Scratchings From the Pen.....

May 2013: a memo and scribbles from and for members of the Pen & Sword Club
Editor: Colonel Mike Peters

A tribute to Colonel Alan Protheroe, founder of the Pool of TA Public Information Officers – proud Welshman journalist, soldier, leader, raconteur, mentor and friend.

In the last month many members of the Pen & Sword Club have made their farewells to one of the greatest advocates of UK military media operations, Colonel Alan Protheroe CBE TD DL who passed on in April. Alan was the founding member of the Pool of TA Public Information Officers (TAPIO) and his memorial service was attended by many of those who shared with him the rebirth of Army media operations in the

seventies and laid the foundations for the success and expansion of today's Media Operations Group (V).

Alan had long and distinguished parallel careers in the Territorial Army and in journalism. His two years National Service in the Welch Regiment was followed by many years in the TA. He founded the TAPIO Pool in 1980 and was its first commanding officer.

In his professional career as a journalist he rose to be a highly successful Deputy Director General of the BBC but he learned his way forward many years before as a junior reporter on the Glamorgan Gazette in an era which produced a batch of Welsh journalists who went on to greater things – including John Humphreys, the doyen of Radio 4's flagship Today programme.

Alan never forgot his roots in journalism and in later years when asked of his connection with the Pool he would describe himself using a title familiar to fellow former members of the National Union of Journalists as Father of the Chapel

National Chairman and Scratchings Editor, Colonel Mike Peters, who took command of the Pool when Alan became the Senior TAPIO paid tribute to a proud Welshman, a great journalist, officer, leader, raconteur, mentor and close friend who possessed the true spirit of the Territorial. Twice the Citizen! Says Mike: Alan's family was much appreciative of the club members who attended the memorial service along with representatives of MOG (V).

This small tribute has not been difficult to write. The task has been to keep it within bounds because there are so many stories to tell. I have called on those who served with Alan for anecdotes but also thought it best that we let Alan tell of some of his life by re-publishing two of the many stories he wrote for Lieutenant Colonel Lawrie Phillips, the Editor of the internationally acclaimed magazine of the TAPIOs – Despatches.

My first encounter with Alan was as a fellow Territorial. I was then a Military Policeman and Alan one of a very small band known as Observer Officers. We cut our media ops teeth in Northern Ireland and British Army of the Rhine and it was in Germany that Alan produced his first copy for me as a customer. As the Chief Press Officer of the Tarmac Group I wanted a story on one of my senior colleagues who would be on camp with BAOR that year. Alan's copy when it arrived was impressive. Accurate, interesting and with humour too. Alan's subject was a Major in the Royal Monmouth Royal Engineers (Militia). I can recall one phrase to this day: *as the major moved his boots to a drier patch of German mud.*

Alan was expert in cajoling officers into joining the Pool and it was this skill plus his enthusiasm for the task that parted me from the boots and bayonets of the infantry to become Alan's Training Major. Even Alan, originally with the Welch Regiment, was not sure what hit the TAPIOs on their first weekend with a Light Infantry officer driving the training. The suggested run before breakfast was received with less than enthusiasm and, in fact, I never got Alan to run in the whole time we served together. Nevertheless it was the start of a lifelong friendship and business relationship that served us both well.

The TAPIO Pool was the birthplace of Media Operations Group (V). Countless nights, and many a bottle of Scotch, were consumed debating how to improve the Army's public relations. Actions speak louder than words and it was not long before the unit strength was enhanced as the Army found it had a group of media professionals who became known as the strategic reserve to many a Director of Public Relations. These were also the days of the Unit Press Officer courses at UKLF run so well by Major Onslow Dent and P&S member Nigel Gillies.

Several times a year this weeklong course prepared young officers for their role on the media hot streets of Northern Ireland. Alan's guidance was invaluable. At the time of the Rhodesian excursion several TAPIOs went to Africa and sport the medal today while Alan was in the background providing much appreciated advice to the General on how to cope with media demands.

