



Royal Tank Regiment Association London Branch

www.rtr-london-branch.org.uk



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N e w s l e t t e r

November December 2021

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Chairman's Christmas Message

After being unable to share Christmas with our loved ones last year, I am hoping that this year will see you meeting with family and friends but at the same time remaining safe.

Looking back over 2021 we have enjoyed some very happy moments together as an Association although as always it must be tinged with some sadness with the passing of lovely people who we will remember with such affection.

I hope that 2022 will be a year in which we can get together more often and I am sure that your committee will do everything we can to make this possible. To this end, we shall endeavour to arrange an association trip to Belgium and France.

I wish everyone a happy, safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

With best wishes

Mel Swan



Editorial

November is always the busiest month of our year and 2021 was no exception. Regrettably it was a sad month as we report the loss of our dear friend Fred Bolwell on the eve of Cambrai.

London Branch members and almost every RTR Association will be affected by Fred's passing to the Green Fields as he was so active and so well known. All will mourn him deeply. See pages 10 and 11 for some lovely personal memories of Fred.



There are plenty of birthdays in December we wish Ena Azzopardi, Maureen Folgate, Joyce Fox, Terry Jones, Rod McCaffrey, Les Pierson, Alan Rigby, David Waterman, David Wilkinson and Drew Westwater all the very best. January brings post-Christmas birthday joy for William Bagley, Jackie Clarke, Eric Geeves, Paula Glanville, Clint Groom, Tony (Bootsie) Harnett, Matt Huston, Jenny Powlesland, Clive Pritchard, Ed Smith, Tom Stewart, and Wendy Whale.

It is Membership Renewal Time again. Attached (or enclosed if by post) is a Membership Renewal Form. It was agreed at the AGM that Membership for 2022 would increase by £1 to £11 per annum. Payment is due on or after 1 January 2022 by cheque or by bank transfer. Reminders will be sent in February and all non-payers will be removed from membership on 31 March. PLEASE NOTE THE NEW MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Roger Burton – his details are on Page 1.

The next issue of the Newsletter will be February/March 2022. Contributions by 15 February.

Sue Hill

New Members

It is a delight to welcome Richard Cole 48RTR (who has just turned 100) and Richard Haddrell 2RTR and previously a junior leader to membership of London Branch.

Action Needed re Cambrai 105

Friday 18 to Monday 22 November 2022 Cambrai 105 – Branch Trip to Cambrai – Expressions of interest needed by your committee for HHQ planning purposes. Please ring, message or email Secretary Ian Tompsett if you think you might like to travel to France in November 2022.

London Branch Meetings

There was no November London Branch Meeting and the December meeting (Saturday 11 at 1.30 for 2.00pm) will be held on ZOOM as will the January 2022 meeting on Saturday 8 January. Meetings are held on the second Saturday of every month except November.

Opening of the Field of Remembrance London Branch Planting of the Crosses The Parade to the Cenotaph

On Thursday 11 November in the presence of the Duchess of Cornwall, the Fields of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey were opened. Fred Bolwell stood Sentry at the RAC/RTR plot. Dean Hutton, Regimental Secretary, Lisa Burgess, Events Coordinator at HHQ observed along with a contingent from Bournemouth Poole and District Branch which included 95-year-old Veteran Reg Fox. The Branch was represented by Mel Swan, In-Pensioner Johnny Walker, Bob Swiniarski,

Alan Cooper, Ian Tompsett and Carley Ansell. Johnny, Reg and Fred had a quick photo opportunity with Daniel Kawczynski MP.



The Duchess spent some time talking to Fred as she reviewed the plots. Little did we know that this would be his last official duty for the Regiment and the Associations before his unexpected death on Friday 19th November. Most of those present adjourned to the Red Lion for lunch and a long overdue catch up.

At the **Planting of the Crosses** on Saturday 13

November the Standard Party, Veterans & Serving Personnel from Badger assembled behind RAC/RTR Plots. The service opened with the recently discovered AA Milne Poem *Tanks* read by Imogen Ansell. Major Rory McCullough RTR Officer Commanding BADGER called the Parade to attention and the Branch Cross was planted by Mel Swan. The Exhortation was read and we were fortunate to have been offered the services of an Irish Guards Trumpeter who sounded The Last Post as the Standards were lowered and two minutes' silence observed, before Reveille. The RTR Collect was read by Major McCullough, followed by The Kohima Epitaph - *When you go home, tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow, we gave our today*. The WW1 poem *Lost*, By Charles Hamilton Sorley, Dec 1914, was read by your Editor before the Parade was dismissed.



