SCRATCHINGS FROM THE PEN...!

April 2015: a memo and scribbles from and for members of the Pen & Sword Club

What next in 2015? A first message from the Chairman

Major John Boyes took over the Chairmanship of the Pen & Sword Club in January this year and has already made his mark – he confesses to have unintentionally upset a two-star with a comment on current media operations! A staunch supporter of the club since its inception

John served in the TA Pool of Information Officers and Media Operations Group (V) for 16 years. An enthusiastic author and an authority on the history of early guided missiles he has published *Project Emily: Thor IRBM and the RAF, Airfield Review – The Blue Streak Underground Launcher* and is preparing a new book *The Blue Streak MRBM.*

Still much involved with the Bomber Command Memorial Fund dedicated to the 55,573 RAF aircrew who lost their lives in World War 2, John took over as its Financial Controller in October 2009 and remains in post. An accountancy graduate of Heriot-Watt University, John was previously Company Secretary of the Scottish Motor Trade Association, Business Management Manager for both Renault UK and Nissan Motor (GB) He specialises in financial planning for businesses and has produced financial training courses for Honda, Nissan and DAF Trucks. In his first message to the club he poses a number of questions about defence!

Sebastian Vettel was the unexpected winner of the Malaysian Grand Prix. One wonders if the General Election will produce a likewise unexpected winner? Speaking of which, and there seems little else of interest to the media at present, I am reminded of what our marketing department used to tell us: when our competitors start comparing themselves with ourselves and the other opposition in their advertising campaigns — then you know they are performing badly. Does the same stand true for our political parties?

The concentration as I write this appears to surround the economy, that huge untamable presence that no one really, not even the Chancellor, understands. The one major issue that seems to have been circumvented by all parties so far is the question of defence. As our services ever more dwindle away, the defence of the realm seems to be something that attracts little attention and even less debate.

The human residue of our operations in the Middle East and now Libya as well is an uncomfortable area for politicians and with a largely apathetic population, the plight of those injured both physically and mentally is all too easily forgotten. With Mrs. Sturgeon's party ever more active it seems ever more likely that our hugely expensive Trident fleet, which of course is a largely political weapon with little military significance other than its huge effect on the defence budget, will at some stage be heading for King's Bay, USA.

Some catastrophically short sighted defence decisions have been made over the years but at least they provoked discussion and of course we wait ever more for the Chilcot Report which surely loses credibility for every day it is further delayed.

But what of the Pen & Sword Club? I hope that you like our new symbol/logo/badge. We have incorporated a purple theme to represent our combined military and civilian memberships and highlighted the colours of the Royal, Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force plus a tinge of Commando green for our Royal Marines.

The monthly 'light lunches' continue to enjoy support from a number of members and always provide for lively discussion. We have been privileged to host the club's new chaplain Kevin Bell and Hilary Roberts of the Imperial War Museum in recent times. We continue to circulate around the military clubs.

Our last lunch at the Cavalry and Guards Club attracted the attention of the staff who took the trouble to ask what is the Pen & Sword Club? I assured them we shall return there in due course. The 77 Brigade issue is covered elsewhere in this issue and still attracts considerable attention and speculation as the club's LinkedIn Group debates demonstrates, although what was clearly an early leak of, at best, confusing information was far from helpful.

Your Management Committee is keen to host a seminar on the subject and various conversations have already taken place. This should at least allow for some transparency on the subject. We are also in discussions with the Guild of Public Relations about a joint event - they have put forward an 'interesting' idea. More soon about both events in due course.

It is always good to see 'subsets' of the Club organising their own event. Lt Col David Reynolds took the welcome initiative to set about planning a TAPIO/MOG (V) re-union dinner

later in the year. Any former members who have not yet contacted David are encouraged to do so as the results so far have been very positive.

As always, Major Doreen Cadwallader, our club secretary and treasurer continues to ensure we are all in the right place at the right time. She has already circulated information about future dates and even our Christmas lunch is booked.

I am indebted to the continuing enthusiasm of Colonel Mike Peters, one of our three Executive Vice Presidents, as this issue of Scratchings demonstrates. The Club is only as strong as its members, so please keep us informed of any relevant news. Returning to the SNP before I close, I will freely admit that fired with the enthusiasm of youth I twice cast my vote for them, but that was many years ago and then they appeared as a right-wing alternative for Scottish voters. How things have changed. Both their current leader and their former leader are, whatever your views on them, remarkably astute politicians.

We shall all, I am sure, await the outcome of the Election with interest.'

Welcome Kevin: our new club chaplain

After more than 25 years as an Army Chaplain in which he won a commendation for exceptionally valuable service from the Commander British Forces Kosovo, Kevin Bell has returned to parish ministry and has agreed to become Chaplain to the Pen & Sword Club.

Currently Vicar of All Hallows in the Twickenham Diocese of London, Kevin has served the Army in 18 countries around the world in which time he has had 15 homes. Attaining the rank of "Colonel" in his military ministry he has led ecumenical teams of clergy as large as 45. Bosnia and Kosovo provide "powerful memories, "he says.

Kevin's career is both outstanding and interesting. After leaving school aged 16 to become a police cadet he spent six years with the West Midlands Police where he was a member of the cadet boxing squad. He undertook detachments with CID, motorway patrols, and other departments. As a constable he experienced routine foot and panda patrols and recalls policing the National Front riots in the late 1970s and serving on the anti-vandal patrol

Leaving the Police to become a theological student at Salisbury & Wells, Kevin was to become a parish priest in Birmingham for nearly seven years and a British Army Chaplain in 1989. He has an MA in Christian Spirituality from University of Wales, an MA in Applied Theology from Newcastle, a Certificate of Pastoral Studies from Birmingham and a Certificate of Theology from the University of Southampton.

A Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and The Institute of Leadership and Management he is also an Aspirant Chaplain of The Military and Hospitaller Order of St. Lazarus and Jerusalem.