As Senior TAPIO, Alan (high in the BBC) plus myself as Commanding Officer (then running the Army Press Desk in MoD) spent much time promoting media operations to a sometimes-reluctant audience. In BAOR we met with the Corps Commander and discussed the media impact on operations should the Red Army roll across the Inner German Border.

A typical question from senior officers was how to stop film and photographs of NATO preparations for such a world-shaking event. Similar topics were discussed in meetings with the Commander of Northern Army Group (NATO) as was the formation and manning of an

Allied Press Information Centre that would deal with thousands of the world's media. This APIC was trialed in 1983, just after the Falklands War, and was an eye opener for many in BAOR.

It was Alan's views on the growth of media operations and the need for trained professionals, plus the acquisition of the right equipment, that grew within MOG (V) after his retirement and led to much of the acceptance of military media ops today.

The relationship between media and the military was tested in 1982 when Alan found himself at the forefront of early disputes with the Ministry of Defence on coverage of the Falklands War.

As **General Lord Ramsbotham,** below, our Club Patron recalls: My keenest memory of Alan, with whom I established a very close and warm relationship, and who was kind enough to throw a BBC dinner when I left my appointment as DPR (Army,) is when the defence correspondents became mutinous early on in the War. Not only had none of them gone with the Task Force, but also they were given no special facilities by the Acting Chief of Public Relations, Ian McDonald, who was singularly unhelpful because of his lack of understanding of military operations.

Eventually this spread to editors who put the point to the Permanent Under Secretary, Bill Cooper, following which he instituted special briefings - not for defence correspondents - but for Editors, to which the Directors of Public Relations were invited. We sat at the back rather than at the table.

One evening, towards the latter part of April, Alan electrified a meeting by standing up and almost shouting said*: I have never before been accused of lack patriotism and the last place in which I expected to be called a traitor was the Ministry of Defence*. There was a stunned silence, broken by the Editor of the News of the World, saying: *I can't make up my mind whether it's conspiracy or cock-up.* The Head of BBC News, Peter Woon, adding: *Both.*

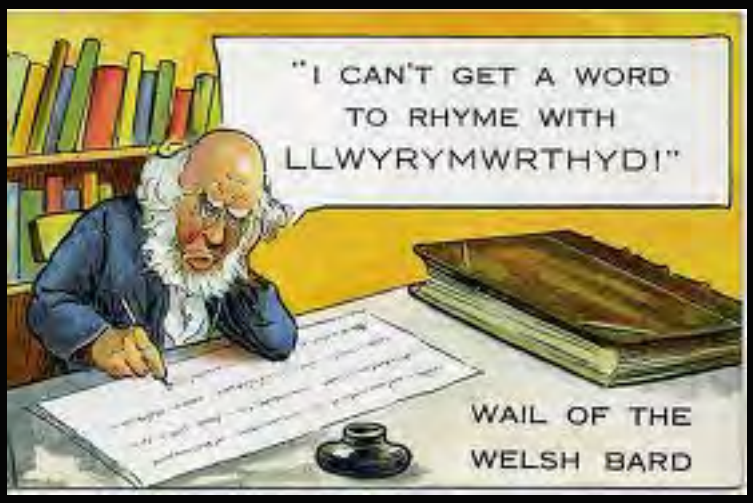
Bill Cooper immediately adjourned the meeting for the first time in the war. He spoke to the three DPRs asking us what should be done. *Sack McDonald we said with one voice. I can't do that he is now a public figure,* replied the PUS. *Go away and think about it and come back and se me at four o'clock tomorrow.*

We went back and said again: *Sack McDonald. He knows nothing about the military. He cannot answer operational questions from journalists. He never briefs us about anything, so we cannot do our jobs properly. He is quite the wrong person to be the spokesman if the Task Force goes ashore because he simply does not understand operation. We must have someone in uniform who does.*

You will remember that McDonald was sent on leave that weekend, and Neville Taylor thankfully, brought in as CPR (non-Falklands). Over that weekend, Tim Donkin, a Royal Marine, did the Pebble Island press briefing, which was widely applauded. McDonald, who had taken press with him to Scotland to interview and photograph him at home, then infuriated Neville by calling the press together on Monday morning and saying that what had happened over the weekend - under Neville - was exactly as he would have wanted.