The troops and the trumpeter, LCpl Adam Collins resplendent in his bearskin, gave an air of solemnity and all others in the Field of Remembrance stopped and remained silent for the duration of the service. It was very moving and poignant.



We then adjourned to the Red Lion in Parliament for late/lunch early supper. The contingent from Badger joined us and it was a lovely opportunity to share information about the Regiment and its activities in the last few months.



They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We will remember them.
We will remember them.



The RTRA AGM was held on Saturday 20 at the Union Jack Club and many Branches were represented. The occasion presented an excellent opportunity for much convivial catching up afterwards.

The Regiment took pride in their annual parade to the Cenotaph as did the many RTR Veterans and Association members who had assembled in London for a weekend of activities. London Branch RTRA was well represented, Bob Swiniarski, Standard Bearer carried the Branch Standard and John Durrant the 8RTR Standard. Ian Tompsett laid a wreath at the Comet Crew Tank Memorial for the Branch, Alan Cooper for the 8th and Jim



Norquay on behalf of Medway Branch. Around sixteen wreaths were laid in total. Although the day was very cold, the sun shone and the Irish Guards Band did the day proud. Many branch members then

attended the Church Service before returning to central London for a traditional drink in the Barley Mow.



Photos show:

Robert Swiniarski, Standard Bearer. RTR Branch Standards at the Comet Memorial. Wreaths laid at the Comet Memorial. Sunday 21 November 2021.

Cambrai lunch Saturday 27 November

On a very windy and wet day we gathered along with guests Dave Larcombe and his wife Kathy, Mick Skerratt from RHC (kindly escorting Don Crassweller), Sgt Clements (Cyclops) and his wife Magdalena at the Holiday Inn Bloomsbury for our annual Cambrai Lunch.

Members gathered in the bar excited to see each other after such a long break in physical meetings. Mel Swan opened proceedings



by welcome our guests and then Special Order No. 6 was read by Allan Oliver, grace was said by Mel and then we proceeded to enjoy our meal. There is no truth in the rumour that the rather large half chicken was in fact half an emu!



After the loyal toasts, I had the honour of speaking about six members who had passed to the green fields in 2021. Four of whom would absolutely have been at the lunch. Sgt Clements then gave a report on behalf of Col Simon Ridgway who was unable to attend [see Page 7, - Ed.]. The wine continued to flow until everyone retired back to the bar to continue to share both happy and sad stories of the last two years. We are very grateful to Allan Oliver for organising the meal. More photos can be seen on the London Branch FB page.



Out and About Bournemouth Poole and District Meetings

BP&DB RTRA kindly invite London Branch Members to their ZOOM and/or in person meetings. At the November meeting guest speaker, Councillor David Kelsey, Mayor of Bournemouth, and Armed Forces Champion for the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council talked about his role. He highlighted that during Covid there has been an increase in the number of homeless ex Servicemen on the streets. Specific accommodation for veterans has been made available in the area which include temporary (3 months at a time) slots for those on the streets. A surprising number of homeless veterans are refusing help and just want to be left alone.

Other things David Kelsey highlighted: Tell your GP that you are ex-Forces, it can help you get fast track services; some councils look to recruit ex-military people and private firms are signing up to the armed forces covenant as aspects become mandatory rather than voluntary.

Snippets

Many thanks for this. Thanks for all you do for us old Tankies. The Newsletter brings back a lot of memories of my time with the 8th in the 50s **Arthur Stockley. Ex.8th RTR.**

Once again, many thanks for this wonderful newsletter. As always so well put together. Well done you & your team. Stay-Safe and keep up your good work. FEAR NAUGHT. John & Crew, Oxford.

