great Escape, 51st HD Crossing the Rhine, The Fall of Berlin, Women in WWII, The Strategists and VJ Day and liberation of PoW.



## BISTRO @ THE CASTLE SUNDAY ROAST

Enjoy our delicious roast of the day, perfectly paired with Yorkshire puddings, seasonal vegetables, roast potatoes, and rich roasting gravy.

Join us for a hearty and traditional Sunday lunch in a historic setting!

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**Served every Sunday from 11:30 AM to 3 PM**

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Balhouse Castle, Hay Street, Perth, PH1 5HR



# The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Commanding Officer: Lieutenant Colonel R Smith  
Second-in-Command: Major M Dobson  
Adjutant: Captain T M Thorpe  
Regimental Sergeant Major: Warrant Officer Class 1(RSM) MSP Robb



As the pages of this year's journal come together, it's remarkable to look back on the past twelve months and see the range and scale of what the Battalion has achieved. In true fashion, 2024 has been a year of challenges, change and success, both in the operational domain and at home in the Highlands. We have had the privilege of training and learning from our Ukrainian counterparts as we do our part to prepare them to defend their homeland. While this has been our primary focus for 2024, our soldiers have also been involved in a host of other activity, from the jungles of Hawaii to historic battlefields closer to home.

## Deployments

The Battalion began the year by building on our Security Force Assistance (SFA) responsibilities by deploying two soldiers to Seattle, Washington, to train alongside our US counterparts, 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade. They embedded in both the training team and the exercising troops, gleaning valuable information and sharing experience. We returned the favour by hosting 5th SFAB in Fort George to observe our own training. Exchange of information and relationship building are skills integral to an SFA Bn, which luckily come naturally to the Jocks.



Delta (Light) Company in Kenya



Soldiers from CIS Pl in Washington with 5th SFAB

As I write this, Alpha (Grenadier) Company are deploying to the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Centre in Hawaii. This is 3 SCOTS second year attending this exercise. It will see a multitude of Indo-Pacific partners exercise in the rugged mountains and jungles of O'ahu. This is one of the capstone exercises hosted by the US, and thus represents an excellent opportunity to work with established and newer partners alike.

In February, Bravo Company deployed to Kenya on Ex JUSTIFIED ACCORD, supporting the 3 RIFLES Battle Group as green forces. Delta (Light) Company joined Bravo Company on this exercise, acting as an enemy force for the exercising troops on Ex HARAKA SPEAR. This was not just an opportunity to hone core infantry skills in a famously challenging environment, but also to add real value to 3 RIFLES training, adding a competent, thinking enemy. Many in the Battalion will be no stranger to training in Kenya, but it's a valuable opportunity to operate outside our comfort zone, especially for our more junior soldiers. The Jocks' ability to adapt quickly to heat, terrain and wildlife once again demonstrated the Battalion's flexibility and aptitude for our core skills.



Delta CHQ after a tough few weeks in the Bush

Like the other support weapons platoons, C Company's Recce and Sniper platoons conducted two weeks of training at Barry Buddon to prepare for Exercise RATTLESNAKE, a demanding Overseas Training Exercise (OTX) based out of Fort Johnson, Louisiana, the very same place and training area where the US Army trained their soldiers for deploying to Vietnam. They were joined by No 2 Company, 1st Battalion The Irish Guards, who like 3 SCOTS, had undergone a recent re-ORBAT to a smaller structure. Remaining largely undetected for 12-days, C



Company were able to deliver a plethora of enemy kills and provide key information up to the Brigade and Battalion HQs that we were supporting. The Company enjoyed well-earned R&R in San Antonio, visiting both the Alamo and the Houston Space Centre.



**C Coy conducting tough, realistic training**



**Conducting Pre Deployment Training for Op INTERFLEX Sport and Adventurous Training**



**C Coy visit the Alamo, San Antonio**

## Operation INTERFLEX

A key highlight in our deployment calendar was our participation in Op INTERFLEX, a central part of the UK's support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine. We are part of a multi-national effort to provide tailored, relevant training to Ukrainian soldiers, ranging from basic training to leadership courses and counter-drone training. A thorough Pre-Deployment Training (PDT) package ensured we were as well-prepared for the task as possible.

The Battalion's participation in INTERFLEX has allowed us to showcase our soldiering skills to a highly motivated and receptive audience. It must be noted that it has very much been a two-way street, with our soldiers benefiting directly from our Ukrainian counterpart's experience. These humble, professional exchanges have undoubtedly benefited us both and allowed us to have a very tangible impact on a conflict that will define this decade. As ever, this effect has been delivered by the private soldier on the ground, through their characteristic humour and hard work.

Closer to home, 2024 has been equally eventful in the sporting arena. The Maxwell Shield inter-company competition was, as always, a close-run affair. After a plethora of sports competitions, including a gruelling march and shoot, A Company and C Company were level. A 500m sprint tiebreaker saw OC C narrowly lose to Pte Spiers, sealing A Company's overall victory. This year's Maxwell Shield showcased not just athletic prowess but also camaraderie and cohesion immediately before a challenging 6-month deployment on Op INTERFLEX.

Our location in the Highlands served as a dramatic backdrop to Ex ADVENTURE HACKLE, a six-week adventure training package delivered by our soldiers in a variety of locations, including Dundonnell Lodge. Soldiers took part in a variety of activities, from rock-climbing and kayaking to hill walking in some of the most dramatic scenery Scotland has to offer.



**Ex ADVENTURE HACKLE**





**Making the most of the Highlands**



**HQ Company in France**

### HQ Company

As ever, HQ Company has played a pivotal role in the operational and support duties of the Battalion but also undertook a deeply poignant task honouring our forebears. In May 2024, HQ Company, led by Maj Patrick Marshall, was honoured to lay to rest Private David Valentine Gemmell, a soldier of 1st Battalion The Black Watch, whose remains were discovered in Cuinchy, France, over a century after his death in January 1915.

A Burial Party made up of soldiers from Company Stores and CIS Platoon, under the watchful guidance of CSM WO2 Reid, travelled to Woburn Abbey Cemetery in Arras. The ceremony, conducted by Padre Geoff Berry, was a solemn occasion, bringing together Pte Gemmell's descendants - three of his grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, some meeting for the first time, to witness the ceremony as well as the farmer who had discovered his remains. The Battalion proudly fulfilled its duty, returning one of their own to his final resting place with the dignity and respect he deserved.

### Looking Ahead

As we look forward to the challenges and opportunities that 2025 will bring, the Battalion remains focused on maintaining the standards of excellence that have been our hallmark. The focus is on the Battalion's deployment to Belize on Ex MAYAN CYCLONE. This will be our first Battalion-level exercise since our re-ORBAT to SFA. The jungles of Belize are notoriously unforgiving and will test both our individual skills and drills as well as our staff processes. I am quietly confident that the Jocks will deliver, as they always have, from the fields of Northern France in 1916 to contemporary operations over the last 12 months.

*Lieutenant Colonel Robert Smith*

Commanding Officer



**Pte David Gemmell, 1st Bn, The Black Watch, being laid to rest**



# 51st Highland, 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland

## BATTALION HEADQUARTERS

Commanding Officer:	Lieutenant Colonel D I D Watson
	Lieutenant Colonel D Robertson
Second in Command:	Major I Bunce
XO:	Major P Colville
Adjutant:	Captain I Pearson
Regimental Sergeant Major:	Warrant Officer Class 1 B Warwick
	Warrant Officer Class 1 A Bright (des)
Quartermaster:	Major M Morrison
Officer Commanding A Company	Captain Grant Linklater
Officer Commanding C Company	Major D McCutcheon
Officer Commanding D Company	Major H Hood
Officer Commanding HQ Company	Major A Collister

2024 has continued at the same pace that 2023 ended for 7 SCOTS. As soon as we recovered from Ex SAVA STAR, our Annual Deployment Exercise (ADE) in Croatia in September, we were plunged straight into the planning and preparation process for Ex RHINO HEART, our ADE for 2024 in June. This was another overseas exercise (in Germany this time) so there was the same substantial amount of administration, kit preparation, equipment tables and transport requirements to sort out. This was not to mention ensuring everyone's personal documentation was still in date, which is a never-ending task. Most of this preparation was, as is usual, conducted by the core of Regular/FTRS staff in Battalion Headquarters, the Quartermaster's Department, the Company Administration offices and in the stores. Concurrent was the regular drumbeat of training weekends for the troops to stay up to date with their Individual Training Requirements (ITRs) and be fully trained and ready to deploy. All of this is mixed in and around the inevitable list of mobilisations, deployments, changes of personalities and community engagements. Never a dull moment as they say.



**The Team in Sennelager**

Ex RHINO HEART has been the main focus for the Battalion and 19 Light Brigade (19X) this year. It was billed as the biggest deployment of Reserves on a single exercise for a generation and absolutely lived up to the expectation. Over 650 Reservists from 5 of the 10 Army Reserve units in 19X plus 100 US National Guard and 40 Germans descended on the Sennelager Training Area in Germany for 2 weeks of Company and Battlegroup level training. The exercise directly contributed to the UK and NATO's larger response to the invasion of Ukraine, with operational and exercise deployments across Eastern Europe this year.

Despite the inevitable frictions a move of this scale can cause, 19X proved the Army Reserve can mobilise from locations all over the UK, deploy to a theatre, reorbat and quickly begin conducting operations, all the while learning from the few frictions by overcoming these problems and all the time improving.

Of course, the exercise phase also happened to be over the same period as the Euros so time was even found in the busy schedule to allow the troops to watch at least some of the games. They also managed some R&R and Cultural activity with time off to explore some of the local landmarks including Wewelsburg Castle, the SS Headquarters during WW2.



**Major Collister speaking to the troops in Sennelager**

7 SCOTS played a pivotal role in the exercise. Firstly, we provided a Rifle Company, commanded by OC Headquarter Company, Maj Andrew Collister who recently returned to the Battalion as a Reservist at the end of his Regular career. As important as having troops on the ground is, these troops require a significant amount of support. 7 SCOTS was at the forefront of providing that support with key enablers including the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO), Maj Andrew Gilmour, and his team providing a stand-alone, Reserve Unit Aid Post (UAP) to provide the real-life medical support for the exercise. This is a significant achievement and the Battalion's UAP is the only Reserve one capable at this time that has been validated. 7 SCOTS personnel were also well represented in the Quartermaster's department providing kit, equipment, and resupply to the troops on the ground as part of A1 Echelon.



**The CO and BGHQ Planning Team in Sennelager**



Additionally, we deployed a full Battlegroup Headquarters (BGHQ) including Engineer and Intelligence support from 71 Engineers and 5 MI. This headquarters was formed around a core of officers from 7 SCOTS including Maj Ian Bunce, the 2IC, Capt Martin Twist and Capt Grant Linklater. From a standing start at the beginning of the year this team conducted a series of Staff Training weekends and then, on arrival in Sennelager with the remainder of the newly formed Headquarters, completed more training in the Command and Staff Trainer. The end result of all of this was the BGHQ completing a full planning cycle for a Battlegroup attack that was then executed by the battlegroup that consisted of 3 Light Role Infantry rifle companies, a Light Cavalry squadron in Jackal, a Close Support Logistics squadron, a Close Support Medical troop and Remote Piloted Aviation Systems providing live feeds to the BG Commander as the battle unfolded; yet another significant demonstration of the capability of the Army Reserve.



**Battlegroup Headquarters in Sennelager**

This achievement impressed and possibly even surprised not just 19X Headquarters but higher formations throughout the Field Army and has enhanced our reputation across the Army.

With Ex RHINO HEART and the preparation for it being so early in the training year there was the potential for a lot of the “look forward to” element of our training year disappearing. To counter this, we are now embarking on a period of “Live Firing Tactical Training” (LFTT), a vital Infantry skill that we do not often find enough time in the training year to conduct. We are now in the middle of a series of range weekends building towards a Live Fire Section Attack range towards the end of the year. The troops and junior commanders are relishing the challenge of putting their fieldcraft skills to good use with the added enhancement to realism of using live ammunition whilst doing so.



**The Highland Band Performing in Nijmegen**

The Highland Band also had an interesting ADE conducting vital international Defence Engagement. They deployed to Nijmegen in the Netherlands in July for The Nijmegen 4 Days Marches. This is the world's largest walking achievement event, more than 45000 entrants from over 70 different countries gather to walk up to 40 km per day for 4 days. The Highland Band were tasked with providing some much-needed moral support and musical accompaniment to the marchers which they did in their usual style.



**The Highland band in Nijmegen**

Alongside our training we still have people volunteering to deploy on other exercises or mobilising for operations. This started this year with the recovery of the 25 soldiers who spent last year mobilised on Op INTERFLEX. They were brought back into the fold in December and January bringing with them valuable experience and confidence, not to mention more than one or two stories to tell. (Get the sandbags out and set that lamp swinging!) Special mention to the soldier who actually completed Op INTERFLEX 3 and 4 back-to-back.



**Lt Lapslie in the Falklands**



A further deployment worthy of mention was Lt Angus Lapslie who spent 4 months on the Falkland Islands on Op FIRIC. 2 SCOTS Fire Support Company deployed as the Roulement Infantry Company (RIC), and he was mobilised as an individual augmentee to fill the role of the Machine Gun Platoon Commander. During the tour, which was spent either on QRF, patrolling or on the ranges, his platoon managed to fit in a Machine Gun Cadre and develop the young platoon he had taken over into an effective Fire Support asset. The highlight of the deployment for him was Ex CAPE BAYONET, the quarterly exercise conducted by the RIC. Angus said on his return “Despite coinciding with the coldest weather since records began in 1982, FSp Coy pushed through the arduous conditions to deliver a challenging and successful exercise, working with HMS FORTH and the RAF’s fighter and strategic airlift assets to demonstrate the full capability of BFSAT” (British Forces South Atlantic Islands). This was a fantastic opportunity for him and again one he gained a lot of experience from that will only benefit 7 SCOTS and the wider Army Reserve in the long term.



**Lt Lapslie with his Platoon in the Falklands**

While much of the Battalion has been off seeing the world, the Recruiting and Engagement team have been out on the ground at their usual diary of engagements and outreach stands across our patch including events such as the Perth Salute, Stirling Highland Games and Westfest in Dundee. One of the most notable this year was The Black Isle Games Tractor Push. The team in Charlie Company under Sgt Brownless entered the competition, managed to come second, and won a £250 donation to the Royal Regiment of Scotland Association Trust so congratulations to them.



**Sgt Brownless (Driving) with the Tractor Push Team**

Another notable initiative in the home path is the ROSO, Capt Scott Shaw’s Project GREEN FINGERS where he is turning some of the waste ground at the back of the ARC in Elgin into an Allotment. This will be a joint effort between the whole force including Civil Servants and Cadets. The main effort is to educate and in turn help the youngsters (and some of the older soldiers) about sustainment, healthy living and for those who require some time to take a load off, a space where they can grow, cook and eat in a relaxing environment.

So in conclusion, 2024 has indeed, yet again been a very busy year for 7 SCOTS with an amazing variety of outstanding opportunities for members of the Battalion right across the rank range which have been taken enthusiastically and, where we have been asked to produce, we have delivered to our customary high standard.



**On Exercise (Courtesy of MoD Media)**



# Affiliated Regiments

## ARTEFACTS FROM THE BLACK WATCH OF CANADA COLLECTION PORTRAIT, THE QUEEN MOTHER, 1963

*By Earl John Chapman*

This painting of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother, was executed in 1963 by the noted British artist Aubrey Claud Davidson-Houston (1906-1995). The oil on canvas was a direct commission from the 1st Battalion, The Black Watch (RHR) of Canada, one of two regular force battalions first raised in 1951 and badged as the Black Watch of Canada in 1953. The Queen Mother, born Elizabeth Angela Marguerite Bowes-Lyon on 4 August 1900, was colonel in chief of The Black Watch for sixty-five years and held the same appointment with The Black Watch of Canada, the London Scottish Regiment, and the Toronto Scottish Regiment until her death in March 2002. The portrait shows Her Majesty resplendent in white silk, diamond tiara, the broad blue ribbon and flashing star of the Order of the Garter, as well as her beloved Black Watch brooch. The "Queen Mum" had always taken a particular interest and pride in The Black Watch and its various branches – her brother Fergus, a captain in The Black Watch, was killed at the battle of Loos in September 1915. Davidson-Houston was born in Dublin into a military family and was a regular soldier for 23 years. His career as an artist began in a German prisoner of war camp following his capture during the retreat to Dunkirk in 1940 – he spent the next five years painting his 700 fellow inmates. When his military service ended, he studied at the Slade School and later at St. Martin School of Art. In 1953, as a result of his first and only one-man exhibition at Walker's Gallery on Bond Street, he received a commission to paint Queen Elizabeth and his career as a portrait painter was launched. His other royal commissions included the Duke of Edinburgh, and the Duchess of Kent. The painting was sent to the home Regiment in Montreal when its regular force battalions were disbanded in 1970.



Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother, executed in 1963 by the noted British artist Aubrey Claud Davidson-Houston (1906-1995)



## THE BLACK WATCH (ROYAL HIGHLAND REGIMENT) OF CANADA

*By Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Unger, MMM, CD, Commanding Officer*

It is mid-August 2024 as I pen these few words. For the Reserves in Canada this means that the summer individual training cycle is about to end. What a good summer it has been; in a couple of weeks, we will welcome three freshly minted platoon commanders and several infantry soldiers to fill the ranks of the rifle company. RSM Fuller and I have had a chance to visit many soldiers on summer training, everyone had a smile on their face. It will be great to integrate these motivated soldiers into the unit.



Honorary Colonel Bruce Bolton, Lt Col Rob Unger, CO; and RSM Keith Fuller visit Ptes Ramaroson, Vega-Martins, Pavlides, Lepage, Argento and Raihert on DP1 Inf Soldier Course led by Master Corporal Benjamin Fuller

Since the last article for the Red Hackle, the unit completed the collective training season, with a platoon integrated into a light infantry battalion made up of elements from all 34th Canadian Brigade Group infantry units and a mortar troop from the brigade artillery regiment. Our unit was again tasked with generating a platoon to exercise in the Canadian High Arctic. With Sgt Wroblewski recently returned with a fresh qualification as an Arctic Advisor and Leader, the platoon was well led and was congratulated for their preparedness and survival skills in such a harsh environment. This cycle starts anew in the coming weeks.

The Black Watch Pipes and Drums had a successful summer, returning to competition for the first time in many years. They acquitted themselves well, placing middle of the pack in their group in three competitions in Port Hope and Maxville, Ontario, and at the Montreal Highland Games. We had a visit from the Normandy Highlands Pipe Band, a pipes and drums band that re-enact the Canadian Black Watch Band circa World War II. The Normandy Band had their first experience at competition in Maxville and Montreal and learned a great deal from this and from rehearsing with the unit band. The Normandy band also organized a commemoration ceremony for the Dieppe Raid, inviting the Command Teams and veterans from The Black Watch and Les Fusiliers Mont Royal, both units having participated in the ill-fated raid. During the ceremony they presented engraved stones from the Dieppe beach to relatives of soldiers who fought in the raid.





**The Normandy Highlands Pipe band with The Black Watch Pipes and Drums at Dieppe Raid Commemoration Ceremony with Montreal skyline in the background**

The unit's focus over the last few months has been to ensure readiness of all troops, as we have been tasked to provide soldiers for expeditionary operations, including the NATO Enhanced Force Presence Brigade Group in Latvia, as well as Canada's Ukraine security forces training mission with elements in the UK and other European countries. The

unit also provided a member to the Canadian Embassy close protection team in Kyiv and will send members to meet the land force component of Canada's mission in the Middle East. So far, we have between 15 and 20 soldiers who will head out on overseas missions. We wish them each a safe and challenging tour.

We are anxiously awaiting the completion of a major renovation project in our cherished Regimental Home Station on Bleury Street. The work to upgrade the electrical infrastructure has been going on for the last 18 months, and we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Whereas the troops were competing for space over the last several months, most of the operational space will be available, with two or three rooms that still require some major work to be completed. We took advantage of this disruption to optimize the space, with the result that we will have more classrooms and improved storage space. Should any visitors from our UK brothers and sisters show up at the front door of the armoury, we will be proud to provide a full guided tour.

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0131 556 6827



# The Black Watch Battalion Army Cadet Force

Honorary Colonel:	Colonel JMK Erskine MBE
Commandant:	Colonel AAR Halford-MacLeod
Deputy Commandant:	Lieutenant Colonel K Douglas
Chief Executive Officer:	Major ACM Potter
Cadet Quartermaster:	Captain A Williams
Battalion Training Officer:	Major B Sangster
Officer Commanding Alma Company:	Captain T Cameron
Officer Commanding Burmah Company:	Major S McKenzie
Officer Commanding Korea Company:	Major J Douglas
Officer Commanding Ypres Company:	Captain M Elliot
Officer Commanding Ticonderoga (Bands) Company:	Major M McCluskey
Regimental Sergeant Major Instructor:	RSMI P Cameron
Training Safety Advisor:	WO2 IR Campbell, SCOTS

The Battalion kicked off the year with a strong start, with Detachment Training nights followed by a highly successful Battalion Training Weekend at Barry Buddon Camp. This weekend marked a significant convergence of military talent and dedication as activities unfolded across various locations, showcasing the commitment and skills of our cadets and volunteers. Cadets took part in basic skills training including drill, first aid, skill at arms and shooting. The atmosphere at the camp was charged with a sense of purpose and shared determination, mixed with a bit of fun. This camp served as a testament to the dedication of our Adult Volunteers, who took time to train and mentor the cadets, ensuring they received the best possible Cadet Experience.

Concurrently, our dedicated cadet Pipers and Drummers were immersed in the National Pipes and Drums training weekend. This specialised training aimed to hone musical talents and cadets refined their musical skills, learning complex pieces and improving their performance abilities. The rigorous practice schedules and high standards required in musical training helped foster discipline and commitment. Through music, cadets connected with military traditions and history, gaining a deeper appreciation for their heritage.