Neville went to see Cooper and said that he was having none of this from his Deputy, and had his appointment confirmed as CPR, full stop! McDonald was told he would leave Public Relations at the end of the war and was relegated to spokesman on days when there was no particular military action to be announced. Tim Donkin, Christopher Dunphie or Dick Trant -

all to journalistic and public acclaim, as you will recall, covered that and the rest is history. But it was Alan who set it all in train.



There are stories galore about Alan in uniform. His time as a National Service Officer is not well recorded but when he joined the TA and then began his career in public information and Army PR he became something of legend.

As a natural Welsh speaker Alan is remembered by **Colonel David McDine** for his humour. The TAPIOs frequently exercised in Wales and Alan's guide, as a Welsh speaker, to pronunciation of local names always produced laughter. When getting TAPIOs to practice the name of the nearby village of Rhandirmwyn in Carmarthenshire Alan also laid out a subtle challenge: Climb the nearby Devil's Staircase. Those who did found them stretching for five kilometers and rising 227 meters – a 4.5% gradient. Alan marched up the hill when serving as an infantryman and knew its leg breaking potential.

David recalls how when travelling on a similar TAPIO mission he asked Alan to teach him a few words of Welsh. *Here's a good Welsh word, he said – 'frajes.' What does it mean? Well you use it like this, said Alan. Hello Dai, haven't seen you f 'rajes.*

Colonel Bob Purvis recalls how easy Alan's relationships were with senior officers. On a cold night on Salisbury Plain Alan and his officers were huddled around a glowing pot belly stove in a World War 2 hut when a visitor joined them in the dim light of the sole working light bulb. Alan regaled the 'stranger' with information and occasionally called him 'Mate.' As he left the group gradually realised the man was the commanding general!

Lieutenant Colonel Graham Barnett adds: Alan has been an inspiration throughout my PR career both in the Army and outside, and along with many others I mourn his passing. I first met Alan in, I think, 1972. I was the G2PR at 2 Division and covering an autumn exercise in Germany of 12 Mechanised Brigade. Together with my photographer, we were shooting footage of 1 RRW for BBC Wales. It was the well established scenario of a crossing of the River Weser, and 1 RRW battle group was leading the brigade. We got ourselves in a good position to film the approach and the leading troop of tanks.

As the leading tank was approaching the end of the pontoon bridge I noticed a uniformed figure clinging to the side of the tank. We were well into our film when the figure jumped off the tank and strode towards us with a beaming smile. Tony O'Shaunessy, my RAOC photographer cursed as the image filled the lens. Calmly the officer introduced himself – *Hi chaps, Captain Alan Protheroe RRW (TA), I'm a TAPIO covering 1 RRW.* That meeting was the beginning of a wonderful friendship lasting over 50 years. What an inspiration!

Alan's quest to expand the newly formed TAPIO Pool saw him cast around and he contacted many of his former journalist and broadcasting colleagues and acquaintances in South Wales. His wicked sense of humour is perhaps typified by this tale from former Pool Commanding Officer and broadcasting entrepreneur Colonel Colin Mason, pictured below left, in his current role as the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire.

The telephone rang. It was Alan Protheroe calling from his office at Broadcasting House. *Colin, come down to HQ UKLF at Wilton. We can have a spot of lunch in the Mess and I will show you around the TAPIO Pool. You just might be interested.*

It was 1981 and Alan was responding to a gentle enquiry from a fellow Royal Regiment of Wales TA officer who was leaving his job at Swansea's commercial radio station to establish a new station - Chiltern Radio – in the Home Counties. Geography was going to make continuing as OC C Company in Bridgend difficult.