Thank you very much for the lovely birthday card from London RTRA, **Pauline Gurling**

Thank you for the Newsletter with the obituary of Don Clough, which hit the right note. Also, the obit of Terry Smith. I served in 1RTR at the same time as Terry and knew him well. The whole Newsletter was very interesting, informative and well written. Alan Rigby



Many thanks for your birthday card which my Dad Richard enjoyed opening on his 100th birthday last Friday. **Tim Cole** [Richard also received a fabulous Fear Naught cushion from HHQ – see photo left. – Ed.]

I think that being old hits you before you know it and dates are not the dates you think. Graham Edwards says that he was sent to Catterick to train in 1958 and the Regt was 8RTR. I joined the Army in 1958 as an early recruit and was sent to Catterick in June 1958 for training and the Regiment doing the training was the 16th/5th Lancers. After training was complete I was sent to the 8RTR in Lovely Tidworth. (Oops I do not think that I should kid everyone that Tidworth was lovely.) I was still only 17 and the Regt (8RTR) was being posted to another lovely place (Fallingbostal) not a nice posting either. I was not posted to Germany until I turned 18 on Jan 12, 1959.

Somehow our dates seem to have a different Regt in Catterick.? Age does not help the memory box. (It does not help with trying to spell Fallingbostel either.) [That would be Fallingbostel Ed – Ed.]

Edward J Smith.

Facebook Group for RTR Riders

If you like to get out on two wheels you might like this group for bikers and scooterists who like to ride out and are either current serving members or veterans of the Royal Tank Regiment.

Amazing who you meet when you buy your groceries

Joffre Sprakes was in Morrisons in Armthorpe near Thorne where he lives and got chatting to a lively 93-year-old, Ray McKenzie, it so happened that Ray was in 4th tanks in 1945-48 when he did his National Service. Ray mentioned to Joffre that in 1945 he was part of a group who took three trucks from Dover, to Calais, then Marseille that were destined for Libya. Joffre is a great communicator and another day when shopping he met and chatted to an 86-year-old from the 16th/5th Lancers which was Joffre's Training Regiment in Catterick. Although they were there at the same time they had not met before.

New RTRA Branch Launched

Bob Swiniarski met some members of the new Anglia Branch at the Union Jack Club in November. The new branch is to be known as the RTRA East Anglian Branch, with a wide geographical catchment covering Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Norwich, and of being friendly, modern and supportive to all veterans. The branch will have a monthly “gathering” at each of the 3 locations, reducing travel and in addition the branch committee meeting will be held every 4 months at one of the venues.

Neil Kellett reports: “It was great to see so much support for the new branch at each location. The first committee meeting took place in Ipswich on 4 Sep 21, with 38 members. Geordie was appointed Branch President, Neil Kellett was elected as his Vice and Bob Catchpole the first Chairman. Volunteers also stepped forward Paul Clark, Carl Vinyard, Davie Donaldson, Justin Shuter, and Marie Ovenstone as Treasurer. There is still plenty to do, but membership is growing steadily with 55 confirmed so far with more applications pending. If you are posted to, live in or just passing through East Anglia, you have an open invitation to join us at any of our meetings, where you can meet with fellow Tankies who have a story to tell and a beer to share.”

Neil Kellett [eastanglianbranch@gmail.com if you wish to make contact – Ed.]



Five 5RTR Gunnery Instructors named

The mystery of the photograph in Sept/Oct News was revealed when Graham Edwards reminded me he had sent their names. Oops.

Left to right, standing, are Corporals "Bugs" Horne, "Olly" Hardy, Charlie Hale, "Eddy" Edwards (me) and, in front, Dick Abley.

Tales from the 50s - Weekend Bedding

A friend, later commissioned into 2RTR, was training at Mons Officer Cadet School. When cadets were allowed to go home for the weekend, they were supposed to hand their bedding into the stores and then collect it when they returned. This was clearly rather a chore but, if you didn't do this, you could be in trouble. To get round this, some cadets put their bedding into the roof space of their hut so that it would appear that they had complied with the order. The trap door into the roof was above a toilet compartment and you had to climb up on the seat to get into the roof. On one occasion, my friend was up in the roof putting his bedding away, farther along from the opening. When he returned and looked down, there was one of the sergeant-majors, on the instructing staff, using the loo! Fortunately, the sergeant-major just said “Going away for the weekend, Mr Salter?” and didn't take any further action.

