



The Flash

Col's Co, RWF in America

May 2019

Old Beth Page

We have had a pretty lean spring for events but we can make it up the weekend of June 1-2 on long island at Old Beth Page. This is a site we've been working with pretty well lately and this will be a two-day event.

With stress being on the rebel raids on the region. We get to defend and drive them off.

We're working on seeing about food in the evening but it is not a bad idea to bring something to contribute for lunch on Saturday. You will need two boxes of ammo. This is easy to reach for people in the NYC area and is still an easy drive for those of us in the Philadelphia area.

The address is 1303 old swamp road. Old Bethpage, NY 11804

To reach the site from Westchester county: take I-95 to the Throggs neck bridge. I-695 S/Throgs Neck Expy S Take the Cross Is Pkwy S exit, EXIT 8. Merge onto Cross Island Pkwy S. Merge onto I-495 E/Long Island Expy E toward Eastern Long Island. Take the LIE to EXIT 48 toward Round Swamp Rd/Old Bethpage. Turn right onto Round Swamp Rd.

To get to the site from Pennsylvania: Take the PA turnpike east to the Jersey turnpike. EXIT 13 toward Goethals Br/Verrazano Br (Portions toll) (Crossing into New York). After 17.01 miles Keep right to take I-278 E/Brooklyn Queens Expy toward Bklyn-Qns Expwy/Queens/Bronx. After 7 miles take the I-495/Long Is Expwy 35E on the left toward Eastern Long Is/Riverhead.

Take EXIT 48 toward Round Swamp Rd/Old Bethpage. Merge onto Long Island Expressway Service Rd. Long Island Expressway Service Rd becomes S Service Rd. Turn right onto Round Swamp Rd.

The Regiment

The Flash, although not a part of our period this is one of the more famous parts of the RWF. Heck, look at the title of this newsletter. It is a reference to the back of the regimental. Although in our period the cues are tucked up under the hat, later they were allowed to hang down, let's face it that is easier, and to stop the greasy, rarely washed hair from staining the regimental it was tucked into a black linen bag, like a small sock.

It is now 5 black ribbons attached at the base of the collar. It came about as a way for the officers of the regiment, to politely give the finger to the establishment.

The stories around this are somewhat muddled and, in some places, they contradict each other but the best I can work out for it is as follows.

In 1808 the regiment was shipped back to England from overseas. The usual procedure was that when a unit returned home it was inspected as soon as it got off the boat. Men packed into troop transports and probably poorly served by the food and water usually looked pretty poor when they got home and it was often seen as a chance for a little pay back on the part of the inspecting officer who could delight in marking off all the bad points he saw.

In this case however the 23rd had taken particular care in their appearance: Keeping clean, fit, their equipment immaculate. It had been a point of pride and by all reports they had marched down the gangplank looking fit for a parade down the Mall if asked.

The only flaw the inspecting officer could note was the men's hair. While on ship and with no way to know about it, the regulations had changed and the cue had been done away with. Hair was to be cut short.

Despite the fact there was no way the officers could have known about the change the inspecting office took great delight in marking them off for their hair, which would have been perfectly acceptable only a few weeks earlier. and so, in protest, the officers started wearing the ribbons down their back to say "we're still doing it."

It was a source of great consternation to the Army and pride to the RWF. A defining element of the regiment on the field it wasn't sanctioned by the army

until the early 20th century and then it was a case of the British army giving up trying to get us to drop it.

In modern warfare, at the start of the 20th century, the army tried to argue that the black ribbons down the back would identify the unit to the enemy. The response was that the last time the enemy saw the back of an officer of the Royal Welch Fusiliers was when the entire British army retreated from Spain in the Peninsula campaign and the 23rd was the last regiment in line of march and had in their pocket, the keys to the Spanish citadel.

In his autobiography Robert Graves reported that during a First World War medal ceremony at Buckingham Palace, the King, the Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment, seeing among the officers awaiting their awards for valor, was an officer of the RWF. He asked the officer "still have them on?" and ordered a 'right about face.' The officer turned around, displaying to the king he still wore the ribbons despite the war office demands.

Turned around the right way again the officer received his medal and a handshake from the king who said in a sotto voce, ensuring everyone could hear, "never let them take those away." with the King's support the army folded and it became a peculiar item of the regiment officially.

The last group to try and take the ribbons off us was the United Nations when the regiment was deployed in Bosnia in the 1990's. In a story confirmed to me by Lt. Colonel Locke a couple of years ago at a dinner party; the UN tried to insist all its troops should just wear the UN badges and not any other identifying marks. The regimental commander, then Colonel Reilly, now Lt General Reilly and our colonel, flat out refused saying the Royal Welch "had not taken off the ribbons for our own government we're certainly not taking them off for you."

So, as we move into the more active time for campaigning. As you take out your kit, remember the example set by those fusiliers 2 centuries ago taking pride in their kit. Check it over. Make sure it's up to snuff and be honest about it. Usually I start looking for stuff a few days before an event. Sewing on buttons and giving a good polish to something is a lot easier when you've got a few days to spread it over than a last-minute rush as you're carrying stuff out to the car.

Keep your hair on

I will note in appearance of late a little sloppiness in our hair and by that, I mean the wigs.

Personally, I don't like them. I think they are the least comfortable part of our kit and that's after 20 + years in the long gaiters. When off the field I really don't care if you feed yours to a friendly squirrel. I can't keep my forage cap on my wig and

after 20+ years of it I've given up trying. BUT when we are on the field, on duty, in bear skin or light bob's helmet, we're supposed to have our wigs on, not just for the cue at the back but the uniform look of the hair at the side of the head as the hair sweeps back.

The head gear is supposed to be sized for your head WITH THE WIG on. My Bearskin won't fit on my head without it and the only time I've fielded with a bearskin and no wig, it was because I literally had an injury and the bandage around my head took up the spare space.

I know some people buy their stuff 2nd hand but we need to make the effort to make sure we get the right size to maintain that uniform look for which the 23rd is well known and of which we can be justifiably proud

Dues

I'm still waiting to hear from far too many people about their dues. Please. if you're planning on turning out this year, we need to get the dues in just to pay for insurance so we're allowed to run around in fields shooting guns and waving pointing little things on them. The dues are

Regimental	\$20
Col's company	\$10
Total	\$30

If you want to also have BAR membership for 2017 that is an additional \$25.
For a total of \$55

Make the check out to Colonel's Company RWFIA and mail it to me at
Paul Astle
1103 Oxford Cir
Lansdale PA 19446

And yes, it's col's company even if you're a grenadier or light bob-it's how I set up the bank account when I was the Colonel's company sergeant and that's how the checks go in.