



From Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Chris KILMISTER
REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS
THE ROYAL WELSH
Maindy Barracks, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF14 3YE

Telephone 02920 781207
Fax 02920 781357
E-Mail chris.kilmister100@mod.gov.uk
Charity Commission Number: 1166089 CRM:0001188



All Members of the Regimental Family

RW Update

2nd February 2021

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the back of this letter is an updated list of provisional dates for 2021.

Introduction

We have seen in the last couple of months that the UK vaccine programme has got off to a good start and this really does give us some hope that we will return to some form of normality later this year. In this optimistic outlook we have been planning for some Regimental Events later in the year. These are laid out later in this Update. I will confirm them as and when Covid Restrictions allow.

You may have seen in the media and on-line in particular that a number of RRW comrades have been involved in a Northern Ireland Legacy Inquest which dated back 46 years to 1974. This is the first of these NI Legacy Inquests involving members of the Regiment. This was the 3rd time some of our comrades had been put through the stress of judicial questioning. More distressingly the alleged perpetrator of the incident had died 18 years ago. Nevertheless, the inquest still went ahead. Our comrades received excellent support and advice from the MOD in the form of a MOD solicitor and barrister. They were very impressed by them both. RHQ kept our comrades up to date as the process unfolded. It is hoped that the Coroner's findings, which have just been published, will be the end of this incident.

Covid-19 Support to Local Authorities

The Army contribution to supporting Covid 19 is in the region of 11,000+, with the focus and priority for support aligned to NHS capacity, Vaccine roll out and National Testing. Testing represents the largest chunk of the deployed force with the Army supporting the conducting of community testing in Kent, Lancashire and Manchester; supporting Schools Testing across England; and a further group supporting Haulier testing in Kent.

1st Battalion Lt Michael Thomas OC 1 Platoon

A Coy of 1 R WELSH (as well as C and D Coy's) were called to Op RESTACK (later Op ROSE) on Christmas Eve. By virtue of the fact 3 whole companies, as well as those of other units, were deployed indicates the scale and complexity of the task that faced the Welsh Warriors this Christmas.

On departing from Lucknow Barracks the general mood was positive and morale was high, regardless of the few comments concerning this being the 'worst Christmas ever'. Despite the time of year, my platoon and the whole of A Coy turned out – with many soldiers leaving their families over night to respond to the Nation's call.

On arriving the lorry drivers were extremely grateful in having Royal Welsh soldiers to help them. Quickly our people adapted to the task and we established an efficient method of reducing the backlog of lorries with a huge number of vehicles moving on Boxing Day. Frankly, it became a section-battle and it was the Section Commanders who ensured that things were being done efficiently and safely. Sgt Smith and I coordinated with the police and ensured that any issues that arose were dealt with efficiently.

Overall, A, C and D Companies performed sterling work – which was frequently commented on by lorry drivers, emergency services and Commander 11 Brigade (our higher commander for this task) alike. Our Regimental Family should rightly be proud of the young men and women of 1 R WELSH who turned out at Christmas when they were most needed.



After their involvement in Op ROSE (Mobile Testing at Dover) the 1st Battalion have returned to work. Due to the current national restrictions and Army wide directive, members of the Battalion are only physically in Tidworth for essential business. In most cases this equates to 1 or 2 days per week. The rest is carried out dispersed with training packages and lessons being delivered virtually.

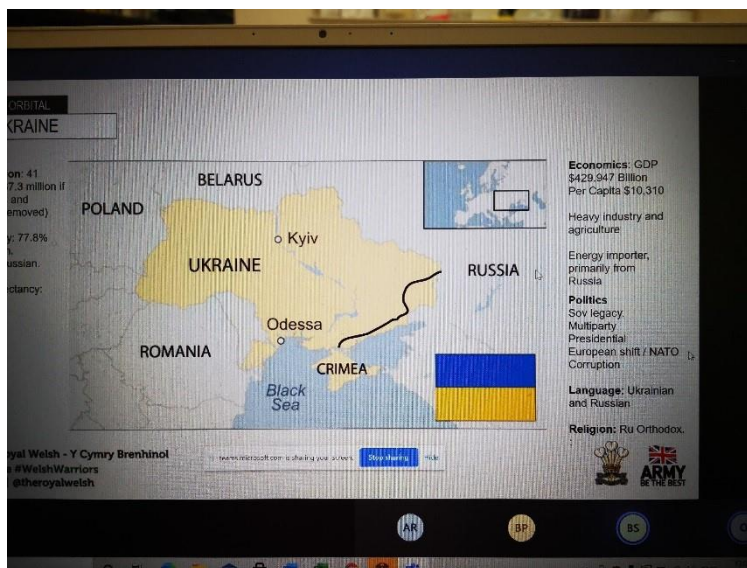
C Company's training is ramping up in preparation for their deployment as part of the RTR Battle Group on Op CABRIT 9 (Estonia) in September 21. The remainder of the Battalion remains as UK Standby Battalion until end of March 21. This equates to Company rotations through 24- and 12-hours' Notice to Move.