Adding to the weekend's dynamic nature, our Regimental Band and Pipes and Drums travelled to Wales to perform at the Theatr Brycheiniog in Brecon. The Rorke's Drift Concert showcased the rich melodies and commanding beats of military music, providing a memorable experience for all in attendance. The talents of our Cadet Musicians filled the air, highlighting their dedication and skill.

In February, Cadet Corporal Ola Delatowska from Perth Queens Barracks Detachment returned from Bavaria after successfully completing the Alpine Ski Foundation course with flying colours. Run by the Cadet Centre for Adventurous Training (CCAT), this centre of excellence provides Adventurous Training qualifications and skill-based experiences for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and cadets aged 15+ from the Army Cadets.

March was the Spring Camp as the main cadetting focus, held once again at Barry Buddon. Despite facing inclement weather, the one-week camp proved to be a resounding success. Cadets participated in a diverse array of activities, including: Fieldcraft and Shooting, Skill at Arms and First Aid, CIS (Signals), Duke of Edinburgh's Expeditions, Drill and Community Engagement where recruits visited the Broughty Ferry Lifeboat Station for a firsthand understanding of the RNLI operations. Despite the challenging weather, cadets exhibited remarkable resilience and dedication, earning praise from the Honorary Colonel during the concluding events of the week.



**Stanley Detachment Cadets on a Duke of Edinburgh's Expedition**

The camp culminated in a Prize Giving ceremony by the Honorary Colonel, Col JMK Erskine MBE and promotions. Addressing the cadets, he commended their perseverance and lauded their efforts in making the camp a success despite the adverse weather conditions. He emphasised the importance of resilience and adaptability, qualities integral to their growth as individuals and leaders.



**Prize Winners at Easter Camp**

A highlight of the ceremony was the promotion of Cadet Staff Sergeant Robert Holgate from Cowdenbeath Detachment to Cadet Regimental Sergeant Major. This promotion recognised his outstanding dedication, exemplary leadership, and unwavering commitment to the Cadets. In his new role, he will serve as a role model, providing guidance, mentorship, and inspiration to his peers.



**Newly promoted Cadet RSM Robert Holgate on the Border after visiting Army Cadet Music Camp at Otterburn**



These concurrent events highlight the multifaceted nature of Cadet life, where excellence is pursued not only in the field and camp but also through music and adventurous activities. The start of the year has set a high standard, showcasing the diverse talents and unwavering dedication of our cadets and volunteers. As they continue to engage in these varied activities, they carry forward the values of discipline, commitment, and tradition, ensuring the spirit of the Cadets remains vibrant and strong.

In a remarkable display of community spirit and dedication, cadets and adult volunteers from across the Battalion have actively participated in a series of significant events, underscoring their commitment to preserving history and fostering community ties. These activities ranged from attending local galas to commemorating historical milestones.

The cadets and adult volunteers took part in several galas across Fife, bringing together communities in celebration and solidarity. These events offered a unique opportunity for cadets to engage with the public, showcase their skills, and contribute to the festive atmosphere. The presence of the cadets at these galas not only enriched the events but also allowed for meaningful interactions between the youth and the broader community.

Their participation included a variety of activities such as setting up an information trailer, demonstrating drill, first aid and the Giant Dartboard. The cadets carried out these tasks with a cornerstone of the cadets' recent activities was their participation in the 80th anniversary commemoration of D-Day at Balhousie Castle featuring a series of events which included the Pipes & Drums playing for the public, a drill demonstration and first aid. This commemoration was a reminder of the sacrifices made during World War II and the importance of remembering our shared history.

The participation of cadets and adult volunteers in these community events has an impact, both on the individuals involved and the wider community. For the cadets, these experiences offer invaluable lessons in leadership, teamwork, and community responsibility.

This year's summer camp for the cadets was an unforgettable experience, held at Garelochhead Training Camp. A highlight of the camp was the upgraded accommodation, as the cadets enjoyed the comfort of new accommodation blocks, a significant improvement from the traditional Nissen huts used in previous years. This change marked the beginning of a week filled with intensive training, personal growth, and camaraderie

The battalion was organised into four cadres, each undergoing a series of diverse and challenging activities. This structured approach ensured that every cadet received comprehensive training in various essential skills.

The Battalion was expertly assisted by Cpl Morgan and Hldr Quinn from 4 SCOTS in delivering Fieldcraft training. Not only did they add their experience, they were able to interact with the cadets and tell them their army story. Cadets were taught essential skills, including camouflage, concealment, and tactical movement by using Paintball and newly acquired Laser Tag weapons. The training aimed to enhance their ability to operate effectively in field conditions. Adventure Training was an exciting part of Summer Camp 2025 and focused on Treezone, Canoeing, and Gorge walking in the local area around Garelochhead.

Building on the success from Spring Camp, Communication & Information Systems (CIS) training was a large part of the camp. Cadets learned about modern communication technologies and information management. The training included practical sessions on radio operations. In addition, Camp Activities were run within the camp including the Giant Dartboard, Tag Archery and STEM Kits.

There were many visitors to Summer Camp'25. The most distinguished of which was from the Honorary Colonel, Col JMK Erskine MBE. Colonel Erskine spent his time engaging with both adults and cadets, observing their training sessions, and providing valuable insights and encouragement.

The camp concluded with a ceremony that recognised the hard work and achievements of the Cadets and Adults. Commandant's Coins were presented to individuals who had demonstrated exceptional commitment and performance throughout the camp. These coins are a symbol of excellence.

The highlight of the closing ceremony was the presentation of the Banner for the Champion Company. This year, Alma Company earned the prestigious title, a testament to their outstanding performance across all training activities.

The final event of the camp was the Talent Show; after a protracted discussion by the Judges, the winner was LCpl Ava Rice from Rosyth Detachment.



**Cadet CSM Alfie Hunter Cupar Detachment being presented with his Lord Lieutenant's Certificate and Badge from Mr Robert Balfour Lord-Lieutenant of Fife**



**Alma Company – Champion Company at Garelochhead**

In September the Pipes and Drums took part in Exercise COLORADO HACKLE where they performed at the Estes Park International Tattoo in Colorado State alongside the RCMP and West Point Military Band and various other smaller pipe bands. The Cadets also spent the morning at Estes Park Elementary School showing the pupils what they could do.





**Cadet Drum Major Jorja Glass leading the Pipes and Drums onto the arena at the Estes Park International Tattoo**



**Pipes and Drums at Estes Park International Tattoo**

Finally, all Cadet activity in Black Watch Battalion ACF would not be possible without the support of the RFCA permanent staff and the Training Safety Advisor from 51 Brigade. All too often they have to work extra hard making sure Adult Volunteers conduct cadet activities correctly, and on time. It is to them that the whole battalion is very grateful for their understanding, patience and support. It has not always been easy!

Despite the funding and training pressures, the battalion continues to deliver the Cadet Experience. 2024/25 looks to be another exciting year with many challenges and opportunities for all the young people that are our cadets.



# Correspondence

To the Editor                      27 September 2024  
Sir,

## Exercise IMJIN WARRIOR

Studying the notes in the last edition of THE RED HACKLE magazine on the activities of The Black Watch, Third Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland I noticed a minor error regarding B Company's deployment on exercise IMJIN WARRIOR. In fact, it did not represent 70 years since the red hackle was last worn in Korea. Some of us will remember that during our time in Hong Kong in the early seventies we took our turn in forming the nucleus of the United Nations platoon in the 8th United States Army Honor Guard Company, as seen in the copy of my certificate below.

It was a few days later that it suddenly occurred to me that we can possibly identify the individual who has the honour of reintroducing the red hackle. As we were to parade embedded in a company which executed drill movements in the US army style, an advance party was dispatched to identify the necessary changes to adopt.

The sole member of this party was our very own Ronnie Proctor. Thus, he was the first to represent 1 BW in the Republic of Korea in some twenty years – unless someone can correct me!

I remain etc  
Hugh Gray  
(by email)



United Nations Command, Honor Guard Certificate presented to Lt H Gray



OC Honor Guard presenting Lt Hugh Gray and Sgt Ronnie Proctor with Expert Shooting medals Korea

Editor's Note: The Red Hackle being traced in Korea again is also in Brigadier Campbell Close's article.

To the Editor                      19 August 2024  
Sir,

## Scottish National War Memorial – Edinburgh Castle

Through your journal of the Red Hackle I would like to pass on that two Black Watch soldiers from WW1 have been added to the Scottish National War Memorial at Edinburgh Castle. Private 2418 Peter Chalmers Ritchie and, also recently added to the Kirkcaldy War Memorial, Private 1163 John Butchart - with the correct spelling of his name now amended on the Scottish National War Memorial. It's through my uncle's link of having served in WW1 in The Black Watch, Lieutenant PW Anderson, and having been brought up in Angus that I'm writing to ask for this to be passed on.

Yours sincerely, Pat Anderson, Letham, Forfar

To the Editor 19 September 2024

## Victoria Cross Trust

Having contacted you last year in relation to our work to restore VC graves and memorials, I just thought I would drop you a line to advise that we cleaned the grave of Major Farquharson VC at Harberton in Devon over the weekend. It's taken some time, but we were able to restore the cross to its former glory.

Regards

Keith Lumley

Chair of Trustees

Victoria Cross Trust/by email

Editor's note: The painting we hold at Balhousie Castle of Farquharson winning his VC was reportedly one of several presented to him, as was the manner at the time, from which this one was selected



Farquharson VC's restored grave stone





Farquharson winning his VC at Lucknow

To the Editor

20 May 2024

### George Reiter Trophy

I thought you would like to see George's Bowling trophy which was done by Gus Angus at Trident Trophies Dundee. He did say that he would do Tex proud and I'm sure you will agree he has.

Kind regards

Lorena Reiter



The George Reiter trophy

Possibly to the Editor

30 June 2024

From: Today's Sunday Telegraph, A bit before our time ....

Donald Fraser

By email to Rose & Humphrys



### The Telegraph article – Naval cricketing v 1 BW in Malta

To the Editor

Dear Sir,

### The first Black Watch soldier in New Zealand

I wish to tell you about my great, great, great Grandfather, a Waterloo veteran of The Black Watch buried in New Zealand. His story, as we have been able, is as follows. Robert Roycroft was born in Carlow, Kilkenny, in 1798, to parents unknown to us. Robert took part in the battle of Waterloo in 1815 where he received a medal and a service-credit of two years. He then spent 6 months in Flanders and France followed, in 1821, Army records showing him at home again in Kilkenny serving as a drummer for 6 months where he met and married Ann.

From records shared by Balhousie Castle we have discovered that Robert & Ann (maiden name unknown) went with the Regiment to Gibraltar in November 1825, where their daughter, Mary, was born in 1826, then Thomas in April 1827 to be followed by George in April 1828. In December 1831 they moved to Malta arriving in January 1832 where Richard was born in April, until November 1834. In December he and his family moved back to Scotland until 1837. We could not find a death certificate for Ann, but on 28 May 1837 he married Jane McIntosh at St Cuthbert's Edinburgh, both giving their address as 65 Broughton Street, Edinburgh, as recorded in the 1841 Census. Most of his service had been spent as a Private though for 6 months he had been a drummer. In 1839 Robert travelled to Dublin to be discharged from the Army due to being 'worn out'.

A daughter, Isabella, was born 1 May 1840, followed by Margaret on 6 July 1842 and finally John was born in 1846. These children accompanied their parents to New Zealand. In December 1846, Earl Grey issued a letter from the War Office notifying 13,000 pensioners in Britain of the 'conditions' on which it was proposed to enrol pensioners for the service in New Zealand, called The Royal New Zealand Fencibles:

The candidates would each receive free passage for themselves, their wife and children with rations at public expense.

On arriving in NZ each pensioner would be put in possession of a cottage of 2 rooms and an acre of land, one fourth to be cleared and made ready for cultivation.

Each pensioner would be given an advance of money to buy the necessary articles required.

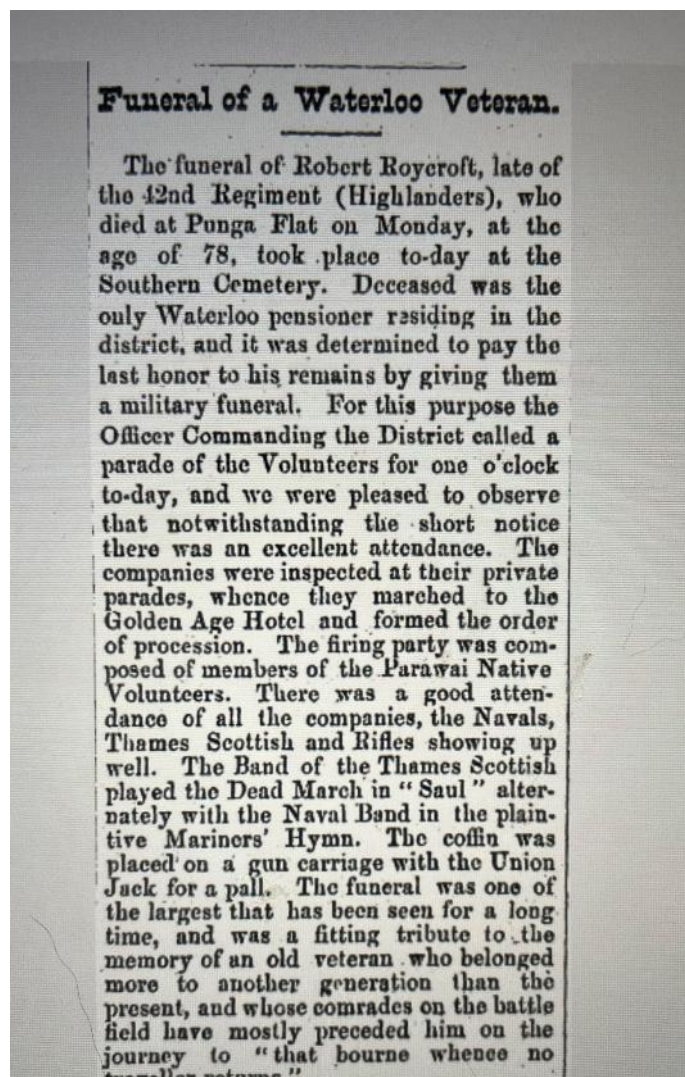
The Fencibles would be assured of employment on public works on their arrival in the colony.

On termination of the 7 years' service as a Fencible the cottage and allotment would be absolute property.

1st July 1847 Robert Roycroft had applied and was accepted; he, his wife and children - and William Fraser, also recorded as of 42nd of Foot, boarded the ship Minerva and, three months later, arrived in Howick,



New Zealand on 8th October 1847. Four more children were born in New Zealand, 3 sons and a daughter. Twenty years later, in 1867, Robert and Jane and such of their children still at home, moved to Thames, NZ. Robert died on 18 October 1875. He was honoured with a military funeral and was buried at Shortland Cemetery, Thames as attached. I hope that this bit of history helps build a story. Shona Roycroft (Robert Roycroft was my direct ancestor, great, great, great Grandfather)



Robert Rycroft funeral notice

The Editor

Captain Wilf Finch

While following up a request for detail on Capt Wilf Finch I came across the following two entries from the archived Red Hackle about his prowess in catering for the Officers' Mess.

JM by email

McMicking.

Malcolm Wallace has taken over P.M.C. from Larry Trotter who has, alas, left us for the rigours of the winter in U.K. and ships executive officer en route. We owe Larry a big debt of gratitude for running such an excellent Mess for the past five months. Wilf Finch our new education officer, has donned the mantle of food member and Campbell Parker is investigating the mysteries of "Plonk."

Wilf Finch Battalion Education Officer- Food Member

## Officers' Mess

### MENU

Potage de poulet  
... un type d'avant gards!

Abitafash

Poussin à la Baalbek  
(très ancien)

Joie des Pentathlètes  
ou  
Après moi, L'Aldershot

Dessert

I reproduce the above as an epitaph for Wilf Finch in his capacity as Food member. His menus at dinner nights and on grand occasions were a splendid opening for conversation when seated next to a guest one had not met before. To place the above in context, our guest for the evening was Col. Alec Brodie, with whom Duncan Bengough and Wilf had spent two weeks in Beirut. The Battalion Pentathletes had just won the Middle East Championships. Menus in a similar vein were produced on such occasions as the private dinner party we gave for Sir Hugh Foot in April and the luncheon for 41 persons, at which the Mess staff excelled themselves, when Earl Mountbatten and half of the Defence staff dropped in for lunch one day.

We had a small reel party at the end of April for which Thomas

Wilf Finch Food Member's menu

To The Editor

Sir,

Veteran Recruiters

I wish to report an odd sighting at Holyroodhouse over the summer during the General Assembly, reportedly 'Twa Recruiting Officers for Age Concern'

Yrs etc

RJKB by email



Twa Recruiting Officers for age concern



To the Editor Thursday 8 August 2024,

Sir,

### Operation TOTALIZE

80 years ago today, my great uncle, Pte Douglas Graham Robinson, died in Garcelles-Sacqueville serving with 7BW, during Op TOTALIZE. He was from Wroughton near Swindon. It remains a mystery to my family why he decided to join a Scottish regiment such as The Black Watch. My late grandad told my dad that he vividly remembered having a drink in the local pub with him for the last time, never to be seen again. I am in the Royal Air Force and felt compelled to travel to Normandy for the 80th anniversary. I had been to his grave before but visiting the battlefield where it happened was surreal.

Op Totalize, 7-8 August 1944, followed Op Goodwood as part of the effort to close the Falaise Gap, south of Caen. The 51st Highland Division had participated with others in the battle in St-Aignan-de-Cramesnil.

The part Douglas played was at the 7BW objective of Garcelles-Secqueville, the woods and village just before St-Aignan-de-Cramesnil. The Germans had taken over the chateau. I have read the war diary for this capture of Garcelles and it makes for a compelling read.



**The chateau then and now**

Initially, 7BW seized their objectives of the woods and village with ease. However, on 8th August a ground mist had arisen, they hadn't had enough time to dig deep enough trenches and the place was shelled and mortared continuously for two hours, causing some 50 casualties in Garcelles. My great uncle was killed there. The chateau owner took me to the woods where the trenches were still visible; standing in them made it all feel very real.



**Gravestone of DG Robinson killed aged 21**

A commemoration in St-Aignan-de-Cramesnil was primarily for the

Northamptonshire Yeomanry, but they welcomed me at the "Bosquet des Libérateurs" memorial, where they unveiled a plaque "Le Castelet honours the liberators". There was no 51st HD plaque. After this ceremony, I was escorted to Garcelles to lay a wreath. There was a memorial to the French soldiers, next to the Church, where they told me to lay it. However, there was no reference to 51st Highland Division here, either. I have been to his grave at the Banneville La Campagne CWGC cemetery, which is stunning, about 10 miles from Garcelles, but I was wondering if there's anything we can do to put 51st HD "on the map" in this area, because they're being forgotten.

Kind Regards, Neil Robinson

Editor's Note: The local population's consent is required for Memorial plaques, but this can certainly be followed up.

To the Editor 14 November 2024,

Sir,

### 25th Remembrance Day in Eggewaartskapelle and Veurne (Furnes - Belgium) Sunday 10 November 2024

As the former police chief of Veurne, I have instigated a commemoration for the past 25 years at the CWGC graveyards in Eggewaartskapelle (a little town near Veurne) and Veurne. This year the Remembrance Day was again organised on behalf of the fallen in general and some in particular.

At 0930hrs a Mass took place in the church of Booitshoeke (also a little town near Veurne) on behalf of the Lancaster crew who crashed near Eggewaartskapelle on the night of 28 May 1944. The only survivor, Philip 'Phil' Gore, mid-upper gunner, died in 2008 and had joined us every year since 2001. His son, Tony, had buried his father's ashes near the graves, so that he can rest forever near his friends. Since 2001, Tony and his wife, Pam, have attended our commemorations.

The Mass was followed by a ceremony in Eggewaartskapelle and finally Veurne. Near the Cross of Sacrifice, a wreath was laid down on behalf of The Black Watch, as well as RAF Marham by Flemish reenactors and members of the Belgian Air Force.

Eight members of RAF Lossiemouth made the long trip to pay their respects to the crew of Pilot Officer Vivian Rosewarne, who died in late May 1940.

We also paid our respects near the graves of Private William Ernest KELL and Private John Philip WESTWATER, members of the 6th Battalion who died in Veurne on 1st June 1940, during the withdrawal to Dunkirk.



**José Clauw lays a wreath at Private Westwater's grave**

José Clauw



# Articles

## THE HOOK REVISITED

*Brigadier Campbell Close*

“This is definitely a request that I should say “no” to, but it seems that we are now far too late for that, am I correct?” I was finding it hard to read whether Director Joint Services Command and Staff College was irritated or playing the game, but looking beyond him, the Director of the Higher Command and Staff Course (HCSC) gave me a ‘thumbs up’ and smiled....

Given the sheer distance from Scotland and the fact that it lies within a heavily mined sector of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), within a few hundred metres of the military demarcation line (the unofficial “border” with North Korea), I suspect that it is a long time since issue boots worn by someone who joined The Black Watch have trodden the soil around The Hook.

For the last couple of years, the final phase of HCSC has been an outstanding trip to the Republic of Korea, a trip that melds historical study at the strategic, operational and higher tactical levels with contemporary study of the Korean Peninsula and the wider Indo-Asia-Pacific security environment. In preparation for our trip, I had done a little research, which had all but dashed any hopes of arranging a visit to The Hook.