Graham Edwards

RTR HHQ Announce RTR Webinars

The RTR History Group under the guidance of Lt Col (Retd) Gareth Davies is taking shape where a number of topics will be delivered online, recorded and available later in 2022 for those wishing to understand more about our history.

Briefings in the form of Webinars from the Regiment will start this year and form part of an effort to inform us all as to the activities of the Regiment, who you will know are active on Operation CABRIT. More on this can be found at:

<https://bit.ly/31B0E0C>

The first Webinar will take place on December 8 on ZOOM. We do hope as many people as possible will be able to join the Commanding Officers briefing.

Details: Topic: Royal Tank Regiment's Zoom Meeting

Time: Dec 8, 2021 6:00 PM London

<https://bit.ly/3Duvp4v>

Meeting ID: 878 1194 1999 and Passcode: Cambrai104

Regimental Report, given at Cambrai Lunch by Sgt Kieren Clements for Simon Ridgway

Overview - The last 24 months saw the Regiment deployed on all three Military Assistance to the Civil Authority tasks that the Army were called upon to support. All were to do with the national COVID effort: Op RESCRIPT, Op MOONSHOT, and Op ROSE. One of the only Regiments in the Army to do this the Regiment stepped up to the plate. The Troops really enjoyed the experience and found it rewarding as well as finding it brought the Squadrons together, providing a real sense of purpose. Over the last 9-12 months the Regiment has then had to focus on our core business and get back on tanks ready for deployment to Estonia on Operations CABRIT 8, 9 & 10.

AJAX – Currently on Mission Readiness Training for Op CABRIT 10 as part of the 1 R WELSH Battle Group. They will be conducting Ex TALLINN DAWN in the new year on Sennelager Training Area. They will then deploy to Estonia in March 2022, taking over from DREADNAUGHT as the Armoured Squadron in the enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group.

BADGER – are back from Op CABRIT 8 as part of the 1 MERCAIN Battle Group. They have conducted post tour leave and are now back in Tidworth. They will now focus on low level training.

CYCLOPS – have been holding the fort as the Rear Operations Group in Tidworth. They have unfortunately had many serials cancelled due to issues beyond the Regiment's control including an exercise in Cyprus. However, the Squadron's Notice To Move was reduced from 365 days to 24hrs in a single day when Op PITTING (related to operations in Afghanistan) was initiated. The Squadron was then held at readiness to surge out and support 16 Air Assault Brigade. A huge achievement pulling an Armoured Squadron together at short notice and getting them ready to help the recovery effort. In 2022 CYCLOPS will be part of the RTR Battle Group on Combat Readiness Training and be fully immersed back into tank warfighting and held at readiness throughout 2023.

DREADNAUGHT – the Armoured Squadron in the RTR Battle Group on Op CABRIT 9. It has been through the full training progression starting on ranges at Castlemartin in January/February, through Ex TALLINN DAWN in Germany, and onto Estonia. DREADNAUGHT will recover to Tidworth in March 2022, have a well earned rest and post tour leave, then commence the progression to Combat Readiness Training in September and October and held at readiness throughout 2023.

EGYPT – Like always, has supported all the Regiment's activity and has been pulled from pillar to post. With a large portion of the Squadron deployed on Op CABRIT 9, a skeleton crew has had to support the majority of the Regiment back in the UK – a tall ask which they have delivered well. 2022 sees yet more support to the progression to Combat Readiness Training and everything that comes with it (firing etc). It will then be held at readiness throughout 2023.

FALCON – They have been heavily involved with Fuchs sustainment plan and getting back fully into the swing of things post COVID with Live Agent Training, career courses and general training.

Colonel Simon Ridgway OBE, Vice-President London Branch RTRA

Report from Bob Swiniarski, Welfare Officer

Several of our members have been poorly recently and have been sent flowers, get well cards and/or received a phone call on behalf of the Committee. We wish them a speedy recovery. Please do get in touch if you know of anyone who would appreciate a cheery call.

It was nice to receive a lovely thank you for flowers: Many thanks for the beautiful array of flowers I received this morning. It was a lovely gift and will certainly aid my recovery. Thank you and the Committee and Members of the Royal Tank Regiment London Branch for their thoughtfulness.