A published poet, musician and author Kevin is no stranger to the world of communications. He was Editor of Woodbine Willie, the journal of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department; and has a written for the British Army Review, and Quiet Magazine

In many ways I have been a priest to all ages, all backgrounds and faiths, says Kevin. I have preached before Royalty and titled folk. I have preached to those without rank or status. I have supported the weak and encouraged the strong. Through public speaking and private counseling I have stood with people in most situations. I have written poems, songs and published articles, in order to reach people by every means at my disposal.

Says Scratchings Editor, Mike Peters: Welcome Kevin. We look forward to meeting you on many occasions. And wish you the best for your new role."

Mike takes over the Welsh Chair

One of best known journalists in South Wales, Mike Buckingham, has taken over the role of the Pen & Sword Club chairman in the Principality following the retirement of Colonel Bob Purvis.

After regular service in the general engineering branch of the RAF with postings in the UK and Oman. Mike read history at Aberystwyth University where he gained a BA Honours degree.

Beginning in journalism on weekly newspapers in his native Buckinghamshire he worked on local and regional newspapers in the North-east, Bristol, Southampton, Kent and Scotland before moving to Wales where for 27 years he was chief features writer on the South Wales Argus.

During his time with the Argus he covered the Army's activities in Bosnia, Germany, Cyprus, Kenya, Belize, Sierra Leone, Canada and the Falklands. He joined the TA Pool of Information Officers in 1987.

In addition to his work with Pen & Sword, Mike is a keen Scout leader and a qualified pilot. He has published two novels and a literary biography and is currently working on a third novel set in Cornwall and Brittany.

Married to Heather, Mike has two grown-up children and, when not writing, Scouting or doing things for the Pen & Sword (which leaves surprisingly little time, he say) he enjoys showing Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers**.**

Hail and Farewell

Club Executive Vice President Mike Peters has paid tribute to Colonel Bob Purvis for his great service to the club: Bob, pictured right, was in at the beginning of the TAPIOs and was a contemporary and great friend of our first Senior TAPIO, Colonel Alan Protheroe.

With Bob adding his considerable business wide marketing experience to the editorial, writing, oratory and management skills of Alan they were an impressive and popular duo.

With the expansion of the P&S some six years ago Bob accepted cheerfully the role of Chairman of Wales and The Marches and has been a great supporter and organiser.

Bob will continue as a member of the club and we hope to see him more frequently when his health improves, says Mike, who added: We do need a new chair for The Marches which we should like to couple with the West Midlands as a new region. Volunteers are welcome."

Hugh installed as Honorary Member of Guild

Club President Hugh Colver, pictured right, has been installed as an Honorary Member of the Guild of Public Relations Practitioners.

He joins a number of Pen & Sword Club members who value the advantages of Guild membership.

The Guild made three awards in February at a London banquet to mark the homecoming from overseas of serving officers of the UK's Reserve media and communications units. All three were also members of The Pen!

Lieutenant Commander Heather Lane, RNR

Awarded the honour of Communicator of the Year 2014 in the Royal Naval Reserve Media Operations Specialisation was Pen & Sword Club Hampshire Regional Chair Lieutenant Commander Heather Lane who was recognised by the Guild to have exceptional communication and engagement skills. She *has a veritable wealth of both military and media experience, and is blessed with an abundance of infectious enthusiasm and a rare talent for creative thought. Heather has built up, and proactively maintains, a vast network of contacts. She is a consummate communicator, and a truly passionate advocate of the Royal Navy.*

During the past year she gave unwavering support for *HMS King Alfred*, as its Public Relations Officer and has drawn high praise from its Commanding Officer. She not only successfully teased out stories across the whole range of Unit life, but also managed to promote them in local and national press and publications, on the radio and even on television.

Of particular note was the widespread coverage she successfully generated for *HMS King Alfred's* 20th Anniversary Parade which was held as part of the 70th anniversary of D-Day commemorations in Portsmouth last summer.

She even managed to create a news story about the veteran Bernard Jordan, who "escaped" from his nursing home to attend the commemorations in Normandy. She ensured that this story, together with numerous others, featured on HMS King Alfred's lively Facebook site, one of several digital outlets which she has been instrumental in setting up and running for the Unit.

She also worked extremely hard to achieve improved Recruiting publicity for HMS King Alfred, and the wider RNR, liaising extensively with Hampshire County Council to exploit various opportunities across the county.

Among her many national press achievements last year was arranging for one extremely lucky sailor to stand on the red carpet alongside Angelina Jolie, as part of the Service contingent at the Film Premier of "Unbroken".

Major Patrick Jackson, MOG

Major Patrick Jackson, pictured right, well known for his meteoric rise from the rank of Trooper in the Yeomanry to Major in the Media Operations Group in about six years was awarded the Army Communicator of the Year title

A member of MOG, Paddy, as he is best known, has given hugely valuable service across the Army and Defence. He was media advisor to General Sir Nicholas Carter – then Deputy Commander of ISAF in Kabul – and now the Chief of the General Staff. For his exemplary service in Afghanistan, he was awarded the NATO Meritorious Service Medal.

On his return, once again he offered his services to the Media Operations Group, and has been working full-time in Headquarters London District ever since. While slightly" in the pooh" for exceeding his allowance of Man Training Days, he has been an invaluable asset to the General Officer Commanding London – and his staff – in raising the profile of the Army, but more importantly in promoting the image of the ordinary soldier across London.

Recent events in Canada and France have caused changes to the way ceremonial troops in London are poised, a bad-news story that Paddy ably managed. The Commanding Officer of the Media Operations Group, who is currently deployed was delighted to nominate Paddy for this year's award… and bearing in mind his promotion over the past few years, fully expects to be Paddy's driver on his return, said the citation.

Squadron Leader Andy Wasley, RAuxAF

Representing the huge success of 7644 Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force In the last 12 months the light blue Communicator of the Year 2014 title went to Squadron Leader Andy Wasley, left, for his outstanding contribution to defence engagement initially with Op Herrick and then, at very short notice Op Shader.