The lunch at Wilton proved to be a very convivial affair. I relaxed and enjoyed myself with a pre-lunch drink and with wine during the meal. Afterwards, Alan took me up the hill to visit the Pool's office which was based in a detached house near the main gate. He was particularly keen that I should visit what I took to be a conference room where UKLF's civilian Command PRO was already in attendance.

Worryingly, for me, I noticed the room was laid out as for an interview. Indeed, to my increasing disquiet, Colonel Alan and the Chief PR took two seats on one side of the table and invited me to take the single chair on the other side. Struggling to clear my head, I did so. There followed a most formal of formal interviews.

Always a supportive man, Alan did have a mischievous sense of humour and he liked to tease: *Tell me, Colin, at what point does Army PR become Psyops?*

This, of course, directed at a company commander tutored only in infantry matters. My brain fought against the effects of that rather excellent lunch – *what the hell is he talking about?...Cyclops...man with one eye...for goodness sake.*

Alan let me stumble on a while talking about Greek Mythology in modern warfare and then, gently waving his cigarette in his raised right hand, he said: *But Colin, should we be involved in Psychological Operations?* With silent, but grateful thanks, I began to talk cogently. I did get into the Territorial Army Pool of Public Information Officers.

Over the years Alan wrote many stories for TAPIO magazine Despatches. He featured in almost every issue of the publication which ran for some six years and was in great demand. Editor Lieutenant Colonel Lawrie Philips could always rely on him to produce copy. Scratchings is pleased to republish two of his tales.

Dicing with death

I was about 17, I suppose, newly started on a weekly newspaper and determined to make my mark on the world of journalism. By present day standards, I was deeply unsophisticated - innocent rather than naive; not least, I now like to think, because I had been deprived of a childhood diet of bananas, crisps, ice cream and Smarties, and denied such joys as modern childhood's delights of mind-broadening global travel (there was at the time a little difficulty, I recall, involving Germany, Japan and most others).

This was followed by the peacetime turmoil of reconstruction, societal retrenchment, protracted rationing, low pay and all those factors which, if sociologists are to be believed, should have turned each of my contemporaries into car-stealing, football-hooligan, rioting rapists and potential serial killers, desperately unstable misfits, instead of what we actually were as Welsh youngsters: perfectly normal, ordinary, sex-obsessed manic-depressives, bred out of the permafrost, rainfall and nonstop gloom of the mining valleys.

Should you think South Wales was not necessarily the best place to begin a career in journalism, you would not be entirely wrong. Neither, for that matter, would you be entirely (or even historically) correct. Because, by God, there were advantages: a thousand stories to be covered, a thousand individuals with a thousand secrets, a thousand lifetimes, a thousand beliefs and arguments.

But it you were to begin to quarry that totality of human experience, you had to tread warily, listen carefully, develop into an outward-going individual, and cultivate the difficult art of keeping a straight face at all costs, whatever the circumstances, whatever the pressure, however strong the temptation to subside in convulsions of laughter, usually at the most important occasions.

Apart from all the standard journalistic precepts drilled into me in those early learning days, 'facts are sacred' and so forth, my mentor, a steadfastly unflappable one-time Oxford Mail reporter always advised 'keep your sense of humour, but for Christ's sake keep it under cover!'

Then, as now, a weekly newspaper plays a vital role in the community, not least because people enjoy not only reading about their neighbours, but also reading about, and seeing, themselves. For the most part, therefore, the hesitant young newspaperman was welcomed whatever the occasion. If he turned up with a photographer as well, then it was party time: the elderflower wine began to flow in inordinate and usually lethal quantities.