Members have also been telephoning to say that they have received a Christmas Hamper from RTR HQ. These are a gift of the RTR Benevolence Fund and are destined for those who have been poorly, are going through tough times, are on their own or have given unstintingly of their time and effort for the benefit of the regiment and or its members. Intel says that they are magnificent and contain lots of biscuits and cake as well as other excellent edible items!!

Gunnery Demonstrations

Throughout my working life, soldier and civilian, I have been involved in tank gunnery development. Consequently, many times have I taken a part in Gunnery demonstrations, as tank commander or demo controller and planner. Seven are of more interest than the others, three at Lulworth and one each at Kirkcudbright, Jordan, Dubai and Iran. In this piece I will relate what happened in one of the seven, a sales venture firing prototype CVR(T) Scorpion at Lulworth. I was OC Gunnery Branch ATDU. The year was 1971.

I was called to a planning meeting at HQ DRAC. Funny, I thought, DRAC are not normally involved in such matters. I was even more surprised when I arrived to find three from the Tactical school and the Gunnery school absent. Now, the Tactical school staff then were gentlemen that roamed the Dorset countryside in fine weather with maps, sitting on shooting sticks and commanding notional troops battling notional enemies, but not during Ascot week. The idea that they were to be involved with anything as real, as shooting guns bigger than a 12 bore, clearly horrified them.

The meeting had been called by a cavalry Colonel on DRAC staff, a stranger to me. He began by telling us that he disliked Gunnery school demonstrations, too divorced from tactics. Thus, this demonstration was to be run by the Tactical school. This was clearly not a planning meeting but an “orders group”. His demeanour indicated that it was unfortunate that I should be involved but a necessity as the only source of vehicle and trained crew at that time.

The Colonel told us of his plan. On a Wednesday afternoon a Scorpion would be air dropped on Heath range, hopefully into dead ground where the vehicle and crew who would do the firing were to be concealed. The Scorpion to fire would drive out to a suitable position and the shooting begin. I interjected, “Firing is not possible on Heath range on Wednesday afternoons because the Clay mine is working”. “I will soon change that” he said. I should have left it at that but could not resist adding, “You will need an act of parliament to close the mine on a Wednesday”.

The Colonel then tabled a schedule of shooting. “I have a problem with serials 1, 2 & 3” I said. “Scorpion, like the Saladin we all know, does not fire APDS. If they did, these light vehicles would cartwheel backwards. As regards serial 4, there is only one moving target gear on Heath and maximum range to it is 900 metres. On a more minor point, delete Browning because Scorpion does not mount Browning, insert GPMG. Also, I advise not to fire MG above 800 metres range on demonstrations because the 7.62 tracer ammunition we have burns out in flight at this range. When firing at longer ranges, trace burn out causes the spectators to think fire is missing plus”.

I am not anti Cavalry. I have happily worked for them, with them and had them working for me. Some are life lasting friends. For years I was proud to sail with RACYC burgee and ensign. But, “I’ve made up my mind, don’t confuse me with reality,” whatever the plumage of the speaker, offends me.

Realising that I had behaved with lack of tact, as soon as the meeting was over I hurried back to Lt.Col Laver, then OC ATDU, to brief him on events. Cameron Laver (now dead) was one of two exceptionally clever RTR officers I ever knew**. Whilst briefing him, the ‘phone rang. Clearly the subject was a complaint about my negativity. I heard Col Laver’s reply. “Yes, but to fault Ralph, he does not suffer fools gladly. He knows his stuff, you are lucky to have him”.

In the event, neither DRAC staff nor the Tactical school played any further part in planning or running this demonstration. I ran it with help from the Gunnery school on Bindon range. The demonstration went well. The serial I introduced, when a spectator was asked to select a target, was appreciated. There was no air drop at Lulworth. A Scorpion, I was told, was dropped on Salisbury plain two days after the firing. The prospective customer spectators saw it land, bounce, and come to rest upside down. Notwithstanding this, Scorpion sold well overseas.