In September 2013 Andy was posted to HQ 83 Expeditionary Air Group, the RAF's operational headquarters for the Middle East and Afghanistan. As head of strategic communications he was responsible to an RAF one-star officer for developing a communications and information strategy for traditional media relations, key leader engagement, and defence diplomacy and issues management.

During his tour Andy's strategic communications plan was adopted as a framework by other UK Defence organisations across the Middle East and Afghanistan. It was highlighted as an exemplar within the Permanent Joint Headquarters, Northwood.

Working with fellow Media Reservist Flight Lieutenant Cameron Rennie, he generated significantly improved, targeted media coverage for the RAF across the Gulf region. He also worked closely with the UK Embassy to the United Arab Emirates, to pilot a new element of the UK-UAE bilateral relationship.

As soon as the RAF's involvement in Op SHADER was announced, Andy was deployed to Cyprus where he quickly started making sense of what was a complex military situation which would require him to work to a number of military and civilian masters, each with different agendas.

One of his first challenges was to set up the media coverage of a short notice visit by the Prime Minister. His strenuous efforts helped to ensure that Cypriot media were content with their access to the base.

PJHQ described his contribution to the start of operations as: “a sterling job in treading a very diplomatic and measured line in accommodating the aspirations of MOD, PJHQ and AIRmedia teams, together with the personal security requirements of deployed personnel. He also experienced challenges in dealing with the British Forces Cyprus team who are responsible for normal media output, but who are not used to supporting deployed operations. His tact and diplomacy, coupled with sheer hard work and determination resulted in some excellent media product throughout his deployment and he can be very proud of his achievements.”

Andy voluntarily extended his tour to see this part of his work through, returning home more than seven months after his tour started.

TV is great and Radio is wonderful – if you have electricity. Newspapers are exceptional – if you can read.

Lieutenant Colonel (P) Chris Hyde, US Army is currently working as a Trainer With Industry Fellow with Siemens Corporation in New Jersey. My next assignment is now Chief Public Affairs Officer for the U.S. Army’s 2nd Infantry Division in South Korea. His experienced comment on how important is the role of media operations in third world countries is particularly relevant as the British Army looks to grow 77 Brigade as a comprehensive communications organisation.

As public affairs professionals, we spend a great deal of time pondering the mysteries of public affairs guidance, messaging, target audiences, external media, and other related topics. That’s understandable – after all, as Western communicators working in a Western world, these are important things to worry about.

Ultimately, we are communicators playing to a technology-savvy, information-hungry, and often impatient audience that demand as much information as we can possibly sling their direction, in the shortest amount of time humanly possible. It’s challenging - and our world is often not as forgiving as we would like it to be.

But, I would like to argue that as much as it’s tempting to think that we should always conduct our communication as we would in a Western environment, my experiences on deployments have proven that the information world of other cultures is often a far, far different place.

Take, for example, my first deployment to Iraq in 2008. I was a fairly inexperienced public affairs officer working as the brigade PAO for 1/25th Stryker Brigade Combat Team in Diyala Province, Iraq. While working the many different lanes endemic to my job in the Middle Eastern theater, I found that one of my most cherished responsibilities was the coordination I did with my Iraqi counterparts in the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and Diyala Provincial Government.

While I was fully prepared for the sad fact that many of my Iraqi counterparts did not have the resources I possessed - still and video cameras, computers, editing software, etc. - what I wasn't prepared for was the greater implications of this missing material, or the personnel capable of using it. Nor was I prepared for the fact that the lack of this equipment, as well as a reliable electrical grid, meant that most of the Iraqi people often did not receive any of the news that we, or the Iraqis, were attempting to disseminate their direction.
Years later, a highly intelligent, experienced Afghan Army public affairs officer in their Ministry of Defense told me something that became a kind of PAO mantra to guide me through many of the darker days of my quest to inform our audiences while overseas. 'Television is great – if you have electricity. Radio is also wonderful – if you have electricity. Newspapers are exceptional – if you can read.'

Simple, yet profound, I found that these thoughts and ruminations about his own country's fight to win the information war and its inherent challenges resonated within my very soul, and almost as quickly helped me to gain some perspective on the long-range difficulties anyone taking the counter-insurgency public affairs fight would likely expect.

Bluntly, it's not enough to rely on our Western trappings to get our word out, whatever that word is.

Yes, the West is blessed with a great variety of tools in the information trade. Not only do we have television (cable, digital, satellite, etc.), radio, and the internet, but we have power systems necessary to keep all of these systems running – and available – to the wider public. Unless facing some sort of natural disaster, we would never have to think twice about whether or not that power would be there to ensure we got the information we so desperately crave, all the time…

But lately it seems that we find ourselves deploying to military theaters of operation where the local residents either do not have ready access to communications technology (e.g. TV, radio, Internet), or do not have the ability to utilize said technology - local people are often illiterate, and therefore incapable of reading newspapers, pamphlets, etc. As a result, I strongly believe that we must reassess how we get our story out, and remain open to fairly non-traditional methods of doing this.

First, if there is no reliable technology present, or the projected audience with any access to said technology is small and/or insignificant, we should limit our use of these mediums.
To me, this seems like it should be common sense. If the preponderance of your primary audience does not have access to radio or TV, then why spend a great deal of time producing material for these mediums?

To paraphrase a different way: play to your audience's strengths, not yours. I honestly think that a great number of my colleagues at least try to do this, to varying degrees. Unfortunately, however, I think that what often happens is that we become overcome by events, the battle rhythm, and other challenges and fall back on common practice. Let's face it, a news release is easy – why shouldn't our coalition colleagues do the same things?

