



# THE DINING CLUB

Preserving the comradeship of  
officers and former officers of  
R Mon RE(M) for 100 years

## NEWSLETTER

June 2023 Edition 13

### **Message from the Honorary Colonel, our Club President, Colonel I C Thompson TD**

Fellow Members

Amid all the pomp and circumstance of the Coronation and inevitable concentration on the Household Division I just wanted to reassure members that we were represented amid the Corps and Regiments contingent by Spr Jennifer Hudson from Bristol Troop of 100 Fd Sqn R Mon RE(M).

The luncheon to commemorate the 100th anniversary of our Dining Club on 24 June 2023 is a major milestone in itself. Keith and David have put a lot of effort in already and will continue to do so right up until the day itself to ensure its success. If you are still undecided do please try and make the effort to join us.

Just to let all the membership know Lt Col Gareth Stockman is now Commanding Officer. We also have a new Adjutant in Captain Sam Pendlebury RE and we welcome his family to the Regiment.

Ian

**Current information on the Regiment can be found on the  
Regimental website <https://rmonrem.com>**

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**Change of Commanding Officers.** Lt Col Al Robinson RE relinquished Command in **March 2023** to Lt Col Gareth Stockman R Mon RE(M). Gareth spent much of his time at 108 Fd Sqn before gaining his majority. He then became RHQ Group OC before commanding 100 Fd Sqn. He was previously serving at UOTC Wales as Second in Command.

### Regimental Trust change of Bank Details

During 2022 we were informed that Nationwide were no longer offering current account banking to charities and we had to look elsewhere for an account for our Charitable Trust. This was far more difficult than was envisaged and quite frankly most of the high street banks just don't seem bothered. Lloyds for example wouldn't offer an account to any charity that was a 'Trust'! Sadly, the process took so long that we were unable to take advantage of account transfer facilities to maintain standing orders etc when we eventually obtained an account. Therefore, could I ask those of you that kindly supported the Charitable Trust to consider starting new mandates for our new account which is:

Nat West Bank

Account name – R Mon RE(M) Charitable Trust - although when you search on internet/mobile banking the details show as '(M) Charitable Trust'.

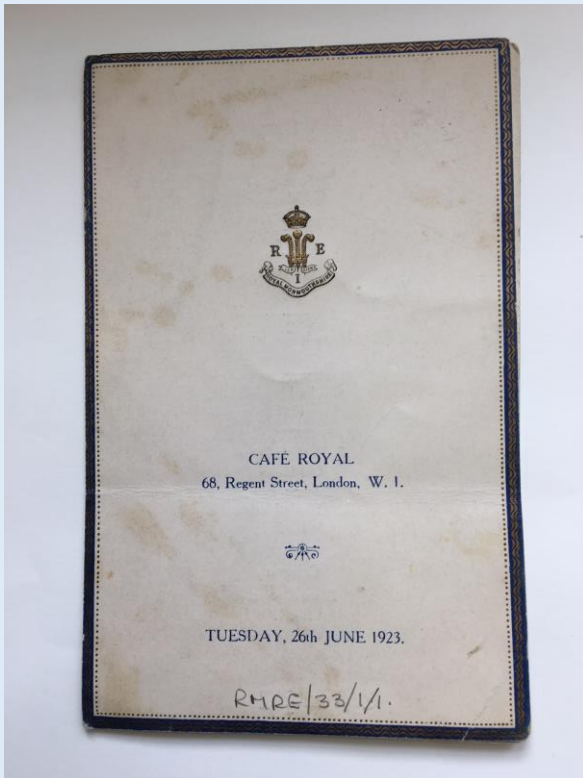
Sort Code: 56-00-59      Account Number: 35577991

Those of you who use the Monmouthshire Building Society account need do nothing, as it is still in existence.

The Trust is a force for good across many areas of Regimental life so I do hope you will renew your support and indeed some new donors come forward as well.

Ian  
Trustee

# 2023 Events



## Dining Club Centenary Luncheon at the Officers' Mess, Great Castle House

**Saturday 24 June 2023**

This luncheon will commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the earliest record of an R Mon RE(M) reunion event which was a dinner at the renowned Café Royal at 68 Regent Street in Piccadilly, London.

We don't plan to go to London but will replicate the menu and wines (as closely as we can afford to!).

## LAST DATE FOR BOOKINGS 12 JUNE 2023

Timings:

1000 - Early arrivals willing to assist in setting up

1200 - Reception Opens

1245-1250 - Photograph

1255 - Introductory Address

1300 - Luncheon served

Officers Mess **Summer Ball 2 September 2023**. Dining Club will be invited to request tickets. If you are interested, please register this with the Dining Club Secretary soonest. Once details and ticket allocations are confirmed we will notify members.

**The Annual Dinner and AGM will be held on 21 October 2023**. This is one of our main events in the calendar and we do hope to maintain the high attendance that it has attracted in the past

## **A Brief History of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia) Officers' Dining Club**

The earliest record we have of an R Mon RE(M) reunion event is a menu card, with the Regimental crest printed on the cover, for a dinner at the Café Royal in Regent Street, Piccadilly on Tuesday 26 June 1923. At the turn of the 20th century this renowned restaurant and meeting place was frequented by those who wanted to see and be seen. It was once considered to have the finest wine cellar in the world and, in addition to probably allowing those Regimental officers who survived the Great War to dine together, was frequented by the likes of Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, D H Lawrence, George Bernard Shaw, Winston Churchill, Brigitte Bardot, Elizabeth Taylor, Mick Jagger and.....well you get the idea. It was demolished in 2008 but four years later, from its ruins, rose the 5-star Hotel Café Royal where you can take tea in the Oscar Wilde Lounge today for £80 (each).