3rd Battalion

Almost all in person and physical training has been put on hold until further notice. The only exception to this is the GPMG SF Cadre which is running with COVID precautions in place.



All other training has moved into the virtual sphere. Fortunately, they are well rehearsed from the last lockdown and are able to build on the best practices learnt from the spring.



Members of the 3rd Battalion remain mobilised in support of Op RESCRIPT (Covid Support), namely the Commanding Officer who remains Senior Military Liaison Officer to North Wales and Maj Mike Laing who leads a small team at the Land Quarantine Facility.

Rorke's Drift Service & Lunch 2021

As you are aware the Brecon Branch were hoping to hold the annual Rorke's Drift event in April but after much discussions with the Cathedral and despite that a vaccine is now with us it would not be possible to hold a service in the Cathedral, this would result in our Rorke's Drift commemorations becoming just a lunch in Dering Lines, we feel that this is not what we or any other comrades have been used to over the last 20 years, to that end we have decided to cancel the event this year and look forward to January 2022 when hopefully the world will again be on an even keel. As soon as we have a date for 2022, we will disseminate it.

Branch Secretaries Meeting - Mid-July Date TBC - Monty Club, Newtown

Last year's Branch Secretaries Meeting had to be cancelled. We are planning to meet up in the Monty Club, Newtown in mid-July (I will confirm the date in due course), Covid Restrictions allowing. I would like as many Branch Secretaries or their representatives to attend.

Brecon Reunion - Saturday 24th July

We are planning for this event to take place. Covid Restrictions will, of course, have the final say. However, we have booked the Sergeants' Mess in Dering Lines for the usual dinner. The Regimental Band will Beat Retreat before dinner. The Colonel of the Regiment is hoping to attend. Captain Des Williams DCM will send out more details in due course.

Wrexham Reunion - 4th September

This is another event we are planning for. It will take place as usual on the first weekend of September. The plan is still being developed but will start with a Memorial Service for those comrades who have passed away during the pandemic. This will take place in St Giles Church and a wreath laying ceremony may follow at the RWF Memorial in the Town. We are looking at organising a march through the town and a Band Display / Concert. Lunch in the Memorial Hall will then take place. Captain Des Williams DCM will send out more details in due course.

The VC Gallery – West Wales – Former CSgt Barry John MBE

The VC Gallery runs two Drop-in centres, an art gallery, Remembrance exhibition and runs many art sessions within schools, the Memory Cafe and residential homes etc. We help and support the Armed Forces Community in practical ways with housing, debt and mental health issues. We offer a friendly, creative environment where everyone is welcome. In recent months we have been busy adapting and trying to safely interact with Veterans and their families during the pandemic.

Friday mornings we hold a Zoom 'Virtual NAAFI break', at the normal NAAFI break time of 1000-1030hrs. Tim Phillips, our military peer mentor, is the host, we have no agenda and the conversation and bad jokes flow. The first few weeks many Veterans and other Veteran support agencies would log on to say hello and join in with the conversation, as well as being a social activity unintentionally it has the added benefit of being a networking session. We have people logging on not just within Pembrokeshire, but from South and Mid Wales and over the border into England. If you fancy logging on one Friday keep a lookout on The VC Gallery's social media pages or email <mailto:tim@thevcgallery.com>



During the summer we adapted to the Covid restrictions by getting outside more with our Walk and Talk groups aimed at veterans. It was not easy getting some back outdoors but slowly we

have built up a great group. Tim Phillips trained as a Walk Leader and acquired lots of free outdoor clothing through 'Gift your Gear'. Tim has a personal interest in keeping fit and knows how good for both physical and mental wellbeing walking is. It's now a great social event that everyone looks forward to.



On a Wednesday we walk from our Haverfordwest hub and do a 2-mile gentle walk for those that need to get back into it slowly or have mobility issues. Fridays see us walking locally but striding out for 6/7 miles in the hills, the coastal path, woodland walks and local countryside routes. This group usually sees about 12 meeting up with our local PCSO joining in too. Again, the social element is a massive bonus along with the incredible views and appreciation of our County.



It is planned later this year to do a 'Couch to Snowdon' event if restrictions and rules allow for preparation and the event to go ahead. The event will initially be a mixture of veterans and community getting together to walk up to the top of Mount Snowdon, by bringing the team ethos we will help each other to achieve this. Some veterans have walked Snowdon back in the day and you can see that they are nurturing those that have never taken on a challenge like this before.

New for 2021 sees the launch of our 'Dig for Victory' project funded by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust through the Positive Pathways programme. This project will see local veterans create a community garden, horticulture courses and spend time together in the outdoors. A local farmer has donated 3 acres of land which houses WW2 bunkers right on the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park overlooking the sea. It's an incredible location and we have started doing up a bunker and are looking for veterans to volunteer along with a SAAFA Representative under our newly appointed project coordinator Sean Golder, who is a veteran who served 22 years in the Royal Engineers and is an experienced Adventure Training instructor.