I saw this in practice in Afghanistan while working at the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command (IJC) and conducting combined/joint public affairs planning with my Afghan counterparts. When I began working on operational public affairs planning with their Ministry of Defense and Ground Forces Command (GFC), I thought the best way forward was to build their media relations capabilities (working with Afghan, and Western, media outlets in the Kabul area, I realized that a great portion of even the Kabul audience was not getting the word).

The Afghan PAO staff told me that they would be happy to work on news releases and coordinate interviews for TV and radio, but repeatedly also told me that this did not guarantee that the greatest portion of Afghans in the capital, and certainly in outlying areas, would receive the information, given electrical problems, technology gaps, illiteracy, etc.

What did they (Ministry of Defense PAO) want? Billboards. Why? Because most of their people could not read. Again, we should play to our audience's strengths, not ours.

Second, we should analyze, to greater *realistic* purpose, our designation of our target audiences, and how we get the word to them**.** Before we even arrive in theater, we should carefully analyze the country/region we will be conducting operations in and ensure that we divide our efforts into primarily two separate, but intricately-related, areas: Host-nation and Western, and further endeavor to establish a clear priority between the two.

Western audiences will almost certainly rely heavily on technology, literacy, and urgency. For most of us, although this type of public affairs work is labor intensive and requires personnel with specific skill sets and a great deal of drive, it will be familiar. On the other hand, a host-nation audience will often be a bit more varied, and could be completely different than what we are used to.

Bluntly, if our target audiences are illiterate and receive most of their information by word-of-mouth, it is ridiculous to continue throwing lots of news releases their direction. Don't get me wrong, news releases are great, but you must consider how many people are actually going to get that information from TV, if only a small percentage of local people have a TV, or the electricity to watch it.

Yes, we must always remain concerned for our national viewers and listeners, and transparency is absolutely important, but where does the desire to remain popular back home outweigh the necessity of winning the war? Particularly when that war is often being fought on the internet, or, more specifically, social media.

I say this, realizing that in many cases, our desire to use the news release is often practical, more than anything. While I was deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 and working at the IJC, I couldn't help but notice that the Combined Joint Operations Center (CJOC) press desk was publishing a great number of news releases every day. Were these releases meant for Afghan, or Western, consumption? Probably the latter. Who should they have been meant for? And again, who is our primary audience? If it is our host-nation, then we cannot allow them to get trumped by our efforts towards our Western audiences.

Ultimately, we should continue to use 'standard' Western public affairs means and methods (e.g. news releases), but orient them by/towards audience and ensure that we have a more clear approximation of what effect we will receive from this effort, in all cases.

Finally, we should remain open to the possibility that any/all non-traditional methods of communication may involve elements of religion and/or spirituality that many of us might find uncomfortable.

Rather bluntly, both of the countries I have deployed to as a public affairs officer have been Muslim. Particularly in Afghanistan (but also Iraq), it is highly likely that most citizens will regard their religious leaders as highly knowledgeable and trust nearly anything they say. Ultimately, imams, mullahs, and other Muslim religious leaders are often cornerstones to their community's way-of-life.

While in Afghanistan, I came to realize that one of the best ways to communicate to the Afghan people (average citizens, shall we say) was through word-of-mouth (a method that does not rely on technology often difficult to obtain, use, or understand). Further, any word-

of-mouth communication that comes from a Muslim religious leader is traditionally regarded as fact (not opinion).

If a society that we are conducting operations in is a religious society, where there is very little separation of church and state, shouldn't we adapt to this paradigm and tailor our communication efforts with a profound respect for their unique culture, rather than insist on doing it our way?

I think that while this is difficult to wrap our arms around as Westerners, particularly Americans who fought some 200 years ago for both religious freedom as well as a secular government and way-of-life free from religious oppression, it is absolutely imperative that we explore alternative methods of communicating while on operation – even if that means communicating through religious leaders.

Ultimately, our job is pretty basic. As communicators, we should communicate. Our challenge, then, is finding the best method for this communication, orienting it by audience, using it to good purpose, and then altering it, when and if necessary.

The Spin Masters of 1941

By Iain Ballantyne

News management was vitally important back in the dark days of Britain's lonely stand against Hitler's onslaught. Not only was this evident in the great air victory of 1940 – when the valiant 'Few' saved the many in the Battle of Britain – but also in May 1941, when the Royal Navy hunted down and destroyed the German battleship *Bismarck*.

That success, coming so soon in the wake of devastating loss of the battle-cruiser HMS *Hood*, was news managed to enhance the effect of the Royal Navy's key units. It perhaps meant some elements that should have gained greater glory did not.

The brand new battleship *HMS King George V* plus the recently commissioned carrier *Victorious* and not-very-old *HMS Ark Royal* had their part in the Bismarck Action spotlighted. For the roles of the fleet flagship and the valiant Fleet Air Arm aviators made good copy and their tales were easy for the general public to understand.

The elderly battleship HMS *Rodney*, and new (but damaged) battleship HMS *Prince of Wales*, plus the destroyers of the 4th Flotilla and the cruisers that took part in comparison got little individual credit for their exploits.

During the Battle of the Denmark Strait, on 24 May 1941, The *Prince of Wales* managed to hole *Bismarck*'s oil tanks and force her to break off her sortie and head for a French port. However, the *Prince of Wales* had failed to destroy the enemy in a contest in which *Hood* was blown apart. *Rodney*, meanwhile, had 16-inch guns that were far more powerful than those of *King George V* and it was she who went in close three days later to do the brutal killing of *Bismarck.*

HMS *Rodney* was old and slow, worn out by hard service and at the time of the battle carrying several hundred passengers on their way to the USA and Canada. The new *King George V* by comparison saw some of her 14-inch shells bounce off *Bismarck* and stood off at some distance from the close quarters slugging match. It just didn't sit right that a battleship created in the 1920s was more effective than the latest battlewagon of the British fleet.

HMS Rodney, pictured, was also in some ways a more robust vessel than even Bismarck, and her guns were more powerful too.

