Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia)
Serving the Crown continuously since 1539
 Longer than any other Regiment in the British Army

Dining Club Newsletter
March 2016

Dates for your diary:

**Annual Luncheon:** Saturday 21 May 2016
**Sapper 300 Open Day** at Monmouth: Saturday 9 July 2016
**Summer Ball:** Saturday 30 July 2016. **Book by the end of April**
**Annual Dinner:** Saturday 3 September 2016
**Militia Crossing 17:** Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 March 2017

Who are these glamorous ladies, and where are they?
Find out on page 4
Louise Wood

We regret to announce the death of Louise Wood who sadly passed away on Monday 29 February 2016. Louise was the widow of Captain Michael Wood of 6 Field Engineer Squadron of the Canadian Army. She accompanied Michael on numerous trips to Monmouth when he was the liaison officer with 6 FES. Louise was born in Calgary and her parents were from Cwmparc in the Rhondda; she and Michael met in Bermuda when he was serving in the Bermuda Police and Louise was nursing. Michael was an honorary member of the R Mon RE (M) Dining Club. Their only son Robert is an officer in the Canadian Army Reserve having previously served as a Lieutenant in 6FES.

Brigadier Bill Mackereth

Some members will be interested to know that there is to be a Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Brigadier Bill Mackereth, former Colonel, The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment [Berkshire & Wiltshire], Commander 160 (Wales) Brigade and Secretary TAVRA for Wales, at 1400 hrs on Thursday 21st April 2016 in St Thomas and St Edmund's Church, Salisbury, SP1 1BA.

Anyone attending is cordially invited back to the Wardrobe in The Close, SP1 2EX, for refreshments after the service.

Parking is very limited at The Wardrobe and will be limited to family and disabled persons only. However, there is public car parking available in New Street, SP1 2PH which is within walking distance of both the Church and The Wardrobe.
Members’ News

Please let us have your news. Nothing is too trivial and don’t be modest! Your fellow members are always interested to know what you are up to.

- Those who remember Robert Edwards, who joined the Regiment in 1946, following service during WW2, may be interested to learn that, now in his nineties with a memory that is sadly deteriorating, he is still able to have a conversation where recognition of past events and indeed passed friends and colleagues breaks through. Loneliness is his biggest issue and his son asks that, whether you know him or not, if anybody is near Queens Court Nursing Home in Buckhurst Hill in Essex, would they mind dropping by for a chat. If you do, please report back!

- Neil Witcombe has handed over command of the Regiment to Scott Spencer who is the first Militia Commanding Officer for 13 years.

- Dirk Nusink has returned to regimental duties after some years in Afghanistan as an Army Interpreter.

- Alastair Cooper is now serving in Glasgow having handed over his appointment as Assistant Commander 170 (Infra Sp) Engr Gp to Pete Fisk.

- Mick Cole has left the Regiment.

- Phil Ord is back with the Regiment (again) as Training Major (again).

- Steve Gadd has taken over as RCMO at RHQ.

- Dave Jones is to be Assistant Commander 8 Brigade on promotion to Colonel.

- Previous Adjutant, Andy Vaughan is to be OC 20 Fd Sqn.

- Nick Spratley will shortly hand over command of the Jersey Field Squadron.

- Jim Edwards has handed command of 225 Squadron to Darren Williams.

- Rob Porter is to command 77 Armd Engr Sqn.
Militia Crossing (3 to 6 Mar 16)

Chairman’s report on our visit to the World War One battlefields around the Ypres salient in Belgium

Well you had to be there to experience and appreciate the great times we had. It was all the best bits of the original ten Regimental Battlefield tours without the discomfort of the overnight journey and with the benefit of having partners, relatives and friends in attendance as well.

The ferry crossings were smooth, the weather was mostly good (just a bit of rain on Friday morning). The hotel was superb and the coach plus driver excellent though a tad warm (the coach, not the driver). Vic, the tour guide, gave us our money’s worth (whether we wanted it or not) and a great time was had by all. We had a few tears and a few thought provoking stories and histories to dwell on but it was a learning experience for us all and well worth the effort of attending.