Our excellent first week started in Busan, looking at operational logistics, the breakout from the Busan Perimeter, all the way up to the Inchon landings. The second week moved onto the contemporary environment, with seminars in the British Embassy, visits to the Joint Security Area, the United Nations Command and the Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was at the start of this week that, during a chat with a couple of our South Korean hosts, I mentioned the Regimental link and that I was sad that I would be unable to get to The Hook. One of our hosts said that she was meeting a friend the following day and would ask them about it. The conversation moved on, and I thought no more about it, until I saw her 48 hours later, at which point it transpired that the “friend” she had been meeting was the recently retired 4\* Chairman of the Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff. He had immediately called his successor and then his friend the Commanding General of the 25th Infantry Division and things had slightly snowballed from there. Looking at it objectively, Director JCSC (who had discovered my plans via the Defence Section in the Embassy) had summed up the situation very well- he should have said no, but we both recognised that we were committed. So, with something approaching an official green light, I was “on”, albeit with a thinly veiled warning that if anything went wrong, the North Koreans would be the least of my problems.

The following morning, as the rest of the course set off to a day of briefings with the UN Command, Brig Matt Baker (late RIFLES and with a regimental link to The Gloucesters) and I set off early in a hire car to drive North from Seoul. We had visited the base of Gloucester Hill as part of the course, but our plan for the day was to gain the crest of the “Glorious Glosters” main defensive position in the morning, followed by meeting our 25th Division hosts at a road junction near the entry to the DMZ.

Gloucester Hill was outstanding. A couple of kilometres of contouring round the back, followed by a heart-rate raising “direct” through secondary jungle with no obvious paths, brought us up onto the ridgeline which, although overgrown, still showed the obvious trench lines on either side of the crest and was covered in the detritus of battle (including UXO).



**The crest of Gloucester Hill, clearly showing the trench line. It is highly likely that this is what the Hook positions look like today**

At 2pm, we met our 25th Division hosts just North of the Imjin River. The Divisional Chief of Staff had come out to meet us, along with the CO of the battalion currently responsible for that sector, with a small Force Protection party and a Military Police bodyguard/minder each for Matt and me.



**The visit party: Brig Matt Baker, Brig Campbell Close, CO 3 Bn, COS 25(ROK) Div, flanked by MP bodyguards**

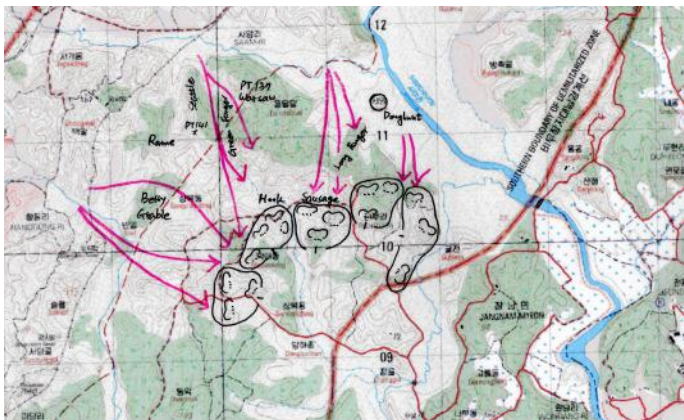
We dropped our hire car at a checkpoint on the entry into the DMZ and transferred to green vehicles for the move up onto the position. It was not long until the agricultural land on either side of the road gave way to minefields, and we started to climb up a steep slope on a winding dirt trail until we arrived at a small, well-defended patrol base on a reverse slope. Having been greeted by the troops within, we were advised to wear dark tops and we set off through a trench system that crossed onto the forward slope to the base of one of the observation towers on the demarcation line. A short climb up a ladder brought us up into an observation tower looking directly down onto the line, but with excellent views East across the Samichon River onto The Hook.





Looking across the Samichon River to The Hook from 1DWR's fire support position

The CO produced a map, which had been neatly marked up with the Company positions from November 1952 and we were clearly able to identify each one, with Bn HQ in the low ground to our South West.



The Hook. Map annotated by 3Bn, 25 (ROK) Division to show 1BW positions in November 1952

The CO confirmed that the 1BW positions are rarely visited now, as they are overgrown and heavily mined, but that he had sent a party up there in the summer to extinguish the fire caused by a decaying mine (this had been coordinated with the North). We then moved over to another tower that gave a slightly different perspective, before moving down onto the Samichon River to an area just South of Lt Col David Rose's 1BW Command Post and the Mortar Platoon positions in November 1952.



Looking North up the Samichon River. BHQ was in the deadground behind the hill on the left with the Mortar Pl approximately 600m further North

In total, we spent a couple of hours with the 25th Division, who were incredibly hospitable and keen to help us. I told the Divisional Chief of Staff that I would be writing a short article for The Red Hackle on my return, and he asked me to pass on to all Regimental veterans his, and his colleagues', sincere thanks for their service in the Republic of Korea. Even 70 years later, the gratitude of the South Koreans that soldiers had come from across the world to fight for their freedom was still very evident. Having exchanged gifts and thanks, we parted and I sensed palpable relief amongst the Defence Academy Staff when we returned safe and sound to Seoul that night, but with tales of an outstanding day!



Brig Andy Watson, Comd 7 BCT and former OC B Coy 1 SCOTS, reads the VC citation over where Sgt Bill Speakman's ashes were interred at Busan 65 years after the guns fell silent.



## CAMERON WALKER - THE SCOTTISH SOLDIER HIDDEN FOR 4 YEARS

*Hervé Savary*



**Cameron Walker - 4th Black Watch**

It is the morning in Sainte-Foy, a canton of Longueville-sur-Scie (Seine-inférieure) on Thursday 27 June 1940. Like every day, Jean Hubert, a young boy aged fifteen, brings in the small herd of dairy cows for milking. Lying on the ground in a meadow, a stranger suddenly gets up and addresses the cowherd in English. Unshaven and dirty, the man, dressed in civilian clothes asks for help and for something to eat. Although remaining on his guard, the Norman teenager faces the facts: an isolated British soldier on the run. Bringing him back to the family farm, the fugitive, who says he is Scottish and that his name is Cameron Walker, is welcomed by the father, Hamilton Hubert. The young Scot is unaware that he will spend the next four years in this corner of Normandy, hidden from the eyes of visitors and the occupying German troops. Despite the mortal risks involved, the members of the Hubert family take him under their wing. Honour to these courageous Normans, the first of the first resistance fighters. Back in 1940.

Born in 1918, Cameron was the youngest son of John Walker, a blacksmith in Forteviot near Perth. Joining the Army in September 1939, Cameron completed his military training in Perth before being posted to 4th Battalion The Black Watch of the 51st Highland Division. Heir to centuries-old Scottish traditions, the "51st" was the only British unit present in the Maginot Line sector in April 1940 between the Saar and the Moselle.

On 10 May 1940, the Germans launched their attack against France. Fighting shoulder to shoulder with their French brothers in arms, the Scots suffered their first losses. At the beginning of June, the 51st HD was engaged south of the Bresle river southwest of Abbeville. On 9 June, the remains of several battalions, including the 4th Black Watch, received orders to return to the port of Le Havre as part of the re-embarkation of ARK Force.

Overwhelmed by the blinding advance of the Germans, groups of Scottish soldiers, varying in strength, found themselves isolated. Not wishing to be taken prisoner, Cameron Walker relied on his lucky

star; heading inland and towards the west, he pretended to be a North African and met many Germans who did not discover his real identity.

Cameron was taken in by the Hubert family, farmers in Sainte-Foy. Son of a mother of Scottish ancestry, Hamilton Hubert, the head of the Hubert family, understood and spoke English. From June 1940 to September 1944, the young Highlander remained with his new family under the assumed name of Camille Valin.



**The Huberts' family farm - Sainte-Foy**

Participating in field work, but constantly on the alert, Cameron hid in a cache set up in the attic of the farm in the event of an alert, narrowly escaping capture on several occasions. Regularly, German soldiers went to the farm in search of downed airmen or food. One day, a German officer almost saw his regulation boots placed carelessly in front of the cache from where the Scotsman could see, through a crack in the wood, the polished boots of the German a few centimetres from his position.

In 1942, suffering from peritonitis, the young Scot was transported in a truck driven by M Coudré, a mechanic in Bacqueville-en-Caux, to be x-rayed. Presented to Doctor Arnon of Dieppe, Cameron underwent emergency clandestine surgery by the doctor, due to lack of a surgeon. He was never to recover from this surgical procedure carried out in poor conditions. Weakened to the point of fearing his death, Hamilton and his young protégé Cameron agree on a possible burial site on the farm.

The same year, a new child was born into the Hubert family. Braving the real risks involved, Hamilton and his wife decide to baptize the newborn Pierre, Cameron, Alexandre, in homage to their protégé. In the spring of 1942, once again defying the prohibitions at the risk of their own lives, the Huberts collected, hid and then handed over to the resistance William Bill Mills, an RAF aviator whose Spitfire had been forced to land.

The fate of the war began to turn to the advantage of the Allies. The landing of 6 June 1944 was successful. The Battle of Normandy, which lasted almost three months, was coming to an end. The Germans were in disarray. At the beginning of September 1944, now speaking French fluently, Cameron introduced himself to the Canadian liberators. The cousins across the Atlantic find it hard to believe the extraordinary story of this young Scottish soldier hidden for more than four years under the nose of the invader.

French beret screwed on his head, Cameron Walker returned home and was reunited with his family, his story making the front page of the Sunday Scottish Express. Unfortunately, the happiness would be short-lived: having been far away from medical establishments because of his clandestinity, the young Scot, weakened by a chronic illness, died on 29 December 1944 at the age of 25. Despite his premature death, unwavering links will continue between the Walker family and the inhabitants of Forteviot on the one hand and the HUBERTs, courageous Normans who hid the young Scottish soldier in their farm at the risk of their lives.





**Cameron Walker alongside his mother - September 1944  
Sunday Scottish Express**

For his bravery and that of his people, Hubert Hamilton HUBERT received the British Empire citation “in appreciation of the assistance given to the sailors, soldiers and airmen of the British Commonwealth which enabled them to escape or escaping capture by the enemy” and the United States of America citation expressing “the gratitude and appreciation of the American people for their courageous service in assisting in the escape of allied soldiers from the enemy.”

Finally, on the French side in March 1950, Mr. Hubert Hamilton HUBERT was distinguished by General de Gaulle for having been part of “the Army of soldiers without uniform who participated in the glorious fights for liberation thanks to the generous help he gave. brought to deported prisoners, deportees, French escapees or fighters of the Allied Armies who fell into the hands of the enemy.”

Since 2001, friendly meetings have taken place on both sides of the Channel between members of the Dunning historical society and members of the Hubert family who go to Scotland to pay their respects at the grave of their protégé.



**Grave of Cameron Walker**

Eighty years have passed. Of the seven children of the Hubert family, only Ghislaine and Pierre Cameron are still present. Taking advantage of the important ceremonies scheduled as part of the liberation of Normandy by the Allies, the honoring of this patriotic family by the French and Scottish authorities constitutes a just recognition.

Lest we forget

Août 2024

Sources

-Famille Hubert

-Dunning Parish Historical Society

-Connaissance de Dieppe

## **A HAND OF FRIENDSHIP**

*Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Mike Onslow*

The 80th Anniversary of the liberation of St Valery en Caux by the 51st Highland Division was marked in September 2024 by a weekend of commemorations and celebrations across the Cote d'Albatre. During the commemorations a small party from The Royal Regiment of Scotland joined representatives of the 2nd Derbyshire Yeomanry Association and the Provost of Inverness and her team and were treated to magnificent hospitality. Cemeteries were visited, gatherings were held at monuments, wreath were laid and plaques were unveiled.

A special moment over the weekend was to meet the Hubert family whose forebears, in Jun '40, took into their care a soldier from 4th Bn The Black Watch and kept him safe until liberation in Sep '44. Mme Hubert, the daughter of the family and now a grandmother herself, received gifts from The Black Watch Association, presented by Major General Robin Lindsay, and from Legion Scotland represented by John Low (whose father, a GORDON, had been taken PoW at St Valery in Jun '40), to acknowledge the risks they took and the remarkably selfless act itself.

The story of Private Cameron Walker, from Forteviot, is told elsewhere in this magazine, the Scottish soldier hidden for 4 years. In the intervening post war period, the Hubert family's bravery has been acknowledged by the British and by the US. In Mar '50, General de Gaulle acknowledged the efforts and work of M Hubert and his family for having been a part of “the Army of soldiers without uniform who participated in the glorious fights for liberation thanks to the generous help he brought to deported prisoners, deportees, French escapees or fighters of the Allied Armies who fell into the hands of the enemy.”

The small ceremony during the community reception in St Valery to celebrate the liberation was really well received. Mme Hubert and her family were deeply touched that their part in the wider liberation and victory was still remembered and is still worthy of recognition. Her brother had been unable to attend, but she was accompanied by the subsequent generations and, together, they joined the 150 members of the local community in remembering the sacrifices, bravery and privations endured by so many during the War years.

Editor's Note: Many will remember the Major Mike Onslow RS as OC Alpha Grenadier Company with us 1996-98 at Fort George and on the Royal Guard; having left the Army as a lieutenant colonel, Mike is now SO2 Engagement at HQ 51 Brigade.

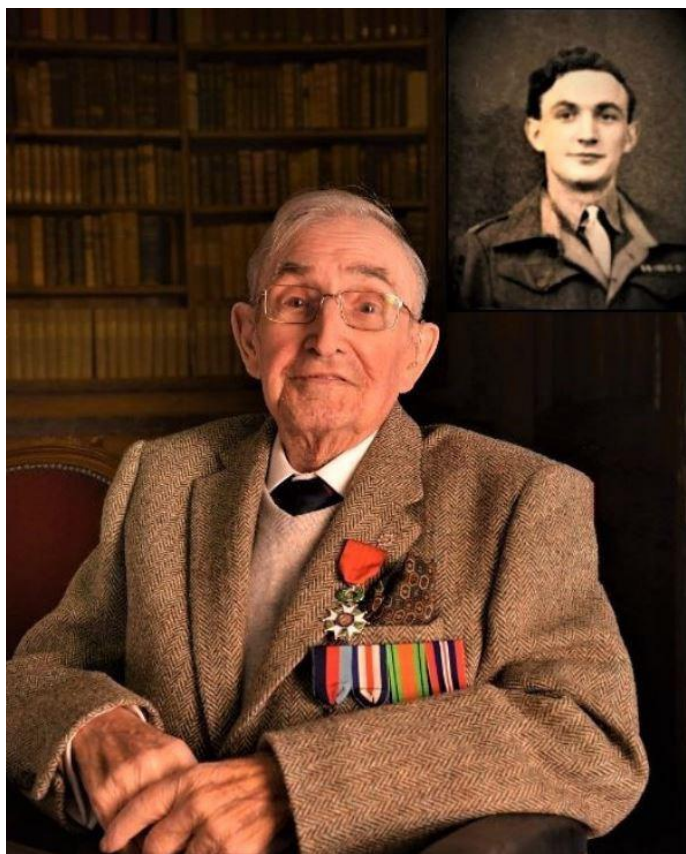




Mme Hubert is presented with a gift from The Black Watch Association by Major General Robin Lindsay

## SATURDAY 24TH AUGUST 2024 BOURG-ACHARD, NORMANDY, FRANCE

*Angus Brydon*



5 BW George Brydon CdG

The day started overcast and warm, I left my campsite in the town of Bourg-Achard at about 9:30am and drove my jeep to a crossroads at Haut Croth just a few miles south of the town.



Memorial at crossroads at Haut Croth

I had been informed by Jacqui Scales, (niece of Private George Hildred 1925-1944) that there would be a commemoration there to the fallen from the battle of Mauny 28th/29th August 1944.

Arriving at the crossroads in the middle of the Normandy countryside, with agricultural fields meeting at all four corners, was surreal; in one corner of the crossroads in a field that had been recently ploughed, stood a small monument with two tall flag poles. One, flying the French Tricolore with the Normandy flag, showing the two lions of lower and upper Normandy regions, and the other; the Union Jack, together with the Canadian flag. Here I met Jacqui and her family members.

Jacqui had told me previously, that this site had been used as a temporary burial place for the fatally injured soldiers of 5th Black Watch after the battle of Mauny, including her uncle Pte George Hildred. Whilst we chatted at the crossroads awaiting the town dignitaries, she explained that the field had been used as a field hospital during the battle, and that all the wounded (over twenty Black Watch soldiers) would have been brought there to be tended by the medics and nurses, and I then realised that this field was where my father would have been brought after being severely wounded on 29th August 1944 at Mauny.

My story starts around 2015 when trying to piece together my father's wartime experiences in Normandy, with very little information to go on. George Young Brydon was just another 18 year old, from Newhaven in Edinburgh, who had received his call-up papers through the post and was conscripted into the Army on 3rd February 1944. In May he was transferred to 10th Battalion The Black Watch and on 29th July transferred to 5th Black Watch immediately embarking to France on 1st August from Portsmouth and landing at Arromanches that same day.

George's first action began as soon as he landed in Normandy, being detailed with hunting down German snipers in the now ruined City of Caen. Once out of Caen, George fought through sporadic firefights from the streets of St. Sylvain to Lisieux and further north as the SS Panzer divisions retreated toward the river Seine, surviving ferocious fighting over the next 2 weeks.

However, on 28th August 5th Black Watch was ordered to occupy the small village of Mauny from the south east, through an orchard. 12th SS Division was there; rearguard to the remnants of the German army escaping Normandy over the Seine. A Company immediately came under heavy machine gun and mortar fire from the woods surrounding the Chateau, many were wounded and at least three were killed. The Battalion was ordered to retreat about a mile as the daylight faded and the tanks unable to support them in time.

On 29th August, B Company (including my father) was sent forward towards Mauny, where they came across a roadblock of fallen trees across the access route to the Chateau.

My father noticed the body of a fallen Black Watch private draped over one of the tree trunks. (After some detective work, I managed to name this poor soldier as Private George Hildred, A Company 5BW, who had only turned 18 in May having landed in France just eight days prior to Mauny.)

After a morning recce, by an Intelligence Officer and platoon from B Company including my father, down to the banks of the river Seine to ascertain enemy concentration, they approached the crossroads



at Mauny and came under heavy machine gun fire from the wooded grounds followed by shelling and mortar fire. Three soldiers were killed in the shelling, including OC B Company, Major Donald Mirrelees, with many more wounded. My father was one of the wounded, hit in the lower back with shrapnel. He was eventually rescued and taken by jeep to the field Hospital at Haut Croth crossroads, outside Bourg Achard. From there he was driven, strapped across a jeep to Bayeaux Army Medical Hospital 80 miles away. During this journey, however, the line of Red Cross transport was strafed by fighter planes and everyone dived for cover in the roadside ditches except George Brydon, who was strapped on top of a jeep and couldn't move. The fighter planes turned out to be American and had had to be signalled using flares to stop them annihilating the convoy. George Brydon was then evacuated back to the UK where he underwent many operations to his back.



**Except George Brydon, who was strapped on top of a jeep**

In my travels through the Normandy countryside, commemorating the route my father took with 5th Black Watch in August 1944, passing through the towns and villages he helped liberate, I have been blown away with the gratitude and compassion expressed by everyone I met, acknowledging the sacrifice the Allies gave for their freedom and liberty.

That overcast Saturday morning at the Haut Croth crossroads, I stood in my family kilt with my father's war medals on my chest, including the Legion d'honneur he had been awarded in 2016, whilst the Normandy Pipe Band played, tears streaming down my face. It will forever remain with me. The day ended with a huge celebration in the town square, with military memorabilia, bunting, war exhibitions, speeches, dignitaries and all the townspeople applauding the Scales and myself for attending the 80th anniversary of their liberation.

On Wednesday 28th, we gathered at Mauny crossroads, for a short service for the dead soldiers of the 5th Black Watch, where many of the casualties had succumbed. The Mayor of Mauny and a few dignitaries attended it. Jacqui Scales and I laid a wreath on behalf of The Black Watch and the Brydon family to the memory of the soldiers of 5th Battalion The Black Watch, 51st Highland Division, who had died on 28th/29th August 1944. The locals called this 'Bloody Mauny'.



**A piper played a lament, a very moving and fitting occasion**



**The place his war ended**

My father lived to become 93 years old and died in 2018. I had promised him that I would trace his footsteps and that of his beloved 5th Battalion The Black Watch through Normandy, to the place his war ended and commemorate his 5BW friends who did not make it home.

## HOUDETOT - JUNE 1940 - THE HIGHLANDERS' FORKS

*Hervé Savary*

The story begins when a resident of the town of Houdetot discovered, hidden under the roof of his farmhouse, three forks dated 1939 and weathered over the years. These everyday utensils, which have the manufacturer's name on the back of the handle, were clearly of military use and of British origin. Two of them, stamped with the letters BW and the series of numbers 4095 and 4211 on the handle, will "speak" and allow us to go back to their former owners: Robert Balfour and David Collins, two young Scottish soldiers immersed in the fighting on the Angiens Plain in June 1940.



**Forks found in Houdetot HS**

Quickly, curiosity prevailing, research was carried out across the Channel. At the time of publication of this article, the descendants of one of the two Highlanders have been found and links established on both sides of the Channel. Surprised by these disconcerting discoveries which occurred nearly 84 years after the events, the members of the alerted family planned to cross the Channel to follow in the footsteps of their ancestor, engaged in the Caux region in June 1940 in an unequal and merciless fight against German motorised troops.



Private Robert Balfour (number 2754095) and Lance Corporal David Collins (number 2754211) both served in the 1st Black Watch Battalion, a legendary Scottish regiment belonging to the famous 51st Highland Division. Declared “Missing” on 9 June 1940, the body of Robert Balfour was never found while his comrade, David Collins, captured on 12 June, spent five years in Stalag XXB in Marienburg (Poland).



**Dunkirk memorial CWGC**

On column 66 of the Dunkirk memorial appears the name of Private Robert Balfour. Born in 1914 in Fife, Robert was married and father of two boys, James and David. Serving with 1BW in 1939, he held several qualifications including that of sniper and wore the “good conduct” chevrons.