But all this was too complex to explain to the public. *Rodney*'s Captain Dalrymple-Hamilton was in the aftermath of the Bismarck action forced to admonish one senior admiral for suggesting *Rodney* should salute *HMS Victorious* for her part in sinking *Bismarck*.

Dalrymple-Hamilton told him: 'Sir, you are standing on the quarter-deck of the ship that sank the *Bismarck*.' The truth was that intrepid though the Swordfish crews of *Victorious* may have been they failed to cause the *Bismarck* any damage at all during their attack on the night of 24 May – but it was an important strike back at the *Bismarck* just hours after the loss of *Hood* and so was emphasised.

Did the spin masters of the day also heighten certain aspects of the pursuit and kill because they appeared more gallant, much cleaner than the dirty business of execution, as carried out by Rodney and the heavy cruisers Norfolk and Dorsetshire? Tovey's attempt to pay a tribute to the gallantry of the enemy (in a fleet-wide signal) was certainly suppressed, as an inconvenient salute to the foe at a time of great crisis.

In his summary of the action, the Home Fleet commander said: 'The *Bismarck* had put up a most gallant fight against impossible odds, worthy of the old days of the Imperial German Navy, and she went down with her colours still flying.' That passage was not made public in 1941, a clear example of news management that was perhaps a necessary excision when fighting a war of national survival?

When it came to the British playing down their own achievements, it was perhaps *Prince of Wales* that suffered most, as her Gunnery Officer, Colin McMullen, acknowledged when interviewed many years later. He observed: '*Prince of Wales* played an absolutely vital part in this operation and has never really been given credit for her part in it.' McMullen believed his ship's sailors also never made much of a fuss, as they felt it would draw attention to the fact that *Hood*'s shooting was so poor during the Battle of the Denmark Strait and she was firing at the wrong ship (i.e. the cruiser *Prinz Eugen* rather than the more lethal *Bismarck*).

'It would be nice for Prince of Wales really to at last be given the full credit for what she did,' said McMullen in a post-war interview for the Imperial War Museum. 'She went out with the bugs not out of turrets, but the men in the turrets achieved three hits, two of which were very serious, and which altered the whole operation from the Germans' point of view. If we hadn't hit her she could have gone on with her raiding operation.'

After the Bismarck Action Winston Churchill in fact wanted to court martial the captain of *Prince of Wales* and the admiral in charge of the cruisers. He would not have approved of them grabbing the glory when he felt they failed to show sufficient aggression in the immediate aftermath of *Hood*'s loss.

The British Prime Minister was a master of spin. During the First World War, when the rest of the government and naval high command was in a state of paralysis over how to break mixed news about Jutland, it was he who organized a press release highlighting the strategic victory achieved by the Royal Navy, despite heavy losses that compared badly with those of the Germans. And it was, of course, Churchill who highlighted the truly amazing feats of the RAF's 'Few' during the Battle of Britain.

The achievements of the 'Many' in the Royal Navy, whose ships had lurked in ports waiting to go out and destroy the Nazi invasion fleet in the summer of 1940, received little, if no, attention.

Rodney was one of those vessels that watched and waited during the long hot summer of the Battle of Britain. In May 1941 Churchill would have noted Tovey's notorious signal declaring that he could not sink *Bismarck* with guns alone but let's not imagine British gunnery was a failure. The late D.K. Brown pointed out in his book *'Nelson to Vanguard'* that between 300 and 400 British shells, out of 2,871 fired at her actually hit *Bismarck*, which proved no more resistant to damage than Royal Navy ships.

Furthermore, Brown described *Bismarck*'s armour arrangement to be 'old fashioned', which did 'as well as could be expected' but it was 'not magical.' British gunfire may not have sunk *Bismarck* - at least not as quickly as Tovey needed, with fuel running low and enemy air and submarine attacks anticipated - but it did *destroy* the German battleship as a fighting unit. Utterly.

Plenty of 14-inch, 16-inch and 8-inch shells did their worst inside *Bismarck*. The German ship, by contrast, in the final battle scored not a single hit on any of the British battleships or cruisers with either her primary or secondary armament. Likewise, *Bismarck*'s anti-aircraft weapons failed to shoot down a single Swordfish.

No amount of spin – British, German or any other – no myth making, then or now, can cover up those incontestable facts.

This article was specially adapted from text in 'Killing the Bismarck' by Iain Ballantyne (recently published by Pen & Sword in a revised paperback edition with a section of fresh material, price £14.99). Available from Pen & Sword direct [http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/Killing-the-Bismarck-Paperback/p/6139] or via Amazon and other retailers.

Autumn Reunion for TAPIO and MOG (V)

Lieutenant Colonel David Reynolds (second from right below) writes: Since leaving the Media Operations Group I have had good intentions to keep in touch with colleagues and while I have been fortunate to have been invited to a MOG dinner night, not many old faces were present.

In conversation with the Club Chairman I suggested it might be worthwhile to propose a dinner night for Pen & Sword Club members who served with MOG (V) and the TA Pool of Information Officers. Perhaps if successful we could make it an annual reunion?

I was not sure what to expect but the response has been excellent and I am now left with the decision of when and where? Hopefully we will find a venue soon with the aim being to hold the event in late September. Let's hope it works.

If you have any ideas for venues we are looking at London and Wiltshire. Please let Doreen Cadwallader know or email me direct on daviid@dramedia.co.uk.

The ideas for the dinner was raised last November after I took part in the Pen & Sword Cenotaph Parade. I have to confess that I found it an emotional experience that I would highly recommend. My participation came as a result of meting up with Doug MacArthur, who told me that it is something that you have to do, even if just the once," and he was right!

After the parade we drank tea on Horse Guards and listed to John as he spoke about the future of the Pen & Sword Club, explaining how difficult it is to pull people together for an event. Our tiny five strong contingent, pictured above, was clear evidence of his concern and hence the idea and a plan to draw old friends together was born?

What did YOU do at the weekend?