I was later as a civilian to fit laser rangefinders to Scorpions in Dubai but that is another story. Scorpions operated in the Falkland war equipped with Kinetic Energy recovery ropes that I invented [see July/August 2021 Newsletter. – Ed.] for Ferrets in 1968 when with the 2RTR. I re-designed the rope for the heavier CVR(T) in 1971.

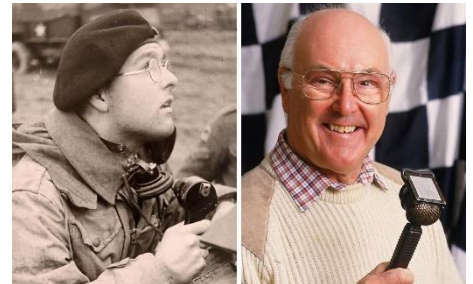
****The other clever RTR officer I knew was Brig. Bill Fairbairn (also dead). Fairbairn and Laver were not similar but both brilliant in their differing ways.**

Ralph Bagnall-Wild (Major) 2, 5, 8 RTR

Famous Tankies – Murray Walker

Murray Walker, who died in March of this year was a Tank man. Born in Birmingham he was an only child. Evacuated with fellow school pupils to Westward Ho in Devon in WW2, Walker who had learned the bugle rose to the rank of Company Sergeant Major of the School Corps. When conscripted into the armed forces Murray volunteered for tanks but had to wait until a training place became available. In the meantime he worked with the Dunlop Rubber Company. In October 1942 he travelled to Wool in Dorset, where he reported to the 30th Primary Training Wing at Bovington, the Royal Armoured Corps headquarters.

He later graduated from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and was commissioned into the Royal Scots Greys. The salute at his commissioning parade was taken by General Eisenhower. He went on to command a Sherman tank and to participate in the Battle of the Reichswald with the 4th Armoured Brigade. He left the Army having attained the rank of captain.



When asked many years later for his views on the Sherman tank he said they were very reliable, his had a Chrysler diesel engine and were excellent vehicles for the advance to Lubeck & Wismar after the Rhine crossing. He said he didn't fancy being in a Churchill as they required more maintenance but was glad he hadn't had to fight in a Sherman in Normandy.

Christmas Watching – some films featuring Tanks

El Alamein - The Line of Fire (2002) War seen through the eyes of Serra, a university student from Palermo who volunteers in 1942 to fight in Africa. **117 mins**

Tank Force! (1958) During WW2 in North Africa, an American sergeant serving with the British 8th Army is captured by the Germans but hatches various plans of escape from the POW camp. **103 mins**

Desert Victory (1943) The Allied campaign to drive Germany and Italy from North Africa is analysed, the film examines the battles at El Alamein, including a re-enactment. **60 min**

Bitva za Moskvu (1985) The battle of Moscow was the first major defeat of German Wehrmacht in the Second World War. The film is dedicated to some fighting events that took place in the USSR after Hitler's conquest of western Europe. **358 mins (two parts)**

The Tanks Are Coming (1951) An American tank crew fights its way into Germany in WW2 **90 mins**

Further to Headsets could cause hearing problems, October issue

Larisa Brown Defence Editor

The Times reported that a judge could be appointed to find out why the army did not act on warnings that the Ajax light tank was making soldiers deaf.

Ben Wallace, the defence secretary, said people should "carry the can for some of their decisions".

One option being considered is for an inquiry that would compel soldiers to give evidence about what they knew. There have been concerns that the army was dishonest about problems with Ajax before the integrated review of defence, so that the programme was not dropped.

A critical health and safety report into Ajax is expected to be published in December.

Thirty-four soldiers are receiving specialist outpatient care and five have either been discharged or medically downgraded.

The Times 27 November 2021

On Friday 19 November we lost a dear friend and a long-time Member of London Branch. Fred Bolwell. On November 21st he would have been proudly parading at the Cenotaph resplendent in Scarlet and laying a wreath at the Comet Crew on behalf of 8RTR.

He regularly represented the RHC and the RTR he so often participated in events, most recently on Thursday 11 November where he stood Sentry at the opening of the poppy fields. Only a month ago he was enjoying the 8RTR gathering in Bournemouth where he was re-united with a Tankie he hadn't seen for 40 years. He also invited another new friend 95-year-old veteran Reg Fox to join him at dinner in Bournemouth. So typical of Fred to be so inclusive. It is true to say that wherever Fred went he made friends and remained in contact.