**Robert with Doris and their oldest son, James - Balfour family**

Although born in Fife, Robert Balfour is also commemorated in Kent, on the Dover memorial and that of the town of Ramsgate where he resided when war was declared in 1939. His youngest son David, now aged 84 years old, does not exclude the possibility of going, among his family, to Pays-de-Caux to follow in the footsteps of their ancestor. His brother in arms, David Collins, was luckier. Survivor of the battles of Houdetot, he was captured and spent five years in Stalag XXB in Marienburg. Research to find his descendants is still underway.

**Discount to families** Certain objects take us back in time. These registered forks discovered in Houdetot constitute a piece of history and invite the reader to take a leap 84 years into the past. The “official” handover of these personal items, via the Black Watch regiment association, constitutes the next objective. The moving story of these men is also ours.

Let's not forget them! Lest We Forget!

Hervé Savary

March 2024

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-Famille Salmon

-Famille Balfour

-Commune de Houdetot

**Editor's Note.** This article was part of a longer account. The subsequent hand back of the Balfour fork was accomplished during 2024 due to the diligence of the author and covered on 18 October in a moving account by the BBC: Dad's WW2 fork found 84 years after last meal. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cqxrv2r1wz7o>

## **80TH ANNIVERSARY BATTLE OF CASSINO MAY 1944**

*George Cowie Ex RE*

2024 saw the 80th anniversary of the battle of Cassino. Large contingents of Polish and New Zealanders had descended on Cassino prior to the main commemorations. On 13 May, the 4 Division Royal Engineers were commemorated for their magnificent effort in completing an assault Bailey bridge codenamed 'Amazon', built under 12 hours of withering enemy fire costing 74 casualties. The bridge was ordered to be built at 'all costs' to get urgently needed tanks and reinforcements into the 4 Division's precarious bridgehead. The bridge is immortalised by Terrence Cuneo's painting that hangs in the Sappers' Officer's mess at Chatham.



**Cuneo's Amazon Bridge**

In the early hours of 13 May 1944 under enemy fire, tanks and infantry were waiting for the completion of the bridge to cross the river and reinforce and expand the bridgehead. At 0500 hours the bridge was opened and the first tanks of the 17/21 Lancers crossed to secure the bridgehead. They were followed by tanks and infantry of the 4th Division's reserve 12 Infantry Brigade. 6th Black Watch supported by tanks of the 2nd Lothians were the first infantry battalion to cross the bridge under heavy enemy fire - artillery, mortar, heavy machine guns, small arms and snipers, and went straight into the action.

Commemorating the actions of 6th Black Watch and the Royal



Engineers' 'Amazon' bridge were a significant part in the achievements and losses of all the 4th Division being honoured as many corps and units had worked together to win the fourth and final battle for Cassino as was highlighted by these commemorations.

Your Pipe Major Duthie represented The Black Watch Association marched piping along the exact route taken by the Battalion at the end of which he laid a wreath to remember the fallen of 6th Black Watch.

Casualties – 6th Black Watch - Operation Diadem/Honker May 1944

Killed: Officers 2 ORs 45

Wounded: Officers 10 ORs 174



6 BW's Pipe Major Hannah's grave CWGC Cemetery Cassino-AD

## MOUNTED INFANTRY

*Brigadier Donald Wilson*



Roman Barracks, Colchester 3rd May 1975 Lt Col Thommas McMicking (CO), Capt Donald Wilson (Adj), Maj Graham Murray (2IC)

I had always thought that the regimental saddle cloth draped ostentatiously over an armchair in the Adjutant's office was a bit of a relic. In any case, I never really had the chance to get close to it because being invited to take a seat in the Adjutant's office was not something that happened to subalterns. There was a similar, if grander, saddle cloth in the Commanding Officer's office but I never noticed it before because my visits to that sanctum had been (fortunately) few and far between and, during them, the colonel always had my undivided attention.

In due course, I became the Adjutant in December 1973 in Hong Kong. After weathering a tsunami of information and advice from Hugh Rose in his handover, I sat down to the task of preparing for the battalion's move to Colchester and restructuring it for our forthcoming operational tour in West Belfast in the summer of 1974. The saddle cloth remained neglected until being respectfully folded into an MFO crate before reappearing on another chair in a new office in Roman Barracks.

My visits to the CO's office were now routine, both formal and informal. While Thomas McMicking continued to have my undivided attention (of course), I noticed he had on the wall a fine photograph of the 2nd

Battalion drawn up on parade in Egypt in 1938 under the command of his father, Neil McMicking. The CO, field officers and (ominously) the Adjutant were all mounted, as was the custom at that time. Dimly, I failed to make any connection between the power of the pre-war image and the planned presentation of new Colours by the Colonel-in-Chief, due in May 1975.

We were soon committed to the pre-tour training programme for Northern Ireland and, as much had changed since our previous tours before Hong Kong, there was a lot to learn and practise throughout the battalion. Little thought was given to parades, except perhaps in the mind and office of the RSM, the magnificent Fred Beattie. Before I knew it, I had yet another office – this time in Fort Monagh in the Andersonstown area of West Belfast. I cannot remember if the saddle cloth came to war with me or was left out of battle in Colchester.

At some stage towards the end of the tour, the blow fell. The CO announced that he, the second-in-command and I were to be mounted on the Colours parade, now 8 months away. Despite being married to an accomplished horsewoman, I had never been on the back of a horse in my life! I probably said something like "jolly good idea, sir" and privately hoped that either Thomas would forget about the idea, or that it would prove to be too difficult. Secretly, I was dismayed; when I told my wife she was horrified. The 2IC, Graham Murray (who could ride), didn't help by being an enthusiastic supporter of the Colonel's proposal. Fred Beattie kept his own counsel. At about the same time, we learned that the battalion was to repeat the Andersonstown tour in 1975, starting to train for it as soon as the presentation of Colours was completed. Hah! I thought that this might divert attention from the horses thing but no such luck, as Thomas announced towards the end of the tour that he had arranged to borrow three officers' chargers from the Army Remount Centre at Melton Mowbray. My fate was sealed.

The battalion recovered to Colchester in October 1974. I joined the Garrison Saddle Club and sought out the riding instructor, a Bombardier from the Royal Horse Artillery. He was cheerfully unfazed when I told him that he had to teach me to ride to a sufficient standard for the parade in early May – a mere 5 months away. The horse I was allocated was less enthusiastic, initially failing to grasp the urgency or importance of the task to which it has been assigned. However, after some weeks we had established some sort of rapport by which we could start, stop and go round the indoor school at a somewhat stately pace. I even graduated to that particularly inelegant (and uncomfortable) military 'seat': sitting trot. At the same time, the life and work of the battalion went on regardless with training cadres and administration catching up after 4 months in Belfast, a brigade exercise in Norfolk and all the events around Christmas, New Year and Red Hackle Day 1975. The RSM and I planned the programme of Colours parade rehearsals, the 2IC got going on preparations for our return to Andersonstown and the CO retreated to his office to finalise the arrangements for our parade mounts, uniforms and other details under the stern eye of 2BW's mounted officers (class of '38). I used to sneak off to Abbey Fields for repeat dates with my dozy Saddle Club horse; progress sometimes seemed elusive. The saddle cloth taunted me across the office,

It must have been in early April when the Colonel's conspiratorial networking moved into a new phase: we visited Melton Mowbray and met up with our parade horses. They seemed enormous but, mercifully, well-schooled. My partner was a chestnut mare called Rosetti and, thanks to my new friend the Bombardier in Colchester, I seemed to scrape by some sort of assessment by the staff at the Remount Centre. Phew! I was also introduced to double reins, held in the left hand with a drawn sword in the right. Thomas McMicking was hugely encouraged and his grand design for 3rd May seemed to becoming reality. I remained nervous!

The Colonel generously provided tartan breeches and we scrounged troopers' black boots and spurs from the Household Cavalry in Knightsbridge. I even persuaded RHQ to part with three sword hilts of the correct pattern for mounted officers. A date was set for the arrival of the parade horses and their accommodation at the Colchester Garrison Saddle Club. Two jocks with some experience of riding and looking after horses, Privates Jamieson and Robertson, were allocated as grooms. They and the Royal Army Veterinary Corps NCO who brought the animals



from Melton Mowbray did a brilliant job in exercising, grooming and presenting them and their tack in good order for rehearsals and the parade itself. The saddle cloths were up and running!

Fred Beattie and I had by this stage (and on my feet) got the battalion drilling well. Many others were working hard on all aspects of what had to be a great regimental occasion, coordinated impeccably by Major Paul Sugden. It was now time for the mounted officers to appear in public and (literally) face the music in the shape of the Pipes & Drums and the Military Band.

Very sadly, Thomas McMicking and Graham Murray are no longer with us. I therefore claim sole survivor's rights to the accuracy of my recollection of those weeks in the spring of 1975. As the late Queen Elizabeth II famously said towards the end of her life "recollections may vary" and I accept that other witnesses (there were several hundred of these, obviously) may have different memories, particularly if they had close encounters on the square with a barely-controlled horse or were distracted by the wicked hope of seeing one (or all) of us fall off!

I particularly remember one early rehearsal when the 2IC's horse was spooked by the P&D striking up. Graham cantered serenely off parade, completed a lap of honour on the football pitch and then returned to his post, while the RSM (Football Officer) seethed about the imagined damage to the hallowed turf. On another parade, Rosetti was taking the command 'march past in slow time' at its slowest possible interpretation. OC No 1 Company (you know who you are) immediately behind me, somehow allowed the point of his broadsword to prick Rosetti's rear end and it was my turn to take off from the line of march, galloping past the CO who bellowed his disapproval at my unauthorised usurping of his position at the head of the battalion! My most anxious moment was always when we formed hollow square for the actual presentation. No 4 Company's right form ended with a crashing halt six paces behind us. Rosetti knew this and when Support Company's brogues came down in perfect unison, she would shift a foot sideways – alarming!



**The mounted Adjutant**

After the excitements of the rehearsals, the 3rd of May finally arrived. The grooms had ridden out for some time to use up much of our mounts' energy. Actually, and to my enormous relief, it all seemed to go pretty well, despite my wife's extreme nervousness and the collective anticipation of equitation disaster in the ranks, particularly No 4 Company. Thomas had a dicey moment when the Pipes & Drums wheeled a little close. I noticed this out of the corner of my eye and my thoughts at that point will remain private to this day. At one point, whilst waiting in line for the Colonel-in-Chief's arrival, Rosetti started to lose interest in the whole affair and, despite my urging her to do otherwise, backed off the actual square and on to a grass verge inside the barracks road circuit. My faithful groom, Private Jamieson, who had been wisely lurking nearby in the wings appeared as if by magic and between us we persuaded Rosetti to return to duty. We somehow managed to form hollow square and march past, saluting in good order, this time without encouragement from No 1 Company Commander's sword.

Suddenly it was all over – off parade; a heart-felt pat and apple for

Rosetti and a word of thanks to Jamieson. The Colonel-in-Chief had a twinkle in her eye when she congratulated (or teased?) me before lunch. I even managed to play in the Novice March piping competition (in front of my erstwhile riding comrade Graham Murray) and then anchor the Command Company tug-o'-war team in the afternoon. Both competitions were a doddle compared to the morning's mission. I was not the only one to feel relieved; the official account of the parade in the August 1975 edition of *The Red Hackle* comments that '... it did go well, which was both a pleasure and a relief ...' in a reference to the mounted officers of Battalion Headquarters.

Selfishly, this has been a largely personal memoir. I am delighted to point out that Rosetti and I were but a small (albeit very high risk) element of a memorable day when, through our combined efforts and inspired by Thomas McMicking, the 1st Battalion put on a magnificent spectacle for the Colonel-in-Chief, the rest of the Regiment, our families, friends and many others. I will never forget 3rd May 1975 and it was a privilege to serve under those new colours for the next fifteen years. I wonder where that saddle cloth is now?



**RAVC LCpl, Pte Jamieson (on Rosetti), Pte Robertson**

## **AN ANZAC STORY**

### ***From Preveli Crete to Prevelly Western Australia***

Editor's note: Prompted by the articles in last year's magazine about 2 BW in Crete in WW2, Sean O'Connell an ex Australian Reservist, has sent this article based on work by Manos Findikakis:

In 1941, Australian, New Zealand and British troops were locked in heavy battle for the defence of the southernmost island of Greece, Crete. Known as the 'Battle of Crete,' Allied servicemen were overwhelmed and captured by German troops and imprisoned in war camps.

One of those captured was the English-born Australian soldier Geoffrey Edwards. In a daring escape, the imprisoned Edwards, aided by a local shepherd was led to a cliff-perched monastery named Preveli on the southern coast of the island. The monastery was a safe haven for hundreds of Allied troops who had successfully escaped German capture and were sheltered and cared for by the monks. On an August night in 1941, Edwards was evacuated from Crete on HMS Thrasher vowing that he would never forget the Cretan people nor the Monks of the Holy Monastery of Preveli for saving his and other Allied troops' lives during the campaign.

In the 1950s, Edwards moved his family to a parcel of land 10km west of Margaret River south of Perth WA. Their dream was to build a holiday park with chalets and campsites which they named 'Prevelly Park' after Preveli in Crete. Some 35 years after he had left Crete, Edwards returned with his wife on vacation. The local people of Preveli welcomed them in traditional Greek fashion and hospitality and the monks celebrated their visit with thanks, prayers, and feasts. Moved by the reunion and reception, it was decided that a permanent link would be forged between Preveli Crete and Prevelly WA by way of a small Greek chapel similar to those dotted all over Greece to be constructed.



In an extract from 'The Road to Prevelly', authored by Geoffrey Edwards (1989), he explains: "It would be a memorial to those who fell. It would honour those brave Cretans, the men and women who risked their own lives in helping us during our hour of need. It would be a symbol of the fight for freedom. It would be a message to all future generations that freedom is not free. It would be named the Chapel of St John the Theologian, the same as the Chapel at the Monastery, thus forging a permanent link between the two; one in the old world and one in the new."

With the assistance of the Greek Orthodox Church in Perth, Australia, the Greek Consul & Community and ex-servicemen's organisations, the chapel was completed in 1979. The Chapel remains to this day and hosts the occasional wedding and welcomes visitors. On 7 April 2000, Geoffrey Edwards was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for services to the Greek Community and then died peacefully four days later.

This year marks 83 years since the Battle of Crete. It brought terrible destruction to the countless lives of both soldiers and civilians from across the globe and of whom many would never return home. Thrown together by the violence of war, the two cultures also demonstrated their common humanity and fight for freedom.

Australians continue to serve with distinction in conflict and peacekeeping around the world. This Anzac Day we commemorated more than a century of service. Thank you to our past and present service men and women for protecting our shores and keeping us safe.

## VISIT TO THE SCOTTISH KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL IN BATHGATE

*by Peter Sutton*

On 22 August 2024, His Excellency Yeocheol Yoon, the South Korean Ambassador to the United Kingdom, visited the Scottish Korean War Memorial in Bathgate.

A service of commemoration to the fallen was led by the Rev Dr Peter Sutton AKC BD MTh DMin Minister of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, who had been commissioned in The Black Watch (1989-1994), working as adjutant in Perth and with 1BW on the Hong Kong tour 1992/3.

The Ambassador laid a wreath alongside those from the Naval Regional Commander Scotland and Northern Ireland, Brigadier Andy Muddiman ADC RM, Commander 51st Infantry Brigade, Brigadier Jody Davies MBE, Air Officer Scotland, Air Commodore Bill Gibson MBE ADC, the British Legion National President, Rear Admiral Mark Beverstock and two veterans of the Korea War, Mr Adam McKenzie and Mr Bill Hands.



**Bill Hands laying the wreath**

The Ambassador spoke individually to the veterans after a small speech to thank those who had helped free his country and then paid his respects to those who did not come back. He thanked Legion Scotland, the Scottish Korean War Memorial Trust and West Lothian Council for having organised the event.



**Korean Ambassador addresses our BW veterans, Lawrence Dean and Bill Hands 22 Aug 24**

## BELIZE REVISITED AFTER 44 YEARS PART 2: DAYS 7 – 13 CONTINUED:

**Editor's note:** This is the second half of an article by the Late Peter Pendlebury. In 1979 the battalion had embarked on a 6-month deployment to Belize; 44 years later Pete Pendlebury, Gus Angus and Danny Donovan revisited Belize. The article left them going by boat out to the Cayes and, if you're sitting comfortably, he will go on: Moving down the estuary of Haulover Creek we could see the swing bridge and Bamboo Bay behind us; shortly afterwards we were bouncing over the crystal blue open sea of the Caribbean.

On arrival, it was a short drive along the palm tree sea front then through the busy streets of bars, restaurants, cafes, shops and hotels until we were at our resort, perfectly situated on the main street. La Isla Resort had been recommended to us by a local Belizean before departing Scotland who was a friend of Lt Col Mike Smith, formerly Force QM in Belize.



**Danny Donovan commemorates the memorial**

After relaxing on the beautiful Caye Caulker we headed back to Price Barracks and the BATSUB compound to hold a service of remembrance for Pte Ian Tasker, who sadly died as a young man when The Black Watch served in Belize in 1979, and other British service personnel who lost their lives while serving in Belize. Three of them were Highlanders, two from The Queen's Own Highlanders and one from The Gordon Highlanders.

On arrival, the Commander of BATSUB, Lieutenant Colonel Crimmins Royal Welsh, invited us in and talked to us about BATSUB of today and asked about our days in Belize 44 years earlier.

The three of us and two RBL Belize personnel having had a dry run through of the parade Bob arrived with a sergeant and three buglers from the BDF; Pete drilled the buglers with exactly what he wanted, and the scene was set for 1100 hours. The parade went very smoothly and to plan; it was quite touching and a fitting tribute to Pte Ian Tasker BW and all other British service personnel who had lost their lives while serving in Belize.

We said goodbye to Airport camp for the last time. At lunch, the food



was the best in Belize to date, the drinks were well deserved and the banter flowed. Afterwards, Bob drove us back to the Belize Water Taxi Terminal for our return to Caye Caulker. All in All a very worthy and productive day.



**Cayes' sign posting**

After our day back in Belize City and Price Barracks, the old R&R destination of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye was the destination for Friday. San Pedro is a 30-45 minute ferry journey from Caye Caulker keeping inside the barrier reef following the barrier reef northwards. Danny and I had not visited San Pedro for R&R back in 1979 we had ventured further afield into Mexico.



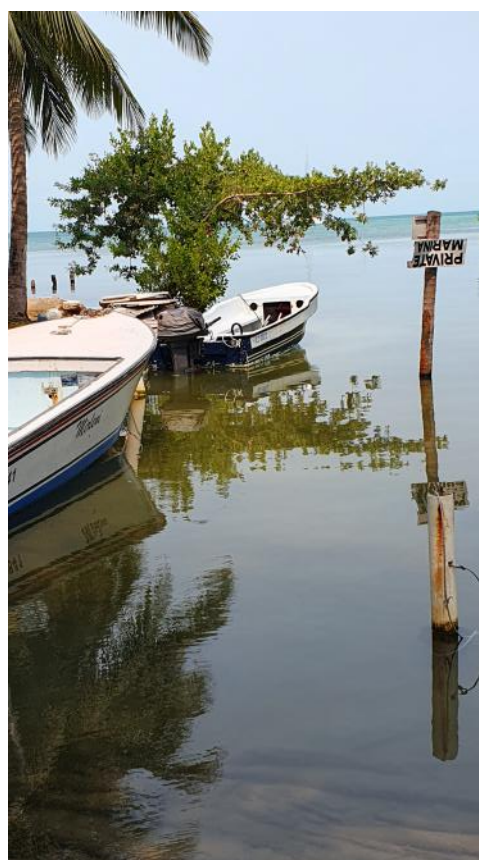
**Golf Buggy**

Gus however, had been there several times both with The Black Watch in 1979 and the Queens Own Highlanders in 1977 so he was very familiar with the place. The one horse, sandy streeted town with a few bars and places for Lodging it was no longer. San Pedro was now an urban spread the size of a small town; it is a busy, bustling quite chaotic town the streets are full of golf carts either owned or hired by tourists. Those who had gone to San Pedro on R&R will not believe that the whole place has changed including the dusty airfield which is now a fully tarmacadam airport.



**Danny & Pete about to go swimming amongst those sharks**

Danny and Pete decided they had to have a go at the barrier reef, Gus not being the seafaring type opted out and decided to stay at the resort. We phoned a BATSUB contact, Ken Lopaz aka Captain Ken and made plans for the following morning. Captain Ken picked us up in his golf buggy and we drove round to the other side of the island where his boat was tied up in his private quay, directly next to his house. As we headed out, we stopped to feed the birds and fish both eating from your hands. On we went, out through the split on Caye Caulker caused by a fierce hurricane in 1966, after which we were on the crystal-clear Caribbean Sea barrier reef bound. Once out at the barrier reef, we donned our masks and were in the water with the sharks, stingrays and numerous other tropical fish, it was an exhilarating experience. Captain Ken addressed us as 'old men'; he was well impressed with us, saying men half our age would not get in with the sharks! He was also impressed that we could pull ourselves onto the boat without the ladder. "You old men are strong" which brought a smile to our faces. We must have snorkelled the reef for the best part of an hour, rising for air and ejecting the salt water, neither of us having snorkelled for a while. Once back on board we headed the long way back to land enjoying the choppy ride and view of Caye Caulker from afar. Captain Ken dropped us off at La Isla Resort's private pier, we paid him his fee and said our farewells, a fantastic experience.



**Gin Palaces only**

We were saying farewell to Belize, with an early rise in Caye Caulker for the 06.30 am ferry to Belize city. At the ferry terminal Donovan from VIP Travel Corozal picked us up for the 150 miles to the Mexican border. On route he asked if his wife could come along, if we agreed there would be no need for the Mexican middleman at the border to take us to the bus terminal in Chetumal. Once across the border, Donovan [encountered in Part 1] would drive us directly to the bus terminal and they would go shopping in Chetumal, we agreed it was a win-win situation. We stopped at Corozal to pick up Donovan's wife and to meet his parents who own the company. Pete had been dealing with the mother for months in the build-up to the trip via WhatsApp to make arrangements; the father commented that we were famous, the memorial service had been on Belize TV news. A lovely family with a well-run business. Once through the border checkpoint, (we had to laugh for we had paid to get entry into Belize and now we paid to exit Belize, same for Mexico, a few pounds each way; we just zipped the mouth and obliged, especially on the Mexican side they looked dodgy) Donovan and his wife dropped us at the bus terminal in Chetumal.