Naval Media Operations puts the Fleet Air Arm in focus, reports Lieutenant Commander Heather Lane, right, of the RNR Media Operations Specialisation.

Naval Reserve Media Operations Officers converged at the Royal Naval Air Station, Yeovilton to gain an insight into the future Fleet Air Arm, learning from the Assistant Chief of Staff, Captain Alun Jones about the ever evolving technological advances in aviation capability of the Royal Navy.

While the new Lightning F35B strike fighter has yet to hit the UK shores, practical training is well underway to prepare those who will fly and handle these capable multi-role aircraft from the decks of *HMS Queen Elizabeth* and *HMS Prince of Wales*. The media specialists heard from Captain Jones about the ongoing deployment and training of both RN engineers and aircrew to the US Navy carriers, flying and operating alongside our allies to grow our knowledge of operating from huge carriers within a Task Group.

These are exciting times for rotary wing aviators of the Royal Navy, as they will soon bid farewell to their veteran and well loved helicopter, the battle-hardened Sea Kings and welcome a new age of technologically superior Merlin and Wildcat maritime helicopters to the Fleet.

Touring the vast hangars of the air station, the Media Operations Officers were able to comprehend the sweeping changes in the air and get up close and personal with the aircraft themselves, climbing into the cockpit to see the new cockpit displays, and noting the subtle differences between old and new.

At the burning grounds far across the chilly airfield, charred fighter jets and broken helicopters awaited their fiery fate as Yeovilton's fire crews ferried in the grinning press officers, crammed into the back of the fire station vehicles, clad in yellow fire-fighting gear. Having escaped their normal roles as corporate lawyers, business executives, managers, surveyors, working mothers and civil servant the reservists were destined to carry out heroic deeds; battle raging fires, enter smoke-filled rooms to tackle an inferno and learn how to cut free victims trapped in a tangled wreck of a vehicle accident.

Such training, a mixture of serious classroom-based briefings, practical demonstrations and hands-on excitement, keep the media ops officers highly motivated and gives them the ability to speak authoritatively to journalists about the work of the Navy.

Drawn from diverse backgrounds the Reservists bond together in this vigorous environment. At the airfield next to the shiny red fire engines and bright blue skies, energy and vitality radiates from every face. Whether emerging triumphantly in breathing apparatus from the burning building carrying the dummy victims, or prising the car doors off with pneumatic powered vicelike jaws, they are all heroes for today, and wiser than yesterday.

What could be better at the end of a busy day on the airfield to enjoy a visit to a local country pub followed by a noisy, laughter-filled spicy Thai dinner in a bustling market town in the heart of Somerset?

After their feast, there are medal presentations, a witty speech and silly games of Connect Four back in the Wardroom. We feel happy and contented to be surrounded with like-minded souls who celebrate the best of both worlds; a love of telling the Royal Navy's story and then getting back to our civilian work colleagues and loved ones with tales of derring-do on Monday morning.

Give a little: Help a lot!

Colonel Mike Peters, Club Executive Vice President writes:

Club members may have seen me sporting a new neck piece recently. No: it's not a much sought, non-existent, Pen & Sword Club tie; it's the work of the South East Reserve Forces & Cadets Association which the Aldershot headquarters staff has been pushing hard.

But then we are also pushing a great deal more these days with the formation of a Communications Advisory Group which is seeking to boost recruiting and retention in the Reserve Forces, for cadet adult leaders, and to highlight the work of the association.

I have been a military member of RFCA in the South West and the South East for many years and at the beginning of this year undertook a new task as Chair of the CAG. While down beat media reports are not helping it is a fact that recruiting is moving ahead. There is, however, much to do.

The big guns in our area are doing well with 7 Rifles and 3 PWRR among those units taking advantage of the major TV advertising. Smaller units, however, often need a helping hand. What makes news in a unit is not often understood and a determined effort is underway to improve this scenario. The region is well served by its full time communications staff and the SERFCA weekly news is among the most read on-line sites. The CAG is also well formed with the Reserve media & communications units contributing ideas and knowledge to the debate along with the full time marketing and recruiting team and the Ministry of Defence information team at Brigade headquarters.

Club members across the country can also help out if they can spare some time. We do not need anyone to write or photograph, to broadcast or to blog. What is in short supply is the professional eye for spotting a good news story.

There are Reserve and Cadet units near to all Pen & Sword Club members. Why not make contact; give a little of your professional knowledge and skills and help a lot. We are a force for good in the world of defence communications. Let's consider going one step further and help boost the work of our serving colleagues.

If you need information about local units please contact me at michaelpcoms@btinternet.com.

RAF Media Reserves take the lead in Exercise RED FLAG

Squadron Leader Andy Wasley RAuxAF writes:

You'd be forgiven for assuming that a media ops deployment to Las Vegas would be a 'jolly' with some work tagged on. Not so – RAF Media Reserves officers from 7644 (VR) Squadron deployed to the region to cover Exercise RED FLAG, the largest and most complex air combat exercise in the world.

During 18-hour days to collect and edit stills, copy and video, the team had little time to see the bright lights of the big city. They did, however, achieve record levels of engagement with the RAF's audiences on social media as well as coverage on TV and radio – as big a win in Las Vegas as they needed

7644 Squadron's participation in RED FLAG started with Wing Commander Dylan Eklund, who deployed to Nellis Air Force Base early in January to set up relationships and line up opportunities for the Mobile News Team (MNT).

The MNT itself – comprising Sqn Ldr Andy Wasley and Flt Lt Cameron Rennie, with regular RAF colleagues Sgt Ralph Merry (video) and Cpl Neil Bryden (stills) – deployed to Nellis on 31 January. Their task was to make sure the RAF's contribution to the enormous exercise received targeted coverage on RAF and regional media. Any media ops officer knows the form: hometown stories, features, rushes and social media output. What made RED FLAG

different was the pace and scale of the operation, and the volume of output the MNT had to produce.