Fred was charming, had a wickedly funny sense of humour and was extremely proficient in his use of IT. He made his own cards for Christmas and Birthdays and made full use of social media as well. Fred has a large family of which he is inordinately proud and they too are proud of him, sadly his wife preceded him several years back. They will miss him tremendously. An in-Pensioner at Royal Hospital Chelsea, where he had many friends, Fred was well known and very generous with his invitations to his London Branch friends to socialise in the Chelsea Pensioners Club. Or in his Berth

Fred enlisted in 1946 aged 17 ½ and went to 90th PTC Ranby Camp Retford Notts from there he was posted to 57th Training Reg't RAC Waitwith Camp, Catterick and trained as a Driver/Operator, V M (B.Veh) and then retraining as a Storeman Tech. During his service Fred spent time in the Hong Kong, Borneo, Germany and the UK. Fred served variously with 1RTR, 8RTR, 3RTR, 41RTR, and when 8RTR and 5RTR amalgamated, he was promoted to S/Sgt. He was released in 1970 on completion of 24 years' service. During his civilian life he was active in all things military and maintained his many RTR friendships whilst forging new ones. After the death of his wife Fred entered RCH as an In-Pensioner in 2015.

As Newsletter Editor for London branch, I often received fascinating articles and interesting content, including photographs from Fred. One of the most poignant items that he shared with me was a poem that he wrote on his 21st birthday, while in Hong Kong, to Margaret, his wife. He confessed that no-one had ever seen it and gave me permission to publish in the August 2020 News. A fact verified by his daughter Christine when I rang her to talk about Fred. It is reproduced below.

I would like to think that Fred is sitting high on a cloud with Margaret by his side as he reads her the poem again a large brandy by his side.

Rest easy Fred. You FEARED NAUGHT and you were and are loved by all who knew you.

To the sweetest and most loveliest woman in the world

As I lay awake with the stars bright above,
I dream of the night dear that we fell in love,
I held you so close dear your lips on my cheek,
I thought I was strong, but that night I was weak,
the touch of your breasts so close to my chest,
brought a feeling of gladness, of love and of rest,
and so my darling I hope you'll be true,
and never be bored with these words I send you,
And so now my darling I'll come to a close,
No more of your time will I take with this prose,
I hope that this finds you so healthy and well
I will kiss you goodnight and bid you farewell.

Hong Kong 11 February 1950

Fred

Members and Friends remember Fred Bolwell

So, so sorry to hear of Fred's passing. John and I met him many years ago and became good friends so you can imagine how 'chuffed' I was when I met him at a meeting after he became a Chelsea Pensioner a few years ago. **Beryl Shepperdley** [Beryl was a long standing stalwart of the Committee and Newsletter Editor. – Ed.]

Maureen has informed both June and myself the very very sad news of our dear Fred. A true Gentleman, wonderful personality including a wise man and his like will never be seen again. As June said there will a very bright star in the sky tonight. God bless you, Fred. Fear Naught, **Peter and June Phelps**

A great loss to the Tankie Community! Only had the pleasure of his company at Westminster Abbey last Thursday and RHC RAC Day last month. Such a kind, friendly and welcoming character. He will be sadly missed by all! Condolences to all his family. Fear Naught **Dave Orman**

Such a shock and for a Tankie Chelsea Pensioner to pass to the Green Fields just before the Cenotaph Parade, a cruel twist of fate. Farewell Fred you will now become RTR legend. **Tony Hart**

It is indeed a sad time. Don Clough and I have met Fred on occasion. I will raise a glass to his memory. **Alan Rigby**

I have a few memories of Fred. Notably at the garden of remembrance when I saw Camilla stop to speak briefly with Fred. As I walked with Fred to have lunch, I wanted to ask what she said to him. Sadly I will never know. As we left the grounds of Westminster Abbey, I noticed that Fred was having trouble walking. I asked what was wrong? Fred indicated that he had caught his shoe on a kerb stone and the sole of his shoe had come loose! He was walking on his frame like a penguin. We couldn't stop laughing! We eventually got to the pub and sat down for lunch. I was sat next to Fred and removed his shoe to assess the damage. I had a moment! I asked the waitress if she had any superglue? She supplied the said glue and I was able to stick the sole back in place. After replacing Fred's shoe like he was Cinderella we laughed. A memory I will treasure. Fred Bolwell rest easy my friend. FN. **Mel Swan**