### Border Mexico

Here we were at the very bus terminal we had been some 14 days earlier, in the same Subway café served coffee and a breakfast Subway baguette by the same young lady as 14 days previously. All that was left was a 5-hour luxury coach journey to Cancun and an overnight stay before the flight to Bonnie Scotland via Paris Charles de Gaulle, “Hasta la vista”.

Reflecting on our Belize adventure, we all agreed it was a very worthwhile experience. This was not your standard all-inclusive Dominican Republic Caribbean type package holiday. Belize is a wonderful place; it has old mixed with some new, the people are very friendly and there is so much to see. We would thoroughly recommend it as a place to visit.

Pete had been making a regular Facebook webcast during the visit on our progress throughout the stay and to update those who had served in Belize with the battalion and anyone else, with the aim of bringing back fond memories. Judging by the feedback we heard, it seems to have been quite popular. (We apologise for the photo of Gus sitting on the cludgie that was grotesque and beyond the pale.)



Chetumal & en route to Haste la vista!

## A STEP BACK IN TIME

*Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Jim Keating OBE*

Some 42 years ago, when 1BW had the role of Demonstration Battalion at Warminster I was a Corporal in Don Company – the Golden Don – commanded at that time by Major (subsequently General) Andy Watson, and a great Company it was too.

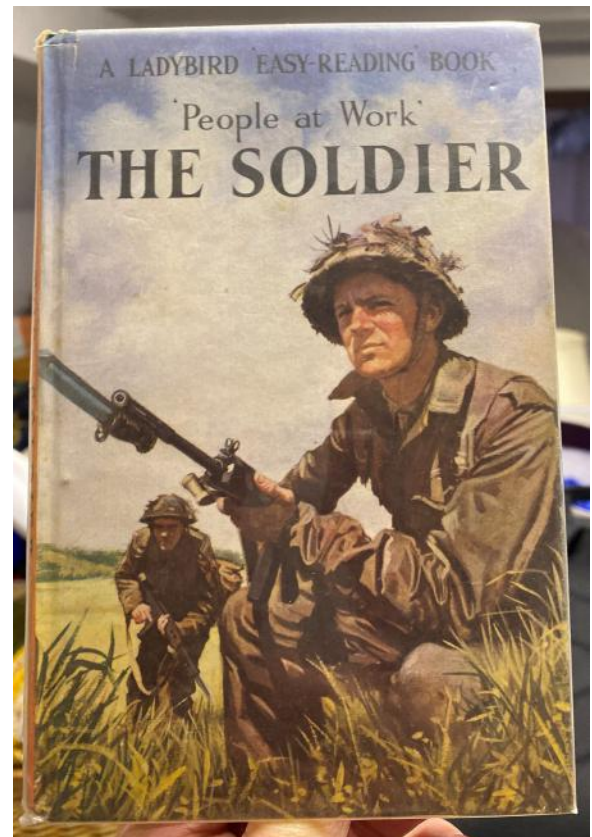
One afternoon I was sent for by the OC and told that my Section was required to parade the following morning in battle order to be available to a MOD PR team from London who would be doing a photo shoot to obtain recruiting material. My Platoon Sergeant at the time, ‘Big Mac’ MacAuley was a veteran, considerably older than the rest of us, and somewhat put out that he was not to be included in the shoot, but he duly paraded in his combats and battle order to take us to the RV on Salisbury Plain. I was then dispatched with the long wheelbase Land Rover to pick up the PR team at the railway station.

On arrival at the training area the team leader was keen to get started,

so Big Mac presented himself as the photographic model. “Oh no Sergeant” he was told “you are far too old! We need that fresh faced young Corporal who collected us for our photographs.” So that was it. The next couple of hours were spent taking photos of me with my section, mounted on various military vehicles or in various fieldcraft type poses, but I don’t think Sergeant MacAuley spoke to me for the next two weeks.

On return to Warminster camp, I was required to draw a GPMG and a bandolier of 7.62mm ammunition for some more posing for photographs. One of these was subsequently chosen as the recruiting poster for ‘The Soldier of the 60s’ and this regularly appeared on television, in newspapers, magazines and Recruiting Office windows for the remainder of the sixties. Unfortunately, it got me into trouble when I went on a Platoon Weapons course at the Small Arms School Corps, at that time located at Hythe in Kent, where the instructors took great delight in informing me that I was wearing the bandolier the wrong way round and not as the SASC stipulated.

Some of the other photos must have been provided by the MOD to the publishers of Ladybird Easy Reading books, who used two of the images in the People at Work: The Soldier edition of their book series. One was used on the cover – the one in which I was required to be looking, steely eyed and with bayonet fixed, towards the advancing enemy. This also appeared inside the book alongside another in which we were mounted in the section’s AFV 432, heading off into action. If the MOD received any payment for the photographs to supplement the defence budget they failed to pass any on to me!



The Ladybird cover

Anyway, that was then but, would you believe it, 42 years later, the book is still in print and available. I recently saw several on a bookshop rack in Ross – on – Wye. And, as if this was not enough, my daughter Jane, who appears in the photograph shown, was browsing in an Edinburgh bookshop when something on the postcard rack caught her eye. It was me, in postcard form of The Soldier book cover, providing yet more income for the publishing industry, this time in cartoon picture form. The Private soldier alongside me, whose name as I recall was Anderson, has been given officer status and is saying “Didn’t see you at camouflage training, Jones” to which my character’s response is “Thank you Sir”. Ironical given that the combat suits of the time were quite bright and shiny. Thank goodness they did not use that well-worn joke “Sir, Sir, the enemy are thick as peas.” “Well shell them, soldier.”

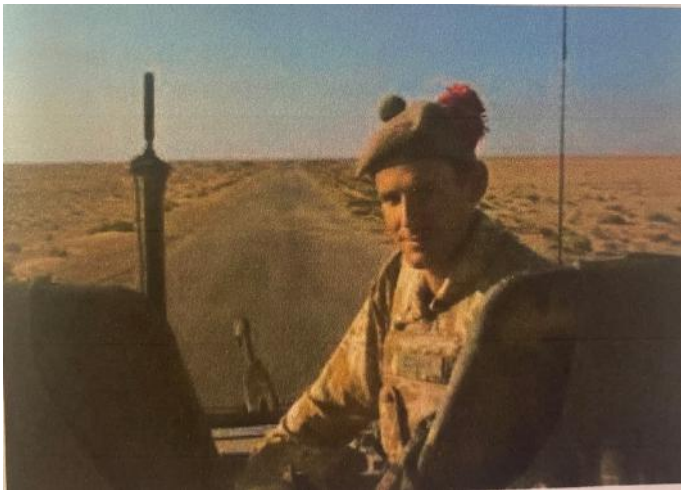




**The cartoon**

## IRAQ 2004, 20TH ANNIVERSARY

*By the former Commanding Officer,  
Major General (Retd) J M Cowan CBE DSO*



**Lieutenant Colonel J M Cowan**

Since 2004 two decades have passed which have seemed both an age and but a moment in time. For the last few years, I have led The HALO Trust, an NGO that works to clear landmines and other explosive devices left behind by conflicts; this role has given me the chance to reflect upon the condition in which the world now finds itself. This article tells that story and also, necessarily, tells it from my perspective.

The Black Watch played a central role in the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 before returning to Germany in June 2003. When the Black Watch moved from Germany in March 2004, no one could have guessed that its time in Warminster would be so suddenly interrupted by a second deployment to Iraq. Having been formally warned on 27th May, the Battalion started training on 3rd June, with Alpha Company deploying only three weeks later.



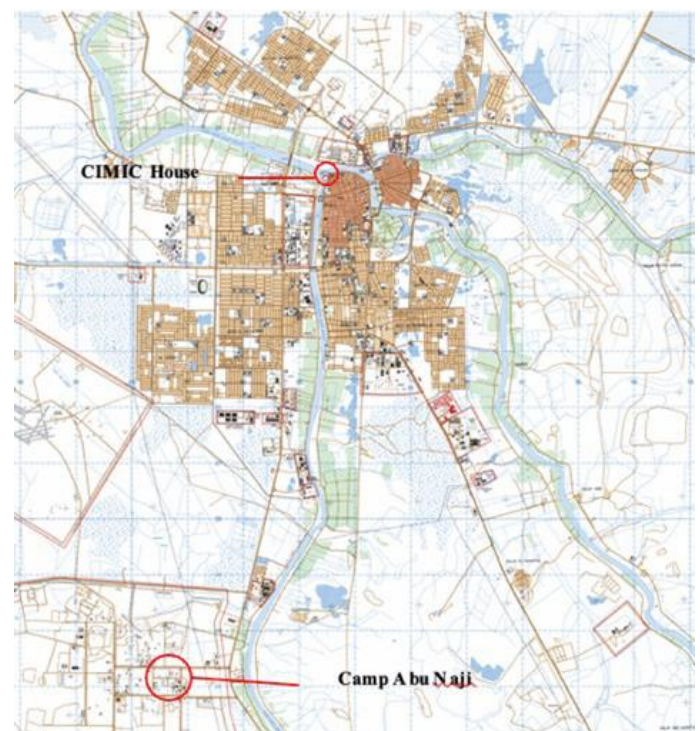
**Black Watch Warrior at Dusk**

The main body left on 15th July to acclimatise and train at Shaibah airfield

in Basra province. Flat, hot, dusty, and noted only for the numerous scrap-metal heaps and tank hulks that littered the area, Shaibah was the main British logistics base. The post-apocalyptic mood was enhanced by numerous oil flares that burned in the distance, pumping smoke into the atmosphere. Alpha Company, having arrived a month earlier, was by now well established and conducting operations. In particular, it patrolled the western edge of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway helping the border police interdict smuggling in the Al Faw area. It was decided that 1 BW would move to the eastern border to interdict the flow of arms and smuggled goods from Iran. To that end, Alpha Company continued to operate in Al Faw, Bravo Company was despatched to Al Amarah and Delta Company moved to support the Danish Battalion at Al Qurnah.

5th August Delta Company was ordered to return to Shaibah to become a reserve and drove its Warrior vehicles onto low loaders. Upon learning that the Danish Battalion was under fire in Al Qurnah, they unloaded the Warriors and drove into Eastern Al Qurnah where they engaged in a lengthy battle.

Meanwhile at Al Amarah, Bravo Company, which had deployed for border interdiction, was warned for an entirely different operation. In the early evening of 5th August, 2Lt Colquhoun took a patrol to familiarise himself with the ground, but soon came under fire from 30 to 40 gunmen firing from rooftops. A 20 minute engagement ensued, but a prelude to the full scale hostilities of the coming week. By 7th August, the violence between warring militias in Al Amarah was focused on the CIMIC House, (CIMIC, meaning, ironically, Civil Military Co-operation). The compound had suffered regular attacks from small arms, rockets and, most frequently, mortars. Lt Collis' platoon moved into town and identified aggressors in a bus station, destroying the position with 30mm cannon fire. Collis's vehicle was then ambushed by four separate positions. He manoeuvred his vehicle into position and then removed the threat. On the evening of 10th, Bravo Company went into action to recapture the police headquarters. In so doing a prolonged battle lasted all night - as testing for commanders on the ground as it was for their soldiers. Gunmen would appear from behind walls and buildings, getting close enough to fire their rocket propelled grenades or machine guns and then duck out of sight, only to reappear somewhere else a short time later.



**Al Amarah**

Throughout 14th and 15th August, CIMIC House suffered 18 mortar attacks totalling 49 rounds. This changed on the evening of 15th after a fighter aircraft destroyed the mortar team with a bomb. From 16th to 24th August, sniper commander Corporal Ross and his Number 2, Pte Mitchell, occupied a rooftop, only moving for periods of rest from the intense heat. Corporal Ross identified several killing areas, over which



he and Mitchell maintained observation to deter attacks from mortars, rockets, small arms and an enemy sharpshooter against the building. Throughout this time, Corporal Ross engaged several gunmen, who had been using vehicles to manoeuvre around the area, while his own position was under both mortar and accurate small arms fire.



**A Black Watch Sniper in Al Amarah**

Bravo Company was involved in several more operations including escorting the convoys occasionally needed to re-supply Camp Abu Naji, the British headquarters. It was during one of these escort tasks that 5 Platoon was ambushed close to Qal'at Salih. Pte Murray and Pte Carter neutralised two gunmen before a red tractor rammed the last Land Rover in an attempt to stop the vehicle. The driver swerved, knocking the tractor out of the way. Pte Munjoma saw a gunman on the tractor, fired, eliminating the threat and forcing the tractor to stop. The platoon continued towards its rendezvous, met up with the convoy and escorted it back to Camp Abu Naji without further incident. On the night of 21st August, 6 Platoon, accompanied by a surveillance helicopter, was engaged from the same area and returned fire. On the way back, having delivered the convoy, the platoon was again ambushed and, under direction from the helicopter, LCpl Young and Pte Holliday identified the enemy gunmen and removed the threat they posed.

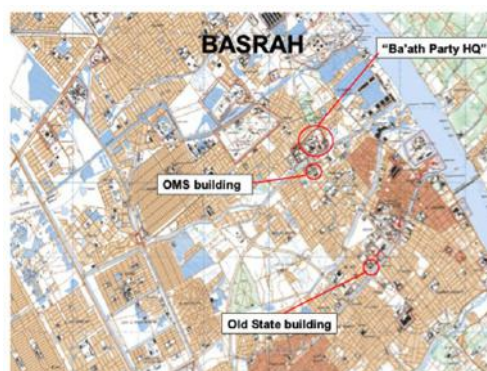


**Morning after the battle - B Company in Al Amarah**

Alpha Company was moved at very short notice to set up base at Basrah Palace due to the violence in Basrah on 9th August, to restore order. As 2Lt Baddeley's Warrior rounded a corner adjacent to the Hayy al Shudha district his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb. The Warrior driver, Pte Marc Ferns, a much-loved member of his platoon – popular, humorous and very good at his job, was seriously wounded and, despite the very best efforts of the platoon medics, died shortly afterwards. Just a week later, on 17th August, a ceremony of repatriation was held for Pte Ferns at Basrah Air Station. The Padre conducted the short service attended by all of 2 Platoon. His friends carried his coffin into the waiting aircraft. WO2 Alexander played Last Post and Reveille, and the Pipe Major played Flowers of the Forest as the hot desert wind blew the notes away into the distance. Sgt Stacey, seated in the gunner's seat of

that Warrior had been wounded in the head and arm. Though he was able to dismount, the extent of Stacey's injuries soon became apparent; he collapsed and was recovered to hospital where for a while his life hung in the balance. Sgt Stacey's wife and mother were flown to his hospital in Kuwait where he thankfully began to recover.

3 Platoon was detached under Lt Holmes to support a Cheshire company in defence of The Old State Building in Basrah. By virtue of its proximity to the Office of the Iraqi security forces, the building was subjected to an intensity of attack that mirrored events in Al Amarah. Early in the morning of 13th four mortar rounds were fired into the Old State Building. A little later, four rockets were fired at a 3 Platoon patrol which was then engaged in a small arms skirmish.



**Basrah**

1 Platoon under Lt Ramsay relieved 3 Platoon on 13th and was hit by multiple small arms and rocket fire in the vicinity of Al Tuwaysa police station. Withdrawing troops came under contact again from rooftops but returned without casualties. That evening, the Old State Building was attacked by small arms fire, rockets and mortars from two firing points which dispersed when fired upon. Black Watch Warrior patrols followed up, but with no result. After midnight on 14th, the Old State Building was again attacked by a rocket fired from the vicinity of the Customs Police HQ and this continued throughout the day. Many, in the early morning, overshot and detonated 400 metres to the northeast. 3 Platoon Warriors surged into the area, and another in the vicinity of the Governorate Building. Five Cheshire casualties were sustained and extracted by Black Watch Warriors with an armoured ambulance. That same morning, 2 Platoon was withdrawn from Basrah and replaced by 14 Platoon under Capt Colquhoun.

Attacks on the Old State House in Basrah continued into 18th August. The Moqtada Militia dispersed their men into small teams using pick-ups that dismounted and used the cover of buildings and alleyways to move stealthily into firing positions and were very aware of air cover. The rockets were then fired in the direct role usually from a distance of 200-300m. However, they could also be fired indirectly with the intention of lobbing them into the Old State Building compound. Amazingly, the rocket teams attempted this from up to a kilometre away with the rounds often dropping short in residential areas with no thought for civilian casualties. Although the night attacks frayed the nerves of those inside and caused some casualties, the Jocks passed the hours playing a complicated sweepstake. All details of the time, type of round and point of impact were covered. The militiamen would have been surprised to hear the cheers of the winning soldiers as yet another round impacted.



**Platoon sheltering from a mortar attack in the Old State Building**



While most patrols were conducted from Warrior, dismounted troops were essential for the protection of the vehicles, which required the occasional reminder that the troops were not invincible. On one occasion LCpl Currie moved his section behind a solid looking object, until the cover blew off and they realised that they were sheltering behind a sofa. On the same dismounted patrol a brand-new Jock explained to Lt Holmes that rounds were falling at his feet who calmly told him not to panic and suggested that he might like to move slightly to his right.

During these patrols WO2 Penman was employed as an armoured ambulance in his Warrior. He and his crew not only helped with casualty evacuation but took the opportunity to engage the enemy whenever possible. He also set the record for the destruction of three lamp posts, twice by reversing over them and once with a burst of chain gun. The Drum Major obviously believed that this was the example to follow as he traversed too quickly in one contact and ended up wrapping his barrel around the innocent street light.

Throughout August, the local CO had been in talks with leaders in Al Amarah. These ponderous talks eventually bore fruit and, on 2nd September, a peace settlement was reached. The ceasefire provided an opportunity to give the companies a change of scene and Alpha Company was deployed to Al Amarah and tasked with interdicting the flow of smuggled goods and arms across the Iranian border. The company soon developed good relations with the locals. The company commander was given authority to raise a platoon of 'Marsh Scouts' from the local community. After asking for a village elder's three best men, Maj Aitken was offered the elder himself and his two friends – all were over 70 and one was missing a leg. Relations were however cordial with regular football games between the Jocks and the villagers on isolated patches of dry land, and LCpl Currie teaching one village how to dance the can-can.



**A Company and friends in the Marshes**



**Feeling the heat in the back of a Warrior**



**13 Platoon at Basrah Palace**

In late September 2004 American forces began preparations for an assault on Fallujah. The city had long been a centre of enemy resistance and a previous attempt to subdue it in the autumn of 2003 had ended in a bloody rebuff. However, the perceived success of assaults on other centres of resistance in the summer had given renewed impetus to the campaign. This time, there was a determination to concentrate enough combat power to defeat the enemy decisively in Fallujah. The operation, entitled 'Phantom Fury', or 'Al Far' in Arabic, involved General Natonsky's 1st Marine Division which was itself reinforced by the 2nd (Black Jack) Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division, two Marine Regimental Combat Teams in the direct assault, along with a number of Iraqi units. Despite this combat power, the Americans had concerns about the routes into North Babil province. The Marine formation entrusted with controlling North Babil was 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit under its larger-than-life commander, Col Ron Johnson. Loved by his men, he was never happier than when out pursuing the enemy. Col Johnson had pursued a dynamic strategy with his available forces with the intent of killing or capturing any enemy found in his area. This approach disrupted the enemy's ability to operate, but levels of hostility to the American presence remained very high.



**Colonel Ron Johnson USMC**

The scale of the deployment was daunting and there was at first little, if any, information on the nature of the operation. Col Johnson agreed to take the CO on a helicopter reconnaissance where two possible base locations were identified. The first, codenamed 'Dogwood', had the advantage of very open arcs of fire and remoteness. The second location, codenamed 'Elm' was on the east side of the river and situated in what was once the centre of Saddam's munitions industry which now lay in ruins. There were major concerns: first and foremost, how much control did the Americans really have over the area if they felt so reluctant to risk ground movement? Second, the ground was close, which would inhibit manoeuvre of the Warrior vehicles, and the Americans had taken a considerable number of casualties from roadside bombs; third, the battlegroup was to deploy 673 kilometres without having sited its base; fourth, the tactical reasons for changing the boundary needed to be squared with British political sensitivities; and fifth it was clear that the Americans had been spread so thinly that they had little detailed knowledge of the area. While the air reconnaissance took place the staff continued to press for information: what civil governmental infrastructure existed? There did not appear to be any; where were Iraqi Security Forces situated? There was none; what human intelligence sources were being exploited? Again, none; did a detailed picture exist of who was friendly and who was opposed to the Coalition? no



– there had not been any forces based in the area long enough. Despite these unanswered questions, it was apparent that there was a need for extra troops during the Fallujah operation and that the deployment was possible. The reconnaissance group then departed for Baghdad, leaving the RSM and Capt Hedderwick in the care of the US Marine Corps. The threat of indirect fire was a real one but there were some redeeming features. The ‘Chow Hall’ provided an unlimited supply of free ice cream. It was while taking advantage of this opportunity one day that the packed hall was struck by rockets, causing the American diners to make a swift exit into the path of a second salvo resulting in over a dozen casualties. The RSM and Capt Hedderwick decided that the best thing to do was to stay put – besides, the queue for the ice cream had disappeared. Sometime later, Col Johnson and his Sgt Maj came to inspect the damage only to find our intrepid heroes alone in the Chow Hall tucking into another helping surrounded by carnage and upturned furniture. Col Johnson seemed to be impressed by what he interpreted as British sangfroid.