This dinner took place after the Regiment had gone into suspended animation following the end of the War. However, it would not have been a disbandment event because the idea of the inclusion of two R Mon RE(M) Army Field Companies in an - at that time unnamed - Army Reserve, which was under consideration was already in the wind. This need for an additional reserve, comprising mainly of tradesmen was discussed in parliament during the Army Estimates for 1923/24 debate in March 1923. We can only speculate that in addition to possibly reuniting Regimental officers, the Honorary Colonel, Lord Raglan, and the very well-connected former CO, H. E. Morgan Lyndsay, who had been adjutant and a Boer War company commander with R Mon RE and was himself appointed Honorary Colonel the following year, entertained as guests, those members of the War Office who needed to be made aware of our Regimental credentials and availability. If so, it seems to have worked because the War office formally wrote to Morgan Lyndsay the following year proposing the Regiment's revival as part of the new Supplementary Reserve.

The next reunion dinner for which we have a record was on 16 March 1935 at The King's Head Hotel in Newport for which tickets were available for half a crown (12½p today). Colonel Lyndsay was still the Honorary Colonel and presided. He died later that year.

The museum has a photograph of Dining Club members on the steps outside Great Castle House taken in 1939 just before the two field companies deployed, separately, to the British Expeditionary Force in France and RHQ was disbanded.

After the Second World War, with no RHQ to keep an eye on them, the two R Mon RE(M) companies had practically ceased to exist. However, the Regiment was re-formed in March 1948 when it once again took over the officers' mess in Great Castle House which had first been used for that purpose in the 1870's.

Sadly very few officers' mess records survive to document the Dining Club's activities and events. However, there is a 1956 photograph of club members and we know that members paid their subscription with an annual banker's standing order, originally for 10 shillings (50p today). A few 50p annual subscriptions were still being paid less than 20 years ago! This subscription was increased to £2, then £5 and eventually to the present £10. The club has a formal constitution, holds and minutes an annual general meeting, elects its officers, and audits its accounts for approval by the members. Formerly in the Adjutants' job description, in the early 1980's, Lt Col John Pope, MBE, TD became secretary and ran the club with great energy and efficiency until he retired in 2013. In addition to the club's raison d'etre - the autumn annual dinner - a luncheon in the spring has become popular and both continue to this day. Regular newsletters are published and, since 2016, pandemics permitting, the club has organised an annual battlefield tour to France, Belgium, and most recently, Jersey. A tour to Normandy in 2024 during the 80th anniversary year of the invasion may be organised if sufficient members and their guests are willing to support it.

The object of the club has always been, and remains, to preserve the companionship of officers who have served in the senior Regiment of the Army Reserve.

## Obituary

### Lieutenant Colonel R J Pope MBE TD

Members will remember that we informed you on 15 December last year that John Pope had sadly died at the age of 87.

John was probably the most influential regimental officer of the post-war period and his commitment to R Mon RE(M), and later the Regimental Dining Club, stemmed from a deep and lifetime love for the Regiment.

He was born in 1935 and grew up in Monmouth during the second world war eventually becoming a pupil at Monmouth School for Boys from where he won a scholarship to Oxford. He read physics and in 1954 was commissioned into the Royal Engineers, later transferring to R Mon RE(M). He completed his national service in North Africa.

Following his graduation in 1958 he worked as an engineer with Texaco in Trinidad after which, in the early 1960's, he returned to the UK for a brief stay in Somerset where he re-joined the Territorial Army as a Royal Engineer. He moved to Ross-on-Wye shortly afterwards where he transferred once again to R Mon RE(M).

During a successful career in management consultancy based at Ross he dedicated his spare time to the Regiment becoming 2IC to Alex Carter who took command in 1975. By this time he had become a regimental touchstone; his briefing of incoming regular officers - Commanding Officers, Training Majors and Adjutants - on the peculiarities of the T A and the history and traditions of its senior Regiment were highly regarded and valued.



**John at the Annual Luncheon in May 2016**

The RHQ post of 'Militia Major' was created for him so that his invaluable contribution to regimental life could continue and in 1985 he was once again appointed as 2IC by John Robertson when he took command.

John relished being mess secretary where he was able to combine his inherent skills as a manager and organiser with his intimate knowledge of the Regiment and the Officers' Mess to lay on dinners and luncheons for the great and the good, including royalty, and summer balls for fun and dancing, something for which he had a passion! He was immensely proud of once having carried the Regimental flag to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.

He was made an MBE in 1988 and promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1989 when he was appointed Chief Royal Engineer (Home Defence) at HQ Wales in Brecon under the command of Major General Morgan Llewellyn.

On Christmas Eve in 1957 John married Christa. They had met in Libya during his national service when she was one of only eleven western girls working in Benghazi among around four thousand troops! Christa was also made an MBE for her work with the Women's Royal Voluntary Service. Tragically, Christa died in 1995. They had three sons - Folke, Torsten and Lars, and a daughter - Kerstin. Torsten, joined R Mon RE (M) and took command of 225 Squadron in 1994.