We laid wreaths and held short services at the graves of four of the Regiment’s fallen in cemeteries located right across the Salient. My thanks go to the Regimental Padre, Canon Leigh Richardson, for conducting the services and to John Carter for the time he spent researching the soldiers’ backgrounds. The tour visited Tyne Cot, Polygon Wood, the Hooge Crater, Hill 60 and many other notable sites and museums. On Friday night many of the party attended the Menin Gate ceremony in Ypres before visiting various hostelries in the old city.
We managed to have lunch *al fresco* on the second day and the Dinner (we couldn’t be a Dining Club without having a Dinner could we?) held that night was a great success with new friendships made and old friendships re-forged. Kevin and Christine McGrath made the long trip from the south of France to be with us and despite not have been seen by many for such a long time we all just carried on as we did before! Two notable events were Brian Henderson’s step-son, James, being taught how to drink by the Padre and our driver, Rob, having to leave the room because Ray Morris was making him laugh too much!
We took the opportunity to have a look at Hussar Redoubt, the only surviving Royal Artillery Observation Post built by the Regiment’s No 1 (Siege) Company in 1916, one hundred years earlier. Although members of the Regiment have looked at this building from the road on previous visits, on this occasion, using a bottle a single malt whisky as a bribe, we were able to persuade the farmer who owns the land on which it stands to let us in to see it up close, inside and out. These remarkable buildings withstood the heaviest of German artillery and, although the others have been demolished to make way for modern buildings, Hussar Redoubt stands as testament to the quality of the engineering with which they were created. Indeed, for this achievement, two Regimental officers and fifteen men were decorated and the farmer now has a Regimental shield as a reminder of who built the bunker in his land.

We were also able to stop and have a look at the new Welsh memorial at Langemark which was erected in 2014 in memory of ‘all those of Welsh descent who took part in the First World War between 1914 and 1918’. This is in addition to the 38th Welsh Division Memorial at Mametz in the Somme and is the result of a three-year campaign by supporters of the Welsh Memorial in Flanders committee who wanted a permanent dedication to the Welsh victims of the conflict.

All in all the tour was a great success and John is already planning for the next epic adventure to the Somme next year so start saving now!

We will publish the latest Regimental news in the next edition.
At a 77 Brigade Dinner last November three officers of the Regiment bravely pitted themselves in mortal combat (or it may have been portal combat as much port had been consumed) with an equal number of HAC members in order to decide which regiment was the oldest. Unfortunately the results of the encounter were inconclusive.
**Spring Cleaning?**

If you find any R Mon RE (M) rank slides, all ranks and all colours, or Regimental cap badges, the PRI can no longer acquire these items cost effectively and so any donations would be gratefully accepted.

If you have a Number One Dress Hat or a Mess Kit that you wish to sell or pass on to a new owner then please let us know.

**Items for sale:**


Regimental Tankards (excellent presents). £25.

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**Who’s who in the Dining Club?**

**President:**

The Joint Honorary Colonel
Maj Gen Dickie Davis

**Chairman:**

Maj Keith Down

**Secretary and Newsletter Editor**

Maj John Carter

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**Contact Details**

To apply for membership or to notify a change of your own contact details:

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**Message from the Regimental Trustees**

At a recent Museum meeting, plans to bring the Regimental History up to date from 1996 were discussed as there has been a lot of change since then. As they had talked about something similar several years ago, Ian Thompson and John Charles agreed to lead on this and have asked Dining Club members if they would look out for interesting photos and other information - pre and post 1996 - that we have all squirrelled away over the years. Once they have drafted out a format of chapters/themes they will let us know what they need.

The Intention is to have something with lots of visual content perhaps in the form of a coffee table glossy reference book. Just to get you all thinking…and looking.

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Did you receive this Newsletter by post?

If the answer is yes and you have an email address we would be very pleased if you would send it to us so that we can contact you by email in future.

Otherwise, don’t worry, we will continue to send your newsletters by Royal Mail!

If you would like to write to us, the address hasn’t changed since 1853:

**The Castle, Monmouth**, but it now has a postcode: **NP25 3BS**.