A visit to the ‘Elm’ munitions facility proved that it would be unsuitable as a battlegroup base and the decision taken that the Black Watch would be based at Dogwood. On the morning of 28th October, the Black Watch advance party drove from Kalsu to Dogwood. Dogwood covered a huge area of flat desert interspersed with occasional ruined buildings and endless piles of dirt and sand berms that severely inhibited movement. In the end, a group of buildings that was relatively undamaged was selected in the southeast corner and christened Camp Ticonderoga after the famous Black Watch battle of that name in North America. The advance party settled down for the night with only their personal weapons as protection and awaited the arrival of the first convoy.



**Marine Expeditionary Unit area of operations**

As the first of nine packets totalling over 459 vehicles with 42 days of supply drove out of Shaibah, Reuter’s reporters picketed the route. Each packet was protected by American Humvee gun trucks with air cover provided by the Division through which the convoy would pass. Additionally, the turrets of all the Warriors were manned; this would provide an excellent level of protection but was exhausting for the men who were blasted by hot desert air for the duration of the journey. Ironically, although the media coverage from Reuter’s had been of considerable concern, the press speculation of the convoy’s direction had served to draw attention away from the true route.

The last stretch took the convoy along the route to the west of Karbala and then to the east of the Razazah Lake. Halfway up the lake the convoy was due to take a sharp turn east along a dirt track directly into Dogwood. The reconnaissance party found that, given the recent rain, it might prove difficult for several hundred wheeled vehicles; however, the Pathfinder commander was content that the route was useable. The Task Force Pathfinder set out to sweep the route and met the lead packet of the convoy commanded by Maj Ewing and elements of Alpha Company. It soon became apparent the Pathfinder commander had been somewhat optimistic and many of the inexperienced Kuwaiti drivers began to bog in. More seriously, the enemy had noted Pathfinder’s passage and inserted two explosive daisy chains of artillery shells. After the first of these, Maj Ewing ordered Alpha Company to offload its Warriors and use the tracked vehicles to pull the bogged transporters free. Alpha Company then pushed ahead of the convoy, arriving at Dogwood mid-

afternoon. The next two packets were rerouted. On the approach to Dogwood a large daisy chain device was found consisting of six 120mm shells. Pathfinder cleared this and after many hours the first three packets consisting of the rifle companies arrived at Ticonderoga.



**Ticonderoga backdrop**



**Dogwood at dusk**

Early on 29th, Alpha and Delta Companies moved out from Dogwood to picket the route south for the arrival of the remnants of the convoy. Lt Williams’ Warrior had developed a fuel problem so had to cross a small bridge over an irrigation channel to reach assistance. During the crossing the Warrior turned and plunged into the water coming to rest upside down. Without thought for his own safety, Pte Lawaci jumped out of the turret of the lead vehicle and dived into the water to get to the back door of the submerged vehicle. He located the door opening device, found Ptes Ambrose and Wright and dragged them out onto the bank. Lawaci then dived back under the water and made repeated attempts to rescue the driver. Although he reached him, Pte Kevin McHale was already dead.



**Dogwood from the air**

The Black Watch was wrestling with an area in which no detailed ground reconnaissance had been possible and for which no actionable intelligence existed. On 30th, Capt Prowse the Regimental Signals Officer, and the RSM conducted a full reconnaissance of the area north of the Latifiyah Canal before heading south and exploring the Al Qaqa munitions facility. It was clear that while radio communications would be possible on the east side of the river, the area itself was highly irrigated and impassable to Warrior vehicles. The mood of the



population was also of interest – most locals were unwilling to be seen talking to soldiers and appeared terrified that they might be accused of collusion. The chances of exerting leverage through ‘hearts and minds’ projects seemed limited.

Even on the west bank people seemed suspicious and a little afraid of the troops and were unhappy about making a direct approach. Aside from being terrified of the insurgents, it was clear that local Iraqis had developed a considerable fear of American troops.

On 31st October breakfast call consisted of incoming rockets. Alpha and Delta Companies deployed to conduct familiarisation patrols. Bravo Company remained in Dogwood with responsibility for the security around the base. Delta Company concentrated on Route Temple and the Saddam Bridge area; Alpha Company concentrated on the riverside area, where Maj Aitken looked in detail at the best way to control movement across the Saddam Bridge. While the Americans had wanted a permanent vehicle check point, he favoured other methods of controlling movement. It was clear that a permanent position could only become a magnet for attack and would leave the battlegroup committed to defending it. He therefore reported that the blocking function could best be achieved by mobile patrols in the area, rather than a fixed base.

On 1st November, the camp was again struck by rocket fire. The enemy assumed that breakfast would be a profitable time to engage the base given that soldiers might be congregating for their food. It was therefore decided that the battlegroup would not conduct communal eating and so began 30 days of individual boil in the bag rations, an experience that tested all but the most regular of constitutions. The firing point was out of range of the mortars and no American air or aviation was available to assist; Alpha Company Warriors moved to intercept. They observed a car heading at speed north-west up San Juan. At 1440hrs at the junction of Route Temple and Cambrian Way, Delta Company observed a man climbing out of a vehicle with darkened windows and wires protruding from the vehicle. The area was cordoned and an American Ammunition Technical Officer deployed to defuse the device. Just before he moved forward to deal with the car, it detonated scattering debris over several hundred metres. The bomb was huge and suggested that it would have done considerable damage to a Warrior. Although impossible to prove, it seems in hindsight that this was a putative suicide bomber who had lost his nerve.

The second convoy left Shaibah Logistics Base on 31st October and did not attract the same media interest which had dogged the first convoy's progress, although 11 embedded journalists accompanied the troops. The convoy arrived at 0300hrs on 2nd November in torrential rain with all those in open topped land rovers soaked to the bone. The battlegroup was now complete.

The arrival of the second convoy allowed Task Force Pathfinder to depart for operations in Fallujah. The American troops detailed to escort them out of the Black Watch area drove across the Saddam Bridge and were promptly hit by a large roadside device. A quick reaction force from Delta Company and Capt Guthrie, the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO), were scrambled to the scene. The American casualties were extracted by air and, during the follow up, a further two daisy chains were discovered. Delta Company put in a cordon on the west bank and the 2/24th's Fox Company picketed the east side. As the American ordnance disposal team arrived, a further device exploded, but without injury. The incident served to highlight the vulnerability of all traffic transiting the Saddam Bridge. The threat of indirect fire also continued.

By 3rd November, the battlegroup had reached full operational capability – the 30 days had begun. B Squadron The Queen's Dragoon Guards was to move west and assume responsibility for desert area (code named Perth) out to the Razazah Lake. Alpha Company would control the whole of the west bank (areas Angus and Fife) and Bravo Company would act as a reserve and conduct security tasks around Dogwood. Most significantly, Delta Company would move to the east bank, establishing a forward operating base from which the eastern area (code named Dundee) could be dominated.



**Bart Bridge East of Euphrates**

To support this deployment, the Engineers would place a medium girder bridge across Bridge Bart. Mindful of the incident of the previous day, Alpha Company was ordered to picket the home bank to allow Maj Lindsay's Company and the Engineers to cross unhindered. Lt Col Cowan crossed with the Operations Officer, Capt Ord, and the Intelligence Officer, Capt Sandford, and headed to the Headquarters of the 2/24th at Mahmudiyah to tie down cross boundary issues and drop off a liaison officer. Having crossed, Maj Lindsay set about exploring the area. His initial consideration of Al Qaqa was that the ground was too complex to serve as a base. Having probed various routes, he decided to establish a base at the industrial site in the north of Dundee and set off up the Abu Ghraib Canal Road. As the Company headed north the lead vehicle, commanded by Lt Bailey, was struck by a very large roadside bomb. Despite the extensive damage, none of the crew was hurt, testament to the great strength of the Warrior. A secondary device was suspected in the body of a cow 50 metres in front of the initial contact point – several wires were identified sticking out of the animal. It was dealt with by 7.62 mm chain gun fire, disrupting the device and establishing beyond reasonable doubt that, if the animal had not been dead before, it was now.

An Ammunition Technical Officer would have taken three hours to deploy to the location and the Company required an immediate solution. Although the warhead caused some damage to the Warrior, there were no casualties. At 1805hrs an American F18 fighter conducted a low level show of force to deter further activity. It was now getting dark, and the Warriors began to come under sustained mortar fire which took place at intermittent intervals for the rest of the evening. Despite this and the threat of further ground attack the company had set to work recovering the vehicles. In the face of the incoming enemy fire, SSgt Ward and Cfn Cocks of the company Light Aid Detachment worked with great determination on the stricken Warrior, refusing to seek cover despite being ordered to do so. Maj Elliott deployed four of Bravo Company's Warriors with two mortar teams just west of the Euphrates to provide close support and to act as a radio rebroadcast for Delta Company. Lt Bailey, despite having been blown up in a Warrior for the second time (the first occasion had been in Basrah in August), coolly controlled the recovery operation and maintained the morale of his crew who, despite being blown into the air by the force of the blast, had managed several seconds of nervous laughter when the Warrior had returned to the ground. The Company persevered through the night and, succeeded in recovering both Warriors from the ditch. While this difficult process continued, Lt Colville had reached the industrial site and secured it for the night; the remainder of the Company moved with the stricken vehicle to join him.





**ATO digging out a blind**

After only 45 minutes rest, dawn broke on 4th November and Maj Lindsay reviewed his options. He despatched patrols into the vicinity to look at routes and identify other possible harbour locations. It was clear that while the industrial site offered a defensible base for the Company, the work force that had begun to arrive for the day was substantial in number and hostile. He assessed that he could not secure the location without denying them access. The longer he stayed at the north end of Dundee the more likely it was that the enemy would seek to place bombs along the few useable roads to the south. Moreover, SSgt Ward advised that the damage to the Warrior was so substantial that it could only be towed along a metalled road. There was one, which would take the Company out to the east through Fox Company of 2/24th.

Maj Lindsay discussed this option with Battlegroup Headquarters by radio and at 0900hrs the Company left the industrial site with the Warrior under tow at a snail's pace. A section under Sgt Gray established a vehicle check point in front of the Company. For the next hour all seemed peaceful; cars approached the checkpoint, waited in an orderly queue and were let through once they had been searched. At 1300hrs the next car in line, driven by an unshaven man with pale features, approached the checkpoint at an unremarkable speed. He was seen to smile and then detonated a suicide bomb. The huge blast killed Sgt Stuart Gray, Pte Scott McArdle and Pte Paul Lowe, as well as their Iraqi interpreter. A further eight soldiers were wounded. The attack was synchronised with mortar fire that now began to fall along the line of the Company. Despite the mayhem, the Company moved fast to deal with the situation. Cpl Laing (who had been awarded the Military Cross the year before in Az Zubayr) received a head wound and damage to one of his eyes. Despite these injuries, he set about giving first aid to his soldiers. In the face of accurate mortar fire, Cpl Ross's first instinct was also to dismount from his Warrior. On arriving at the scene and undeterred by the carnage, he immediately gave first aid and, with Cpl Laing, dragged the wounded into a ditch that gave cover from mortar fire. At the same time, he acted as the vital communications link between his platoon commander, Lt Ramsay and those troops on the ground. Pte Currie moved to assess the condition of the wounded. One of the first he came to was Pte Lowe. Despite the realisation that his friend was dead, he calmly administered first aid to the other casualties, remaining dismounted throughout, without thought for his own safety and without regard for the personal effects of the blast. Pte McLaughlin was employed as a team medic. He was also caught in the blast, but immediately moved into the contact area to give first aid. He showed considerable presence of mind and calmly tended to the casualties, despite remaining exposed to the incoming mortar salvoes. With Pte Currie, he treated Pte Muir who had a severe open fracture to his leg. Having stabilised him, they moved to give aid to Pte Whelan who had massive blast injuries. Despite their lack of experience and youth, Ptes Currie and McLaughlin's decisive action and skilful application of first aid prevented the casualties from deteriorating further. LCpl Patterson was in the rear of the CSM's Warrior a short distance down the road from the seat of the explosion. CSM Hood moved his vehicle to the scene and LCpl Patterson dismounted from the armoured vehicle.

He immediately set to work, confirming death where necessary and triaging the survivors for treatment and evacuation. Even when the mortar rounds fell, he calmly continued to work out in the open. During this period, he saved Pte McMenemy's life by dressing and splinting an upper arm fracture. He then dressed a serious fragmentation injury to Pte Gonsales's leg and directed the walking wounded away from the scene. When the live casualties had been evacuated to a secure helicopter landing site he helped the CSM move the dead into the rear of the Warrior. CSM Hood dealt with the most traumatic aspects of the incident personally, placing the dead in his own vehicle, to limit the younger soldiers' exposure to such horrific sights. He remained dismounted throughout, despite the subsequent mortar fire. His robust and compassionate approach was exemplary and the decisive feature in maintaining the combat effectiveness of a company that had suffered 10% casualties. Cpl Laing was forced to stop for a short while to treat his own wounds which were considerable. He then returned to take charge of the situation and calmly provided reassurance to minimise the impact of shock while they waited for the helicopter. The Company had initially requested two helicopters, but only one was available and it took some time to fit all the wounded into the single airframe. Cpl Laing supervised this process, only entering the helicopter once all the other wounded had been safely taken aboard.

It is hard to measure the impact of this incident upon the Battalion, or indeed upon 14 Platoon, which had served together for many years as the Pipes and Drums. Afterwards, the CO gave a short statement to press: "For a close-knit family such as the Black Watch, their deaths are indeed a painful blow. All three of these soldiers were our friends. But as we mourn, so we remember them and give thanks for their contribution to the life of our Regiment. The interpreter had been with the Black Watch since our arrival in Iraq and had become a friend to the soldiers. He had volunteered to come north with us and had delayed his wedding, which was to have taken place on the day of his death. Stuart Gray was a sergeant of great experience in the mortar platoon, Paul Lowe was a talented drummer in the Pipes and Drums, and Scott McArdle was a rifleman in the elite reconnaissance platoon. We will miss them as brothers in arms and we extend our sympathy and love to their families. The whole of the Regiment is saddened by this loss. But while we feel this blow most keenly, we are the Black Watch and will not be deterred from seeing our task through to a successful conclusion."

Orders for the return to the east side were released on 6th November. The companies and the squadron were to undertake blocking operations throughout the area to disrupt and deter enemy movement through it, in support of American operations in Fallujah. Maj Elliott with Bravo Company was to move across the Euphrates into Al Qaqa to establish a forward operating base and control movement into and out of area Dundee. Bravo Company would also protect the Engineers as they put in a physical block at Bridge Lisa. During the day the bomb disposal officer, SSgt de Gruchy, moved his equipment from the usual truck into a Warrior to protect his team from the high threat.

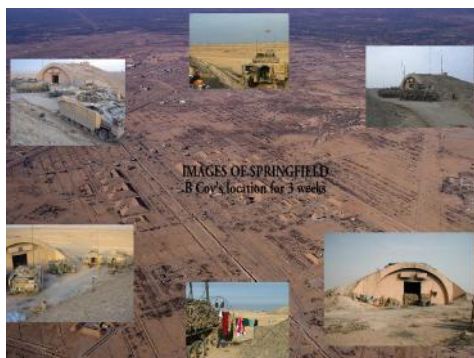
The redeployment to the east bank started on 7th with Alpha Company securing the Saddam Bridge on the west side. Bravo Company with the Engineers moved across to establish a position inside Al Qaqa code named Springfield. Elements of the Company then moved forward to Lisa to put in the block consisting of several trucks of soil and a large, spiked metal obstacle designed by the Engineer troop. At 0915hrs, Alpha Company reported a suspicious device on the side of the road. SSgt de Gruchy and his team moved to examine the device. This turned out to be innocent, but just as his team was re-entering their Warriors, a second suicide bomber drove up to two Warriors and detonated five feet away before the rear door of the Warrior could close. The explosion severely injured Cpls Brennan and Heritage of the Royal Signals, who both lost their legs. In the shock and confusion of the immediate aftermath of the explosion, CSgt Gibson dived from the turret and quickly and calmly took control. Despite having just survived the attack himself, he lay on the ground with Cpl Brennan, giving first aid and talking coolly to the casualty the whole time. Cpl McNaughton also just had time to warn his crew to take cover before the detonation and moved to assist the casualties. LCpl Ahmed was also in one of the Warriors. While in a state of shock and disorientated by the explosion he immediately dismounted and administered first aid. Cpl McNaughton returned to



his turret to control the situation on the radio. As this incident took place, CSM Campbell diverted his Warrior towards the blast as he had Capt Guthrie, the RMO, and the company medic, LCpl Newburn, in the back. Despite previous attacks being followed with indirect fire, these two left the safety of the Warrior and applied tourniquets to the amputated limbs. In what was a horrendous and distressing incident, and in an environment of great uncertainty and continued danger, LCpl Newburn showed considerable maturity and self-control. Yet again the Warriors provided superb protection for the crews; the fact that more soldiers and equipment were not affected by this incident can be directly attributed to SSgt de Gruchy's prescience in trialling the Warrior as a mode of transport.

Cpl Mitchell was ordered to block the route leading to the Saddam Bridge, to allow soft skinned vehicles of Bravo Company to pass in safety. A further attack was considered imminent. At 1100hrs he and his gunner, Pte Douglas, noticed three vehicles pull up to the front of the queue of traffic. Two vehicles stopped, but the third burst through and set off at speed towards the parked Warrior. There was almost no time to react, but Cpl Mitchell instantly recognised the threat of a suicide bomber. He ordered the firing of warning shots above the vehicle and, when the car failed to stop, he had no hesitation in ordering the gunner to fire at the vehicle. The shots from Pte Douglas hit the target first time and brought the car to a standstill just short of the Warrior. The vehicle was now blocking the extraction of the Company and, given the very real possibility that it contained a suicide bomber, it was decided to disrupt the vehicle using 30mm fire. The CSM fired, but the round skipped off the road under the vehicle, striking it a glancing blow. Maj Aitken, unaware that the round had not hit and confident that the vehicle must now be safe, personally bulldozed the vehicle off the road in his Warrior. The day had served to reinforce the battlegroup's understanding of just how lethal the enemy threat was. With the deployment of Bravo Company to the east of the Euphrates, the battlegroup was balanced for its task in support of Operation Phantom Fury.

On 8th November blocks were mounted on all major routes running through the area. The two suicide bombs had served to highlight an essential dilemma: for the Black Watch to search vehicles and to contact the local population, soldiers needed to come into close proximity with vehicles and their drivers. But such contact made the troops vulnerable to attack. A twofold strategy was therefore agreed. First, the battlegroup would stop conducting static vehicle checkpoints. Instead, roadblocks would be mounted. All drivers would be stopped with warning shots. If the driver failed to heed the warning, he would be considered a threat and brought to a halt by fire. Traffic would not be allowed near the Warrior and motorists would either have to be patient enough to wait until the block was lifted or turn around the way they had come. Mobile vehicle checkpoints would however continue, mounted either from the air in helicopters or from the desert in Warrior and Scimitar. There was initially a natural reluctance by British troops to employ such tactics given the risk that this might result in legal action against the soldiers concerned. Indeed, the incident of the previous day did result in a Royal Military Police investigation. The CO therefore decided to set a personal example by firing shots at several cars, which had the desired effect and no damage or injury was recorded. A reconnaissance was mounted by Lt Col Tucker of the Joint Helicopter Force and very soon afterwards a small force of one Puma, a Lynx and a P4 night-time surveillance Puma was deployed. This force gave an immediate boost in capabilities to the battlegroup.



**B Company's base at Al Qaqa**

The deployment of Bravo Company to Al Qaqa and the establishment of their base at Springfield had achieved the objective of blocking movement from north to south on the east side of the Euphrates. By staying south of the Latifiyah Canal it had also prevented further incidents of the kind suffered by Delta Company on 4th November. The absence of attacks on Bravo Company was in many ways curious. There had not been a single indirect fire attack on Springfield itself, nor would there be for the duration of the deployment. This might seem surprising given the level of attacks on Ticonderoga, but the sheer complexity of the ground made it difficult for the enemy to get a good enough fix on the base. In addition, the defensive patrols together with the covert and overt observation positions around Springfield made the enemy uncertain of where soldiers were. But if the absence of indirect attack was explicable, the lack of direct attacks was less so. The Americans had suffered a major assault on Fox Company's base at Yusufiyah and although the attack was repulsed, one of the platoons had fought until it ran out of ammunition. Concerns existed that the insurgents might seek to mount such a high-profile attack on either Springfield or even Ticonderoga. Counterattack plans were therefore rehearsed at both locations and defensive positions improved.

However, one area of vulnerability at Springfield remained. While the base itself had good arcs of fire and was well defended, the routes out of Al Qaqa were narrow and vulnerable to attack. At 0643hrs 17th November, a roadside bomb detonated seriously injuring Pte Gibson. The vehicle was badly damaged with the road wheels removed by the detonation. Immediately after the contact a car was seen heading away at speed from the site. Aside from Pte Gibson, whose pelvis was broken and who suffered other internal injuries, the dismounts were also badly shocked. Lt Colquhoun, the commander of the vehicle, was blown from his turret and temporarily rendered unconscious. He recovered, steadied himself and quickly regained control of the situation instructing his other Warrior vehicles to provide all round defence. He sent an accurate contact report requesting medical and recovery assets at 0650hrs. The RMO arrived shortly afterwards and treated the casualty until the helicopter arrived at 0725hrs. The speed and efficiency of Lt Colquhoun's contact report no doubt assisted the rapid medical recovery of his injured driver.

On 22nd November Alpha and Delta Companies launched a dual cordon and search operation code named Quatre Bras. This operation was not supported by hard information and relied purely on speculation. The operation went well and although nothing was found at the search sites or rummage locations it did give an important opportunity to speak to the local population as well as maintain the initiative with the insurgents.

While the Americans looked at how to fill this gap, the plan was developed into a battlegroup operation and renamed Operation Tobruk. This would be a large-scale search operation designed to flush out Caraghoul village. Lt Col Cowan put his ideas to Col Johnson, who not only agreed the plan but gave orders for simultaneous American and Iraqi assaults onto Rushdi Mullah and Al Anbarayin.