This year's RAF RED FLAG participants included Typhoon FGR4 aircraft flown by 1(F) Squadron from RAF Lossiemouth. The Typhoon is an excellent air superiority fighter, and during RED FLAG it had a chance to demonstrate its swing-role 'fighter-bomber' capability. Armed with Paveway IV laser-guided bombs and Advanced Medium- and Short-Range Air-to-Air missiles, Typhoon can fight its way in to hostile airspace, strike ground targets and fight its way back.

Throughout RED FLAG's 120-strong air battles Typhoon demonstrated its lethal capability using live munitions, providing RAF aircrew with invaluable experience of using the weapons systems offensively in a heavily defended battlespace.

(*photos courtesy of the author and RAF MNT)*

Alongside Typhoon, RAF Sentinel R1 aircraft from V (AC) Squadron, RAF Waddington, were participating. Other participants included aerospace battle managers from 1 Air Control Centre, RAF Scampton. Naturally the MNT was keen to avoid aircraft-heavy stills and footage – it was important to highlight the broader RAF contribution. During the deployment the MNT worked hard to fit in with the frenetic pace of operations to find time to interview personnel from all units, working in all roles, to fully demonstrate the RAF's capability.

Armed with an array of 'punchy' stills and rushes, the MNT sold-in the story to BBC Scotland, STV, BBC Lincolnshire, BFBS Radio and Forces TV. The team felt it was important to highlight the RAF's capabilities to the internal defence audience as well as TV and radio local to the main bases involved, and long-standing warm relationships with the term at SSVC helped make sure BFBS and Forces TV used a wide range of video and audio snippets to cover the Exercise.

In today's digital-first defence media environment, of course, no deployment would be worth writing about that didn't properly include social media in its output. Here, the MNT made a special effort to engage with the RAF's audiences across Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Tumblr. Video snippets from RAF personnel working at RED FLAG – crucially including all ranks and as many trades as possible – proved a big hit on Facebook, generating a quarter of a million views from the RAF's follower base.

Pictured right: Wing Commander Dylan Eklund

Yet more interest came from Tumblr, where the RAF is leading the field in generating interest in great video and long-form written pieces.

Despite the MNT's narrow focus on the RAF's contribution to the Exercise, the team took the decision to use imagery of other air forces' aircraft to illustrate the scale of the coalition. Naturally enough, this delighted the Service's followers on Facebook and Twitter – as well as helping the Service engage directly with its allies in a public space, further demonstrating the warmth and ease of the RAF's relationship with the US Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force.

None of this would have been possible without close working relationships with the RAF detachment and Nellis AFB's public affairs team. 7644 Sqn has worked closely with US public affairs staff on operations in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iraq over the last decade, and the unit's awareness of the US's ways of working helped cement an easy working relationship which delivered great results for both sides.

Time spent on task also played a part in the team's success. The RAF works exceptionally hard on operations and exercises, and the MNT worked into the small hours throughout its time in Nevada to hit deadlines and turn out excellent material. For Sqn Ldr Wasley, as the team leader, the principal pressure came from the time required to liaise with Air Command and media in the UK on an eight-hour time difference, giving him a normal working day of 0600-0130.

Flt Lt Rennie spent every spare hour planning complex media tasks across multiple sites at an enormous air base, and Sgt Merry and Cpl Bryden had hours of footage and many hundreds of stills to edit and process. For every member of the team, the week ended with a marathon 23.5-hour day to finish filming, edit rushes and distribute media.

This is by way of saying that the deployment was certainly not a 'jolly' – as demonstrated by the record scale of success for its output (and the dark circles under the MNT members' eyes by the end of the week). However, part of the appeal of the RAF – for regular and reserve personnel – is the opportunity to travel and see new places. Las Vegas was close enough for the team to spend its final evening exploring the city, half-asleep but happy with their hard work. For the rest of the week – and for the rest of the Exercise – the bright lights were a distant reminder of a world away from the hard work of RED FLAG.

Practical PR - or Election as a Councillor

Matthew, Chapter 7 verses 7 & 8 - Major Ian Proud proves his transferable skills

Last October I was selected to stand as a Councillor in the London Borough of Ealing. Unfortunately it was not in the ward where I live, but a neighbouring one, whose boundary is 200 yards due west of home. Whilst both wards were *true blue*, like Animal Farm, one was more blue than the other and I was in the other one. As there were other more borderline wards we helped them before canvassing our ward until after Christmas. With some 10,000 electors in the ward we would then be pushed to visit all 3,000 households by mid-May.

From January we settled down to canvassing the electorate. We focussed on the wards where our support is strongest. This included leafleting, knocking on doors asking questions and asking for their support. In the majority of calls the occupant is so surprised to have a political activist, be it a cabinet minister, MP, councillor or a local party activist asking for their opinion or support, they normally agree to support you.

To quote Matthew 7:7-7- 8 ([7] Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: [8] For every one that asketh receiveth; and he

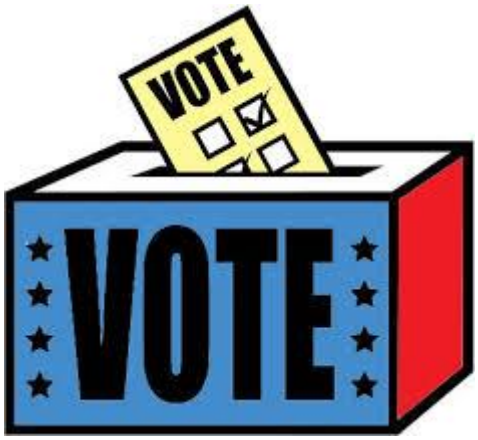
that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.). 2,000 years later it is still applicable.

Having identified our key areas of supporters we did an intensive programme of calling with our canvassing cards which showed the three Conservative candidates in a typical leafy Ealing park with our names and contact details. If no one was in the card was slipped in through the letterbox. The worst ones were at ground level, the next worst were the vertical ones, the dodgy ones were where you could hear the dog charging the door just waiting to chew up anything that came through the letterbox and fingers would be a bonus.