I was very sad to hear of his passing. I will always remember him with great fondness! He was always very friendly and welcoming. **Pauline Gurling**

RIP Fred a true gentleman a pillar of our Branch. The Greenfields gain is our very sad loss FN **Ian Tompsett**

I am very proud to say Fred was a friend. I knew him when we served with the 5th, a true gentleman in every sense of the word. He leaves a huge hole in our Tankie family, a hole which will never be filled. . He was elected unanimously President of 5RTRA, he was universally loved both during and after his service with us. Words are not enough God bless and God speed to the Green Fields old friend. **Mick Wilby**

Fred and family will be in my prayers on Thursday, God bless them. **Peter Gregory**

I will be thinking of Fred on Thursday, **Arthur Stockley**

Fred was a very good friend from my 5 RTR days, and through the years since, A big loss to the RTR family. Fred was a very good friend of mine, he was 5RTR, and he was a well-known figure throughout the Tankie family.

I knew Fred as a serving soldier in Catterick in the 60s and then met him again when he came to Royal Hospital Chelsea. He came to one of the early Branch meetings that were held there and it was wonderful to be able to remake our friendship. Fred was a wonderful character. Another one gone. **Barry Wicks**

2022

January

Saturday 8th 1400hrs: Branch ZOOM Meeting – Zoom open from 1.30-4.00pm pm –

Tuesday 18th 1400hrs Spooners informal Lunch get-together A Social event and catch-up FACE TO FACE at Penderels Oak; J D Wetherspoon, 283-288 High Holborn, London WC1V 7HP, nearest tubes Holborn and Chancery Lane.

Meet in the basement for a 1400hr start. Just turn up and have a drink or a meal and a catch up with London Branch members - All welcome. Hosted by Allan Oliver Covid Rules and Regs Permitting of Course

February

Saturday 12th 1400hrs: Branch Meeting – venue to be confirmed

March

Saturday 12th 1400hrs: AGM followed by Branch ZOOM Meeting – Zoom open from 1.30-4.00pm pm – venue to be confirmed

Friday 18 to Monday 21 8RTR Reunion Bournemouth Trouville Hotel £49.50 pp/pn - Bed Breakfast & Evening Meal with Evening Entertainment [Add Thursday and Sunday for £45 pp pn]

Saturday Dinner Guest £23.95 pp

Sunday RTR Church Service, followed by Curry Lunch by coach to Bovington

There will also be a memorial service for all who have been lost over the last two years.

April

Saturday 9th 1400hrs: Branch Meeting – venue to be confirmed

Saturday 23 0900hrs-1800hrs: Tiger Day at Tank Museum – see Tiger 131 in action, the worlds only running Tiger 1, other WWII-themed Tanks in Action – including German and Allied vehicles

May

Saturday 14th 1400hrs: Branch Meeting – venue to be confirmed

June

Friday 24th - Sunday 26th. Tankfest 2022 tickets are now available from the Tank Museum

October

Friday 14 to Monday 17 Bournemouth Weekender Trouville Hotel £45 p.p.n

Bed Breakfast & Evening Meal with Evening Entertainment [Add Thursday & Sunday for £45 pp pn]

Guests welcome for Saturday night Dinner £23.95 pp

RAC Church Service at RHC, date to be confirmed

November

Friday 18 to Monday 22 Cambrai 105 – Trip to Cambrai

London Branch Membership Renewal 2022

Your membership is due for renewal on 1 January and Pages 13-14 have the details of how to make your payment.

Volunteer Needed to take over as Newsletter Editor

The frequency of the newsletter will return to 4-6 times per year in 2022. Would you like to take on the important role of writing and editing the newsletter? Please contact me or the Committee if you would like to Volunteer.

It only remains for me to wish you all Seasons Greetings and the very best for 2022

Sue Hill, Newsletter Editor

Cambrai Lunch Photos