The operation carried some risk. The battlegroup would need to cross the Euphrates taking its chances with any off-route bombs that might have been pre-positioned. The area would then need to be picketed in order that the assault force could insert and extract unhindered by suicide bombers. That assault force would also need to cross the Latifiyah canal. Initial planning focused on re-bridging Bart, but it became clear that the time the Engineers would need to cross the bridge (50 minutes) was too long to sustain surprise. Maj Elliott went to reconnoitre the hitherto unused Maggie and reported back that it was useable, but only just. It was therefore decided to push the initial assault force across Maggie, while the Engineers bridged Bart, allowing the second wave and specialist assets to cross at this more reliable point. Another difficulty was the sheer size of the Caraghoul village which meant that one company of three platoons would not be enough to clear it. It was therefore decided to reinforce Alpha Company with three more platoons – one each from Delta Company, the Royal Marine Troop and the Welsh Guards. B Squadron would hold the west bank, Bravo Company would secure Bart and Maggie, and Delta Company would remain in reserve at 'Bones', so named after an old cemetery at that location. Given the possibility that



the search could develop into a fire fight, considerable aerial firepower and surveillance assets were put on task to forewarn Alpha Company and defeat any enemy before he could get close enough to the assaulting troops. To distract the enemy from the southern crossings, a troop from B Squadron was despatched to the pontoon bridge in the north of the area codenamed 'Burns' to conduct a feint. This troop was reinforced by the Psychological Operations team which had recently taken delivery of some state-of-the-art loudspeakers that allowed them to project the noise of massed armour moving around the northern crossing. Some more of these speakers were attached to Alpha Company with the intention of playing various Arabic messages and Pipe music to heighten the sense of dislocation achieved by the early morning assault. The operation would also see some housekeeping with the damaged Warriors at Springfield and Yusufiyah being returned to the west bank. At the end of the Orders Group on 23rd November the CO reminded the Battalion that, given the forthcoming reorganisation of the Infantry, this could be the last operation that The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) took part in, in its current form. All present at that Orders Group formed the impression that, to para-phrase General Sir Mike Jackson, while the Black Watch was not about to march off into the sunset, a new dawn awaited the Regiment across the Euphrates.

Company orders followed and were momentarily disrupted by the now almost daily indirect fire attack. It was decided to embed all the journalists with Alpha Company and the press moved off to their new platoons. Soon after, all the hacks began to sport Hackles, given them by Jocks. On 24th, battle preparation continued and by 1600hrs all the vehicles involved in the operation were leaguered in their order of march. For those veterans of the war the year before, there was a real sense of purpose, an atmosphere that had not been experienced since the Battalion was leaguered in Barnsley (the concentration area just south of the Iraqi border before the invasion). There was that mix of adrenaline fuelled by excitement and the sense of purpose that comes from a well-trained group of soldiers off to do their job. The skirl of the pipes further added to the atmosphere as the Pipe Major played Scotland the Brave, Black Bear and Highland Laddie as the sun went down. It was a fitting touch that an operation named after the Tobruk Sortie, where Pipe Major Roy was thrice wounded piping the 2nd Battalion into battle, should have included his modern day counterpart plying his trade in the same manner.

The decision to launch in the early hours undoubtedly paid off and complete surprise was achieved. The worst fears of a full-scale battalion attack through a densely populated village were not realised and it proved possible to detain large numbers of individuals without opposition. The attack had involved 116 tracked and wheeled vehicles and over 650 men. The 26th was spent recuperating, but on 27th November Delta Company carried out a Cordon and Search on the west bank based on speculation rather than intelligence and served to disrupt rather than secure equipment or detainees.

With its conclusion, thoughts turned firmly towards the extraction of the battlegroup under the codename Operation Corunna. Planning at a higher level had initially focused on using Route Tampa, which would have necessitated the movement of the battlegroup out to the south east and over the Euphrates. At 0400hrs Operation Corunna began. B Squadron picketed Route Midland, Delta Company secured the rendezvous and Alpha and Bravo Companies provided intimate support to the convoy. As dawn broke, the sight of the entire battlegroup moving across the desert with the sun rising behind it and individual dust clouds from over 100 armoured vehicles and 200 heavy transporters was immensely impressive. The sense of relief was palpable. Having arrived at the rendezvous, the vehicles were swiftly loaded, and the long move south began. Operation Bracken was at an end. This operation, in common with the rest, was planned in conjunction with American forces at a level that showed an increasingly close relationship. One aspect of the deployment that required particularly close cooperation between American and British forces was the logistic support of the force. The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers were ingenious in their repair of vehicles, several of which were recovered under fire. Despite an extended line of communication and the regular interdiction of routes by the enemy, the supply of the force was never in doubt. When the short notice of the deployment is considered, this was an

achievement by the echelon of The Black Watch, the Royal Logistics Corps and the Americans themselves who were immensely generous in their support to the battlegroup. Communications between all these elements and Multi-National Division South East were eased by the hard work of the Royal Signals. The medical provision for the operation was particularly successful. The numerous casualties placed great stresses upon the available resources, but despite grievous injuries, no soldier died of his wounds – a remarkable testament to the skills of the Royal Army Medical Corps and the soldiers of the Black Watch Regimental Aid Post.

Operation Bracken came against the backdrop of huge public anger about the war in Iraq. The deployment of The Black Watch north to the "Triangle of Death" was the only occasion in which a British unit, other than Special Forces, deployed outside of British command during the Iraq War. Yet while our experience has largely been neglected, I believe that the complex battle with which we were involved south of Fallujah would have important lessons for the Army in the years that followed.

## Gathering to Reflect on Loss in Loos

*Colonel Lindsay MacDuff*



**Standing watch at the burial service for two unknown soldiers at Loos** (All photos by Tim Cooper, BFBS Forces News)



**One of the unknown soldiers served in The Black Watch, with members of the Royal Regiment of Scotland taking part in the burial service**



**Princess Anne was also present at the service**

Royalty, Ambassadors, Admirals, Generals and international dignitaries aplenty gathered in Loos to witness the formal burial of two unknown soldiers over a hundred years after they died. One of them had served in The Black Watch and it was fitting that members from The Black Watch Battalion took part in the burial service. This commitment is even more impressive because they are seriously busy with their many operational commitments.



I have seen many military burials, and this one was the same but different. The same because reverence, dignity and formality remain, but different because, although evocative and emotional, no family members attended and no one knew these soldiers.

Why did hundreds, including two couples from Ontario, Canada, come to witness this burial service? Was it because Captain The Honourable Fergus Bowes-Lyon (the late Queen Mother's brother) was killed in the Battle of Loos? Or because Rudyard Kipling's only son, "My Boy Jack" also died in the same battle. Or perhaps others were Beatles fans wanting to see George Harrison's grandfather's grave; he died on the first day of the Battle of Loos.

I attended because I served in The Black Watch and The Royal Regiment of Scotland. When serving at Regimental Duty, I spent years looking at a powerful painting of the Battle of Loos; it was known as "Porridge" because the terrain was such a quagmire – every soldier's worst nightmare. I recall the portrait of the Queen Mother, Colonel in Chief of The Black Watch for over 60 years, sharing the same walls as "Porridge"; cementing the regimental family connection. The strength of this is still strong and it was a joy to catch up with Major General Robin Lindsay and other well kent faces from the Regiment.

Over half a million soldiers are still missing from the First World War and over one third are thought to be buried as unknown. More are being discovered all the time through agricultural work and building development (in Loos a new hospital is being built). The Commonwealth War Graves Commission have a rapid response team which deploy within two hours and aim to recover the remains within three to six hours. This remarkable capability shows the commitment to honour the fallen appropriately.

Honouring the fallen is at the heart of what the Joint Compassionate and Casualty Centre do. Often called the "war detectives", the team diligently and forensically research all the evidence to try to identify who the fallen are. They painstakingly build a picture that sometimes leads to them connecting families with their lost relative. I saw this at a remarkable reunion in Sicily of a Second World war casualty with his family.

The hundreds attending the burial service in Loos will all have had their own personal motivations for being there. Binding us all together is the commitment to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice so we may enjoy our freedom. Geopolitics, war and conflict make it vital for us all to take time to reflect and remember the staggeringly significant sacrifice of millions who fought and endured war. The scale is difficult to comprehend.

The reburial of these young soldiers from the First World War reminds me of our collective responsibility, set out beautifully in John McCrae's poem 'In Flanders Fields' to honour the fallen (whenever & wherever) they fell.

"To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields."

Finally, even though we don't know the names of so many that sleep in Flanders Fields, they are like us and we will remember them:

"...Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,  
In Flanders fields."

## 'IN FROM THE COLD'; THE GRAVE OF CORPORAL WILLIAM SALMOND, 7TH BLACK WATCH, FINALLY RECEIVES A HEADSTONE MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH.

*Dave Dykes*

William Salmond died at home in Kelty, Fife, on 3rd May 1917 of Pulmonary Tuberculosis and as the result of a chest wound he received on active service. He was buried in Dunfermline Cemetery, in what we now know was a family lair, but his grave was never marked with a headstone at the time.

Thanks to the work of the 'In From the Cold Project' (IFCP) his grave is now marked with a Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) headstone dedicated during a service on 28th March 2024.



**The CWGC headstone for Pte Salmond, Dunfermline**

The ceremony was the culmination of painstaking research carried out by IFCP volunteer Mark Duffy of Blairgowrie. Started more than 20 years ago, the aims of the project are to identify service men and women missing from the official CWGC list of casualties from the world wars, ensure they are given due recognition and to provide evidence to ensure that casualties whose final resting place was hitherto unmarked are identified with a CWGC headstone.

Behind the story of every casualty is the story of a family, many of them touched by much sadness, and the story of the Salmond family is no exception. William Salmond was born in Kingseat, Dunfermline on 22nd June 1892, the son of John Salmond, a coal miner, and his wife Catherine Lethem.

On 16th January 1898 Catherine died in Kingseat of Hypostatic Congestion, a slow-developing chronic pulmonary disorder, inflamed by chronic congestion in the lungs of long-term bed-ridden patients. She had been working in a linen factory in Dunfermline from the age of 15, and it is almost certain that she developed respiratory problems as a result. She was 43 years old and William 5.

At some time between 1901 and 1911 the Salmond family moved to Foulford Place, Cowdenbeath. William attended Foulford School and left aged 14 to begin working life as a coal miner.

By 1911, the family, comprising his father John, William, his older brothers Charles, George and Robert and his younger sister, Catherine, was living at Miller's Buildings, Lower Oakfield, Kelty. Also living at this address were Grace Salmond, wife of George, and their three-year old son John, who was born at 5 North Walkerton, Leslie, Fifeshire in 1907 - North Walkerton was also the location of a textile mill.

War was declared on 4th August 1914 and the following day William Salmond attested for war service with 7th Battalion Black Watch (Royal Highlanders). The 7th Battalion was a territorial battalion and would



have already received training during drill nights and at annual camps. It would have initially carried out coastal defence duties along the Fife coast and was then posted to France and Flanders with the British Expeditionary Force on 2nd May 1915.

On 26th October 1914 William's older brother, Charles, was killed. He had been serving with 2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders as part of the British Expeditionary Force. He was killed in action on the River Lys, close to the town of Armentières in northern France. Charles may have been buried on the battlefield by his comrades, but many of these graves were lost due to continuous artillery bombardment throughout the war. Having no known grave, Charles, aged 30, is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing. (Readers may recognise the cemetery from its WW1 popular name of 'Plugstreet'.) Less than a month later, at home in Kelty, their father died of Pulmonary Tuberculosis on 19th November 1914, aged 66.

Having only been in France for just over a month, William Salmond was seriously wounded in action on 16th June 1915. 7th Black Watch had been in support of an unsuccessful attack on a small portion of the enemy line near Le Touret. One officer and 16 Other Ranks were killed, six officers and 81 Other Ranks wounded and four were listed as missing. William would initially have been treated for his wounds at a Regimental Aid Post, then at a Casualty Clearing Station and eventually, via a series of other medical facilities, a base hospital near the French coast. From here he would have returned to Blighty by boat and then travelled home to Scotland.

William must have been a good soldier, having been promoted to corporal on 20th November 1915. At some time after this he was discharged as unfit for further service overseas and he returned to Kelty. He died at his home, Miller's Buildings, Kelty, on 3rd May 1917. Without parents it is not known who had looked after him. His death certificate states that he died of Pulmonary Tuberculosis and having been wounded through the lung at the war. His occupation was given as 'Coal Miner and Corporal Black Watch (Discharged)'. He was 24 years old.

The grave dedication at Dunfermline Cemetery, off Halbeath Road, took place 28th March 2024. Patricia Keppie, of the CWGC, gave a welcome address and an outline of their work. CWGC volunteer Dave Dykes shared William's story with those assembled. Reverend Alastair Ridland conducted the service during which Binyon's 'For the Fallen' was recited. Brian Alexander, a bugler from Beath High School and former DM 1 BW, played Last Post, followed by a minute's silence and a piper, Ronan Gilchrist, son of the late Lieutenant Colonel Rory and of Liz Gilchrist, then played the regimental lament 'Sleep Dearie Sleep' followed by the Kohima Epitaph being read by Reverend Ridland. Finally, wreaths were laid by the Lord-Lieutenant of Fife, Robert Balfour, the CWGC, Ian Mitchell, the Regimental Secretary of The Black Watch Association, Tim Carmichael, in the presence of a red hackled contingent from the Fife Branch of the Association, and others. In all, the destitution of Corporal William Salmond's burial in 1917 may have been marked with more regimental presence and honour in 2024.

The day before the ceremony in Dunfermline, Nele Bille, who works for the CWGC in Ypres, had visited the Ploegsteert Memorial in Belgium to place a wreath at the panel which bears the name of William's brother, Charles, and had sent some photographs which were shown during the ceremony at William's graveside.

Since the ceremony, and due to the help of Fife Council Bereavement Services, the enigma of the 107 years grave unmarked other than by a stick has been solved. William's lair is that he is at rest beside his parents and maternal grandparents, bearing her maiden name. While they were still alive all would have known about him, but as generations moved on his family membership was forgotten, until now.

William's brother, George, his sister-in-law, Grace, and their son John emigrated to Canada shortly after the war and remained there for the rest of their lives. There are a few possible links to descendants in Canada, and there is still hope that someone will be found and given the news that William has finally been honoured with a CWGC headstone. We are still trying to find descendants of William's siblings in Fife.

## Remembrance Sunday 2024 Canongate Kirk

*The Reverend Neil Gardner*

Psalms 45:17      I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

Our text is printed on the front of today's order of service and above it there's also a name highlighted, 2nd Lt John Ainslie Aymer Grassie, who was killed in action while serving with 5th Bn The Black Watch in France on 21st March 1918. He was my late father's cousin and I've never mentioned him before because I only found out about him a few months ago. My nephew had just started a new job at the Scottish Records Office and as part of a familiarisation process was encouraged to trace his own family history, and it was he who made this surprising discovery. Surprising partly because nobody in the family knew anything about John Grassie and that must include my father who otherwise would surely have told me about him, especially when I became chaplain to the Black Watch in 1993; and surprising too because in the space of just one generation it takes us back not to the beaches of the Second World War but to the trenches of the First. Admittedly it's quite a stretched generation. Dad was born in 1917, the youngest of three brothers in the Borders. In turn, his mother was the youngest of several siblings – John Grassie was born to her oldest brother and his wife in 1896. When he died in 1918, he was just 22.

Since first finding out those basic facts about him, I've found out a little more. He began his Army service as a private soldier in The Highland Light Infantry and first went to France on 23rd March 1916. It was almost exactly two years later that he was killed, after being commissioned into The Black Watch in October 1917 and joining its 5th Battalion. As far as I can make out, 21st March 1918 was a particularly dark day in Black Watch history. "The storm broke at 5.30am," according to the official regimental records, "when after a terrific bombardment for five hours, which caused the complete destruction of many lines of trenches, the Germans attacked the Divisions on the right and left and drove them back by sheer weight of numbers. Having achieved this, the Germans then endeavoured to cut off the 51st Division by coming in from behind on either flank and attacking with machine guns, rifle and bombs." Initially reported as missing in action, it was in the course of that fiercest of storms that my father's cousin, my grandmother's nephew, was killed. He has no known grave, and his name is simply listed on a memorial stone in the local war cemetery at Pozieres to the south of Arras. John Grassie.

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

This discovery makes me wonder about all those whose names have been forgotten all these years, unremembered. The writer of the Apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus summed it up when he declared "Some there are who have left behind them a name to be commemorated in story. Others are unremembered; they have perished as though they had never existed, as though they had never been born..." On Remembrance Sunday we remember the unremembered too, those whose names have been lost in the mists of time, those whose place in their family's story has been long forgotten, for they too shall grow not old as we that are left grow old. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

When St Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, to the persecuted Christians suffering at the heart of the Roman Empire, he might have been writing of the events of 21st March 1918. For your sake we are being killed all day long: we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered. But before he draws his eighth chapter and our first reading to an end he comes to a more positive conclusion. For I am convinced, he writes, convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And the explanation for that lies at the heart of our second reading. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. Because Jesus did just that, laid down his life for his friends, and from then on, from that moment on neither



death nor depth of suffering and slaughter would be able to separate any of us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Never separated. Always connected. Never forgotten. Always remembered. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

Here in Canongate, we regularly remember our connection with the hymn-writer Horatius Bonar who lies buried towards the foot of the Kirkyard. In recent years one of his classic Victorian hymns *Only Remembered* has reached a new audience through the powerful stage productions of Michael Morpurgo's *War Horse*, and its words seem especially apt today not just for that young man who died in the springtime of a year and of all his years, but for all those like him, whose achievements will never be forgotten even if their names are:

Fading away like the stars of the morning,  
losing their light in the glorious sun,  
thus would we pass from the earth and its toiling,  
only remembered for what we have done.

Shall we be missed, though by others succeeded,  
reaping the fields we in springtime have sown?  
Yes, but the sowers must pass from their labours,  
ever remembered by what they have done.

Only the truth that in life we have spoken,  
only the seed that on earth we have sown,  
These shall pass onward when we are forgotten,  
fruits of the harvest and what we have done.

Only remembered, only remembered,  
only remembered by what we have done;  
thus would we pass from the earth and its toiling,  
only remembered by what we have done.

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

### **From the archives: Bandsman Spencer Barwell. 1859 -1938, on active service as a bandsman with 1st Battalion, The Black Watch, 1874 – 1886**

*Tess Monteith*

The archive at Balhousie Castle contains many an interesting trove of information covering the history of The Black Watch. The Spencer Barwood collection deserves attention for the insight it gives us into the daily life of the ordinary soldier on campaign in the 1880's and the type of engagement the Regiment participated in during the latter half of the 19th Century as Britain sought to protect and reinforce its considerable dominance in World affairs.

The Barwood collection consists of a volume of correspondence, service record, some photographs and other miscellaneous items. From this disparate and seemingly fragmented evidence, we can actually build up quite some insight into this young man's life. From an inauspicious start, the youngest of seven siblings, it appears the family was abandoned by their father. On the death of his mother when he was aged only five, he and three brothers were admitted to the workhouse, St Saviours in London. However, he must have shown talent as a musician for in October 1874, he was enlisted for the 57th Infantry Brigade and, almost immediately, in November of that year embarked for Malta, listed as a Private (Bandsman) with 1st Battalion, The Black Watch. His description is of sandy hair with hazel eyes and a height of 4ft 10, just a child.

What an extraordinary direction for this young man who must have

only known a life of limited horizons and tough living. His service record and discharge papers 12 years later though speak of someone who embraced the opportunities afforded by the service. He passed certificates of education, was clearly highly articulate, and is described as an excellent bandsman and musician, a competent swimmer and qualified boatsman. How a young Private found time for boating in Egypt, one can only imagine. His chit, permitting absence for boating, dress code: clean fatigue without gaiters, has survived; clearly something of importance to him.

Between 1874-9, Barwood was in Malta; in 1875, the date of the photograph below



**BW Regimental Band on Malta 1875**

He was still only 15, and probably less than 5 foot. We can narrow him down to one of the three young boys staring earnestly into the camera. Cyprus and Gibraltar followed, returning to England in 1879. 1882 sees him set sail again on the S.S. *Nepaul* bound for Egypt, the boat calling in at the Isle of Wight so The Queen could wish them God speed. They were off to defend British interests in the Suez Canal. Egypt, on the point of financial collapse through mismanagement and corruption, was undergoing a major revolt by the Egyptian army under Arabi Pasha against the ruling Khedive. A British military force assembled under Lieutenant General Sir Garnet Wolseley was tasked to invade, capture Cairo and restore the Khedive as nominal ruler with Anglo-French control of the country. Landings and bombardment of Alexandria were, in fact, a diversionary tactic. Wolseley's true intention was to come from Ismailia in the South, shipping the brigade via the Suez Canal and conducting an arduous march through the desert in the August heat. With stomachs empty, and kilts exposing legs to severe sunburn, there was also little in the way of provisions, tentage or fresh water. They slept out in the open desert.

Having first been attacked at Kassassin, the Egyptian army of some 20,000 soldiers had retreated to an entrenched position at Tel-El-Kebir, ten miles distant. To achieve complete surprise in the ensuing attack, Wolseley ordered a night march. Barwood, in letter to his family, relates it thus:

'No one was allowed to smoke or talk. After marching about 4 miles, we were to lie down and sleep for two hours. It was the last sleep for a good many. Who could tell how many would be left to tell the tale in a few hours. It was the best sleep I ever had. I slept on the stretcher I was carrying, it being my duty to look after the wounded. Of course we had to fight as well. At length we were woken up without any noise and resumed our silent march.... I commence to get tired, and wondered when we were to commence the attack. I was not kept long wondering, for before daylight came in, three shots were fired at us and then the fight commenced in real earnest. We must've been very close to them. Their shots went over our heads at first, which proved that we must have been only 400 yards from where they found us out. But they got a shorter range, and then came a perfect shower of bullets, just like hailstones, only of course, a little harder. In the face of this, we ran up without firing a shot; there we gave, one unearthly yell and drove them from their first trench which was very deep and broad. They retreated to another trench, deeper and broader than the first; again we charged them and finally drove them out of their trench. Some thousands of them were left dead or dying in the trenches. Seeing they were beaten, they ran like rats across the plains thinking to escape but no, they ran

right into our cavalry who mowed them down like grass. There were very few shots fired in comparison to those killed by the bayonet. We were completely masters of Tel-El Kebir in an hour and a half. Actually, the battle so to speak was over in 20 minutes. We captured 69 guns and numerous other things from the enemy including all their tents, horses, camels, ammunition including food and plans of their forts.