A week before the election two VIPs came to the Ealing Conservative Association to cheer on the troops. All the candidates were assembled in the back car park, issued with placards and we were addressed by David Cameron and Boris Johnson. David Cameron did a good workmanlike address but Boris showed off his true form in style. The whole event was set up by Conservative Central Office. As a press facility it went well, but you would have to be spectacularly bad to mishandle a press call with the PM and the Mayor of London. I managed to video the whole of Boris' speech, downloaded it onto my Facebook page and e-mailed it to colleagues for them to use as they saw fit.

Whilst canvassing in Ealing, I came across an elderly blind man who wanted to vote. Unfortunately it was too late to organise a postal vote or proxy vote, so I offered to drive him to the polling station at 8.30 am on Thursday morning. I duly arrived, but was two minutes late. However as he heard my car stop outside his front door, he opened his door ready to be escorted to the car. As I took him to and from the polling station he told me had had gone ashore on D-Day with the Royal Sussex Regiment and suffered a leg wound. For someone who is mentally sharp, physically fit, at least 90 years old, and a WWII veteran and was keen to vote made me realise that some people, having fought for our freedoms, did not want them thrown away. He put the apathetic 55% of the electorate to shame.

From May 8 we intensified our calling, complete with our Get out the vote (GOTV) cards. These had a photo of the three of us in a well-known ward location complete with our names in the numbered slot where our names would be on the ballot paper and on the reverse were our six main pledges.



- ***As a means of raising our profile they worked well. I was stopped in the street by a woman, who asked, "Are you a councillor or are you a candidate?"***
- ***"I'm a candidate."***
- ***"Oh I recognised you from one of your leaflets and I see you running most mornings."***
- ***"With a memory for recalling faces you must have connection with the police?"***
- ***"Yes," she replied, "My husband is in the Met, in the Diplomatic Protection Group."***
- ***"So," I countered, "Do I look like a pleb or a prole?***
- ***Burst of laughter and I was promised both votes.***

Having done at least two sessions of canvassing a day for the two weeks prior to election day I could have passed the taxi driver's knowledge for the ward. In addition I was meeting people who knew my wife, my son and daughter, as well as meeting many with whom we had mutual acquaintances.

Come election day I did a few hours telling outside the polling station which had the largest number of voters on the roll. Throughput was slow, 250 by midday, 500 by 5.00pm and then

another 500 by 9.00 pm and I reckoned about 1,200 would be the final figure. Using my time wisely I went round the immediate neighbourhood chivvying people out to vote.

At one house, at 8.50 pm the man answering the door was surprised to be told it was election day, exclaiming he thought it was next week. I asked for his vote and he replied, “No, I am voting UKIP as a protest.” And off he shot before I could tell him there were no UKIP candidates standing as councillors. I had come across about 10 UKIP supporters, six of whom promised me their vote as it would help them with the council and then vote UKIP for the European Parliament.

May 23 was the count day, in a huge marquee erected in the council car park. Ever since the New Year I had never felt confident that the election was going to be a walkover. There were 23 counting tables and I went there with my counting agent, a friend from university. We all had a training session on how to monitor the vote which proved incredibly useful.

Throughout the day I was depressed by the indication of the early results with the odd burst of optimism. So I was up and down mentally all day. After all this was my first ever election and at my age a second chance might not happen.

As the boxes were emptied the counting team sorted the papers in those with block votes, i.e. all three votes for the same party, those that were split, i.e. had one or two votes or three votes for a mix of parties. We noted the number of votes from each polling station box and the breakdown of votes per party. That gave us an idea of the turnout per polling district and proportion of votes cast per party. What was interesting was a distinct number of totally blank council voting slips.

Having met the protest UKIP voter I assumed that he took both voting slips, vote. It all took time and when the block votes had been counted I caught the eye of the Presiding Officer and asked if he could give me the block vote results which were 1,344 Conservative and 1,280 Labour. That gave us 64 votes of clear water before the split votes were counted and there were 60 split votes, each pack having 25 ballot papers. At this point all the candidates and counting agents were leaning over the counters checking the accuracy of the votes being transferred to the split vote recording sheets and that the totals were accurate.

Because we could not cover all the counting teams we only had a rough idea of the figures, but I was getting about six votes per split vote pack, i.e. about 360 votes which added to the 1,344 block votes put me in a position to win a seat. As I was not counting my colleagues’ splits I had no idea how they would fare. Eventually the presiding officer came over to us with a printout of the results he was due to announce and as he held it up there was a veritable scrum of some 20 people piling in to see the results, photograph them and generally note them. All I could see was my result, 1,766 and the lead candidate with 1,820. Incredibly I was a Councillor. The results were formally announced with the third councillor being Labour with 1,641 votes.

I was swamped with congratulations, not surprisingly as the number of Conservative Councillors had been slashed from 24 to 12. It was quite an emotional high winning a seat at

my first attempt but offset at seeing so many friends losing their seats and hopefuls who had put in so much work over the previous four years to see it all come to naught.

So not only am I the only Conservative Councillor in Cleveland ward, but I am the only Conservative councillor in the whole of the Ealing North Parliamentary constituency, the other 23 being Labour.

So now the hard work begins. The next morning the much depleted group of Conservatives Councillors held its AGM to appoint the Leader, etc. As expected it was not a happy occasion. Immediately afterwards we all went through an induction programme to complete the formal paper work for being a councillor. The only decent perk is the car park pass for the council car park in the middle of Ealing.

What happened? The council elections and the European elections were held in mid-term. That is the traditional time for the electorate to give the Parliamentary governing party, or parties today, a good kicking which is why across the country, especially in London, Labour won so many seats.

In my case I was the one who put in the most effort calling on people and they came out, voted for me and enabled me to win my seat. Wipe out Thursday was not a happy day.