Barwell notes as a footnote 'We had no food from the afternoon of the 12th until the morning of the 14th except that which we stole.' An estimated 2000 Arabs had been killed, compared with the British losses of 57; 9 officers and 48 non-commissioned ranks killed and 27 officers and 353 non-commissioned ranks wounded. 22 men were reported missing.

Amongst Barwell's papers is an address, printed out and personally assigned, that was given by the brigade commander, Major General Sir Archibald Alison Bt,

'There is one thing that I want to impress upon you and that is not the fiery valour of your rush over the entrenchments of Tel-El-Kebir but the disciplined restraint of the long night march over the desert proceeding it, which I admired the most - that was one of the most severe tests of discipline which could be exacted from men, and by you it was nobly borne.'



**Barwood Plaid Brooch**

Over the next couple of years Barwell continues to correspond with his family. Apart from battle, there was also time for some sightseeing.

A letter dated April 1883 describes a march to the Pyramids.

We were allowed to roam all over the place. Tom and I went into the inside and also climbed to the very top. We got some of the stones from the top and inside, which we intend to take home. I didn't think it would take so long to reach the top. We were quite done and had to take a couple of halts before the top. We visited the Sphinx and temple also the tombs of mummies.

He returns to the pyramids in April 1886, writing from the top and having taken this time just 10 minutes to make the ascent after a walk of 9 miles to get there, attired in his kilt and medals. 'Not everyone can boast of having a letter from the top of the Pyramids.' Unfortunately, the exertions subsequently make him faint owing to a lack of breakfast. An orange is the remedy. The rocks he had prised from the top to bring back as a souvenir were sadly left behind after his fall. Also preserved is a letter describing 'these mighty stone blocks' penned by a friend, Herr Schemeil, triumphantly given as 'Top of Cheops.' Perhaps they had met on the previous ascent. Sadly, included in the archive is a death notice, in French, showing that, two months later, Schemeil was dead; no clue unfortunately as to why. Snippets of evidence to piece together. But Barwell was clearly making the most of his time in Egypt. However, as later campaigns see him transported down the Nile, he expresses huge frustration on not being allowed ashore to see Luxor and Thebes. Moored across the river from the Island of Philae, he contemplates disobeying orders and swimming across to view the Temple. He also makes a collection of native weaponry, three spears and a couple of knives which he succeeded in carrying all the way through the Eastern Sudan, no mean feat.

At other times open air concerts and theatrical plays were arranged,

the stage made of biscuit boxes and sides of tents for curtains. Scenery was ingeniously constructed using date palms, lanterns for footlights and trenches dug in the sand for seating. With the band for music, and athletics competitions, morale was kept high and the soldiers away from the town and the capacity for causing mischief.

In 1884 in the Sudan, 1500 miles to the south of Cairo, a jihadist army, under the self-proclaimed Mahdi, was in revolt against the Egyptian Khedive and British interests. With forces too thinly stretched, the Mahdi army had effected a massacre of the troops under Baker. The Black Watch was deployed as part of a relief force. They would be facing Sudanese tribesmen, armed mostly with traditional weapons, spears, swords and knives. Engagements ensued at El Teb and Tamaai.

Service in the desert often involved marching long hours in extreme heat, soft sand and with little access to clean drinking water. Having had to draw water from a well in which a woman's body was found, it was unsurprising that at times cholera was rampant, necessitating constant relocation and harsh measures to contain the outbreaks. He records, with some outrage, how a fellow soldier's entire possessions were burnt on contracting the disease. When unexpectedly, but fortuitously, he recovered there was no compensation with the exception of his service dress.



**Barwood Black Watch Cane**

Barwell possesses, however, the great qualities of a Black watch soldier; the ability to cope with the greatest hardship and still retain his sense of humour. After unseasonable rains, there were bogs to negotiate.

You would have loved to have seen us going through that bog. We had to take off our boots et cetera, and with our kilts and packs we waded through three feet of mud. A great number of men held their kilt as a lady with her dress crossing the street on a wet day. It was for no purpose for the mud almost reached their waist. Cursing and swearing was the chief topic. The march was very difficult and tiring; here you would see one fellow fall; rifle and everything would sink under the mud and, in standing still to look for them, he would sink too far down to be able to get himself out. One or two would go to his aid and they, perhaps, would drop something in trying to keep hold of him. Then would come a regular volley of oaths, and those passing by would laugh so much that it made them stop. I got two or three tumbles and nearly lost my boots. Such a mess we were in from head to foot, nothing but thick mud. Although it was hard work, it was very amusing and caused many a hardy laugh afterwards. We got out of it, although some were a long way behind and kept us waiting; we did not put on our boots and socks, as our feet and legs were too dirty. Just as we got 'fall in', we were ordered back, and the whole affair had to be gone through again. You may guess our temper. But we got through it, and marched clean into camp, barefooted and bare legged. Didn't the men laugh when they saw us coming in; our kilts and in fact all our clothing had a thick coat of mud.' They were sent to bathe. 'Didn't we scamper into the water, nothing on but our kilt and shirt. Had you seen us, you would certainly have taken us for savages, covered with war paint.'



After this, there was nothing for it but to lie down in the formation of a square and try and get some sleep. There was no protection from a deluge that descended at 3 am. Not allowed to don coats as it would have necessitated the undoing of packs, 'there we lay in the (nearly) Bay of Biscay.' To add further insult, the wood was too wet for lighting which meant no breakfast.

Transport, amongst other forms, was on a camel ship. 'You have no idea of the stench which comes from them, worse than stink-pots. Seven hundred men crushed on the upper deck in the heat of the day without water or biscuit.' Ingeniously Barwell manages to scrape a little butter oozing out of a barrel to go with his biscuit he had saved in his pack. No water was to be had however, the temperature noted as 110 degrees in the shade.

Lack of water is a constant theme. 'You can't tell how a soldier feels when he has a short rest only to know he has half a dozen miles to go before he can get a drink again. I dare say most of the bottles were empty before we were three miles away.' Arduous route marches also feature heavily in Barwell's accounts, with the men often being called on to march for long hours in the heat of the day, soldiers frequently falling out with sunstroke and fatigue. The misery was compounded by having to wait, in full accoutrements, for the stragglers to catch up.

Barwell generally attaches much importance to the erratic supply of provisions, taking time to forage an onion in the heat of the battle of Tamaai at the same time as being engaged in 'hand to hand fight with thousands' the day only being won 'after a good deal of hard fighting. On being commanded to charge, we found ourselves tumbling over a precipice right on top of the enemy. They came in thousands from behind large rocks... We got a regular routing for some time but we rallied and beat them all to sticks. I had nothing to defend myself with when the stampede commenced, so I threw stones at them. One of the men got his kilt torn off and he followed all day in nothing but his shirt. Our regiment must have been deeper in the ravine than any other as we have 65 killed out of 116, and 27 wounded out of 99. It was just butchering and nothing more...there is no use in explaining the sights as it would shock you too much.' They left the battle scene as they had arrived ie under fire. In another letter he relates, 'I had a very narrow escape...my section alone lost 13 out of 24.' Barwell though, somewhat nonchalantly, records 'I made a good breakfast off an onion which I picked up during the fight.'

On return from the Sudan campaigns, the harshness and heat of desert living, and privations aboard the very basic troop ships, back in Cairo the Barracks are a source of pride. Where a civilian might see harshness and bare ugliness, the soldier can take pride in cleanliness, order and the simple pleasure of polish. Barrels of beer, bottles of lemonade and pots of preserves are given out. Barwood lists in 56 gallon flasks of ale, 80 pots of preserves, 216 lemonade and 600 cigars. Divided between only 50 or 60 souls, perhaps unsurprisingly, the aforementioned order descends into somewhat of a brawl. The end result is a carting off to the guardroom of twenty or more souls and, in the morning, a dozen guns to be fired in the rousing.

Barwell's pride in his service is encapsulated in this passage:

'Arthur (his nephew) lost my canteen for me yesterday. I would rather have lost £1 (presumably a great deal of money in those days) than that, as I have had it ever since I enlisted, and it has served me in three campaigns. That canteen, a receptacle for everything for a soldier is useful in 100 ways. To make it better, the canteen was just being engraved with the honours of the Regiment and my service. I intended in keeping it all my life. It's gone now though and there's no use crying over spilt milk. If ever the poor old Nile dries up, my poor companion will be found in the bottom with my initials on it.'

Mention too is made of Jock, the Regimental dog who 'had been all through the Soukim campaign of 1884, the Nile campaign of 1885-6. He was present at the battles of El-Teb, Tamaai, Tamaneih and Kirbeken. Several times he has nearly lost his life in the Nile Cataracts, and four times has he received bayonet wounds.' His bravery mirrors that of Barwell, who received the Egypt medal with clasps, Tel-el-Kibir, Suakin, El Teb, Tamaai, The Nile, Kirbeken, and the Khedive's bronze star. Barwood was immensely proud of his medals, citing their greater importance to a true soldier than any 'bribe money.'

Barwell is discharged in Malta 1886, his return journey to England not without incident as they are almost shipwrecked in a gale off Gibraltar. Now aged 26 and grown to a height of 5 feet, 5 and a half inches but still with hazel eyes and sandy hair. 'I have got very stout, they say.'

He emigrated to Cottesmore, Western Australia, married Amy Miranda Webb and had four children. Barwood died 23 February 1938.

## Auditors to **The Black Watch Regimental Trust Ltd**

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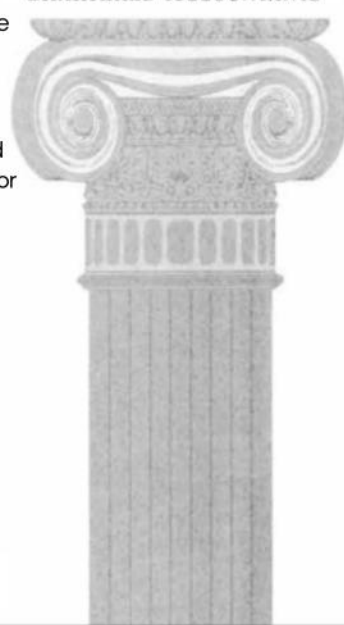
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# Other matters of Interest

## Fundraising for the Black Watch Parade Memorial

The fundraising appeal target for the Black Watch Parade Memorial is £80,000. This will probably take 2-3 years to reach. However, the generation of funds is progressing well; at the time of writing (September), just short of £19,000 has been raised, almost 25% achieved thus far.

Ailsa Magnus MRSS (our chosen Artist) is expected to produce her Visual Plan for the memorial by the New Year after which fundraising strategy will engage and really push ahead.

**Progress.** Stimulated by the Dundee Branch, raffles and auctions have been held since the beginning of the year for prizes generously donated by many individuals and companies, which have been the main source of funds received so far. Dundee Branch members have also been physically active in their fund-raising with Stewart Carson, Grant Lumsden and Colin Gray taking part in the Kiltwalks around Scotland. On 28th April, Stewart & Colin completed the 23 mile Glasgow Kiltwalk, then on 2nd June, Stewart and Grant completed the 18 mile Aberdeen Kiltwalk while Colin was sunning himself in Tenerife hence his absence, after which Stewart and Colin completed the 21 mile Dundee Kiltwalk on 11th August and, finally, the 21 mile Edinburgh Kiltwalk on 15th September. Approximately £3,500 was raised from the four events: well done the Kiltwalkers!



Grant and Stewart looking very fresh during the Aberdeen Kiltwalk



Colin Gray and Stewart Carson with a friend during the Glasgow Kiltwalk



Stewart Carson and Colin Gray crossing the Tay Bridge on the Dundee Kiltwalk



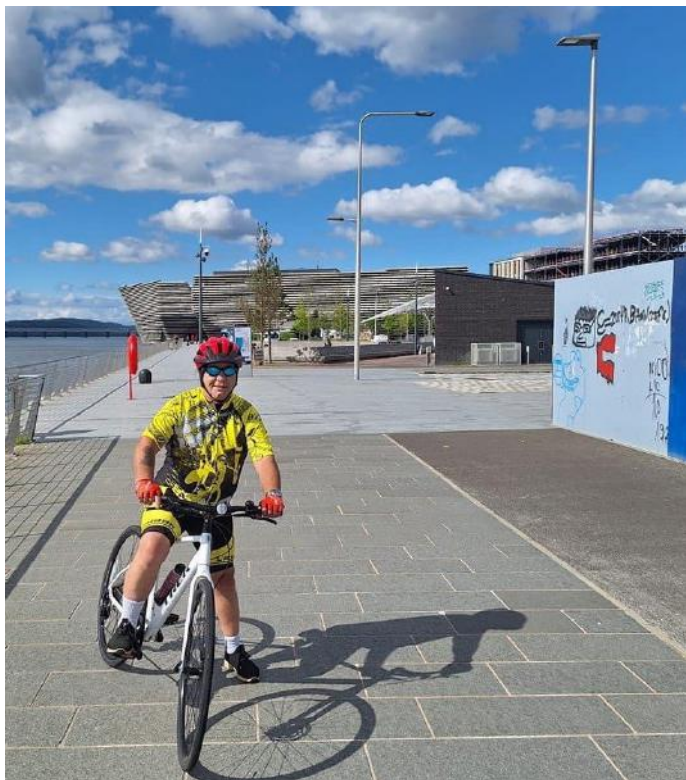
Colin Gray meeting up with Black Watch Veteran Shug Sheridan during the Glasgow Kiltwalk



10 miles to go for Colin and Stewart on the Edinburgh Kiltwalk



Not to be outdone, Jim (Shorty) Crawford, being a keen cyclist, was also busy having set himself a Cyclethon Challenge to cycle every day (weather permitting) throughout June. People were invited to enter a sweepstake to guess the total miles Jim would complete. At the end of the month Jim had covered an outstanding 488 miles and raised a fantastic £460.00. Well done Jim.



**Jim Crawford on Black Watch Parade about to start his Cyclethon**



**Jim Crawford meeting with Gus Angus on completion of the Cyclethon**

The project having been undertaken on behalf of the Association, all Association Branches, Association members, their families and friends and all readers of this magazine are asked to consider organising or participating in events to raise funds for this appeal; join in fundraising once you have gone back to read more about the preparation for this memorial described in a separate article. The memorial is about the Regiment as a whole from beginning to end, it is to be sited in one of Scotland's major cities, one of our major recruiting grounds and as such it deserves major support efforts from us all.

Corporate and personal donations can be made via either a bank transfer to the Black Watch Regimental Trust Account, through the Just Giving page or by sending a cheque. All monies received will be deposited into an account purely for the purposes of this project. Please use the Reference 'Dundee Memorial' when making a bank transfer.

#### **Details for Bank Transfers**

Name: The Black Watch Regimental Trust Limited

Sort Code: 83-47-00

Account Number: 11477506

#### **Address for sending cheques: payable to The Black Watch Regimental Trust**

The Dundee Memorial Fund

Black Watch Regimental Trust

Hay Street

Perth

PH1 5HS

**To make a donation through the Just Giving site**, please visit the Black Watch Castle & Museum website and follow the links or donate via Just Giving pages on Facebook.

A huge Thank You to all those who have made donations thus far, either through a direct donation to the BWRT, via Just Giving, as a sponsor for the Kiltwalks or Cyclethon, by participating in a raffle, auction, scratchcard, or throwing money in a bucket or by donating a prize to be raffled or auctioned. Every single penny is accounted for and hugely appreciated.

## **ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA**

### *Royal Hospital Chelsea*

The Royal Hospital Chelsea has been the home of the Chelsea Pensioners since 1692 and since its first residents moved in 332 years ago providing accommodation and care for its 300 In-Pensioners. However, it does more today than ever before as the institution now represents, very publicly, the covenant that exists between the nation and its Armed Forces. Collectively, the Chelsea Pensioners attend over 600 external events a year, the highest profile being over Remembrance weekend, and the general public are always interested in the lives of our In-Pensioners.

Inside the gates, the In-Pensioners are a vibrant community involved in a wide range of activities with 66 acres of grounds and gardens to enjoy, and facilities including a newly built hobby centre nestled amongst our historic buildings. We have regular entertainment nights and opportunities for socialising including external visits to places of interest. Visits to Corps and Regimental museums are always well attended.

In-Pensioners have many different interests and experiences which helps to create the sense of community and comradeship that is felt here. Life as a Chelsea Pensioner encourages a sense of pride and belonging that is so important for veterans.

We are in constant need of new recruits who hold the values and standards needed to represent this great institution and to be advocates for the wider veteran community. We recruit both male and female former soldiers, of any religion, ethnicity, or cultural background, from all regiments and corps, and from all parts of the UK and beyond.

Criteria for application:

- A former Private Soldier, Non-Commissioned Officer, Warrant Officer of the British Army. Late Entry Officers may apply subject to having served time in the ranks but will wear their soldier rank on their Chelsea Pensioner uniform.
- In receipt of your State Pension or eligible to receive it.
- Free of financial obligation to support a spouse of family (we do not accept applications from individuals who are currently married, in a civil partnership or have children under 18 yrs. old)

- Able to live independently in our Long Ward accommodation. We don't accept applications from those who currently require residential or nursing care.

If you are looking for something more from life in retirement or still have the urge and drive to do something different and think you have what it takes to be a Chelsea Pensioner, then get in touch. Our Admissions Team would love to hear from you.

Many thanks,

Greta Kendall (Admissions Officer)

E-mail: [admissions@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk](mailto:admissions@chelsea-pensioners.org.uk)

<https://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/become-chelsea-pensioner>

## VETERANS' UNCLAIMED ARMED FORCES PENSIONS

Historically, around 2,000 preserved Armed Forces Pensions go unclaimed each year. Anyone serving after April 1975, now aged 60 or over could have an Armed Forces pension if they served for two years or more. The pension is not paid automatically and veterans must apply to Veterans UK using AFPS Form 8 or call 0800 085 3600.

The main points to note are;

People who joined The Regular Army before 6 April 2005 automatically joined AFPS 75 and the following people could be eligible.

- Those who left service after 1 April 1975 but before 1 April 1978 and are now aged 60 or over, if they completed five years or more of reckonable service and were 26 or over when they left.
- Those who left service after 1 April 1978 but before 6 April 1988 and are now aged 60 or over, if they completed five years or more of reckonable service.
- Those who left service after 6 April 1988 if they completed at least two years' reckonable service from aged 18 for non-commissioned ranks or age 21 for officers.
- The pension is payable at the age of 60 for service up to and including 6 April 2006 and at the age of 65 for service after 6 April 2006.

Different rules apply for AFPS 05, FTRS 97, RFPS 05 and AFPS 15 but if you have a deferred pension that is not due to be payable for a little while, you can request a forecast of the benefits by submitting an AFPS Form 14 to Veterans UK.

**(Editor's note:** I am grateful to Roddy Riddell for providing this extract from an article that appeared in the Autumn 2024 Pennant Magazine, the journal of The Forces' Pension Society)

## TRAINING GRANTS TO SUPPORT ASSOCIATION MEMBERS TO UPGRADE, BROADEN OR OTHERWISE IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS.

The Association is often asked whether it is able to support or otherwise provide funding for its members to upgrade their employment skills and qualifications. The motivation may be to renew existing qualifications or to acquire new ones to present oneself better to a new employment opportunity. This is most definitely part of the Association's remit in providing support and help to its members. Applications can be made direct to the Welfare Committee via [assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk](mailto:assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk).

Members, and those who otherwise served in The Black Watch, may not be aware that they can bid for funds to pay for courses. Whether they be

for retraining or broadening and upgrading their skills, such as driving, HGV, agricultural, warehousing, or specific IT or management courses to get a better job the list is almost limitless.

If readers are aware of individual members of the Association or those who otherwise served in The Black Watch needing to upgrade or acquire qualifications, they are asked to emphasise to these people that this access to funds exists and encourage them to contact the Association, whether via email or phone on 01738 638152 and ask for the Association office to call back.

## BLACK WATCH ASSOCIATION VISIT TO SAINT VALERY 11 TO 16 JUNE 2025

The Association intends to run a visit to Saint Valery, France, over the period 11 to 16 June 2025. Details will be confirmed to Association members in January 2025.

In outline:

We will travel by coach from Perth via either Hull or travelling down to Dover to arrive in France on Thursday 12 June. That and the return trip departing pm Sunday 15 June will be paid for by the Association.

Over pm 12 – am 15 June we will be conducting battlefield study of the events leading up to the surrender in 1940 and commemoration activities as an Association and with other 51st Division regimental associations and the French authorities.

Accommodation for yourself and spouse/partner in France will be booked centrally in Dieppe – for ease of transport and timings, and paid for by those participating. As an approximate guide price a single per night will be ~£95.

All meals taken while travelling and in France will be at the cost of the individual.

If you wish to join separately for part or all of the visit you are welcome to make your own travel and accommodation arrangements but to keep the Association informed of when you will be part of the overall visit.

To book a place provisionally contact [assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk](mailto:assoc@theblackwatch.co.uk) with contact details of yourself and - if applicable your spouse/partner, and of anyone else from the Association you intend, at this stage, to be travelling with.

Remember:

Check your passport and UK Global Health Insurance Card will be in date 6 months after the trip, ie to December 2025

Find out provisionally what travel health insurance you'll need over and above basic treatment.

Now!