My basic training in those first few months was the 'weddings and funerals ‘beat. Boring, maybe, but extraordinarily character-forming. For it was at that point you began to meet people face to face, and began to understand the importance of facts. Funerals could be quite

(Courtesy of *The Guardian*)

tricky. The scrupulous noting of every mourner at a ‘high-class’ - funeral called for immense care: to miss one, to suggest in the published list that someone had NOT turned up at the cemetery was a frightful gaffe. Miss one name, and all hell broke loose.

Even accidental omission was to be interpreted as evidence that Councilor Soandso had not even bothered to turn up at the cemetery: the reporter and his newspaper were already on the slippery path to being branded 'unreliable'.

Even more taxing for the young reporter was the job of calling at the house and 'getting the details' of death. One was always welcomed into the home of the deceased although calling unannounced on such a mission required a deal of tact on my part, and considerable understanding from those I wished to talk to. My tact evolved rapidly. The kindness of the bereaved was astonishing. *Come in, luv. Cup of tea? Tell you what, you go in with him while I put the kettle on...*

And I was ushered briskly into the front room to commune silently with the shrouded grey figure, usually with two half crowns on his eyelids, arranged in his coffin astride two trestles. The visit was always endless and, to a youngster unaccustomed to, and utterly unamused by, the fact of death, somewhat distasteful. *Looks well, doesn't he?* (I always agreed with the widow). T’hat’s *just what I said after they laid him out, yes, I said, 'e's looking lovely: that fortnight in Barry Island did him the world of good...* Slowly, I would drag the conversation around to the deceased’s career. Usually, he was just a normal, quiet, unassuming, undistinguished apparent non-achiever who had 'done his bit ‘at various times. But he was a member of the community. And that was the most important thing of all.

Weddings, too, made their demands on the trainee reporter. The details had to be scrupulously accurate: get them wrong, and you were a goner. Not to mention that Maggie's third cousin twice removed (three-year old Benjy, still bus-lagged after the 15 mile drive from Pontygwaith) presented her with a sprig of white heather and Bakelite horseshoe was to hazard what was to become known, technically, as a 'near death experience'. What you didn't mention, of course, even though they told you quite cheerfully, was that Benjy also distinguished himself by knocking off all the dregs from the whisky, sherry and gin glasses and was discovered, paralysed, in the pub bowling alley at the post-reception mop-up.

In those days, people cared about what we now term 'their image'. People cared about what people thought of them. And, not unnaturally, they cared very much about the way you, as the reporter/intermediary, described them and related events affecting them. There were occasions, of course, when keeping a straight face came close to inducing a savage double hernia.

Sadie, for instance, when I called to see her after her wedding, turned out to be startlingly pregnant. She and her husband, a beefy miner, dead ringer for the Missing Link, a man who in the USSR would have been, inevitably, a Stakhanovite such was his reputation for endless hard work, lived with her parents in a two-bedroom terrace house. Expecting her to go into labour at any second, I carefully noted the details. It was a white wedding (of course: all weddings are posh and, pregnancy notwithstanding, in 'white' aren't they?)

She described her dress as if she was a fashion commentator next to a Paris catwalk. *And,* she added breathlessly, the dress had a beautiful coatee, too. *White silk it was with embroidered roses made of durex thread - beautiful it was, wasn't it?* Head down, I concentrated on my note taking, seemingly oblivious even to the firm but admirably sternly controlled fart from her husband as he sipped a pint mug of black tea.

Durex thread? I enquired carefully, completely po-faced. *That's right luv: it's like, well, shiny thread... LUREX,* snapped her mother from the back kitchen. *Yes, that's right, durex... LUREX with an L* yelped mother even more loudly. But the bride was determined. *No, I don't think it was Lurex*

Its got to be asn't it, growled her husband. *You can't have durex thread girl. Otherwise we'd all be bloody knitting French letters wouldn't we?* At which point, and imitating those much admired News of the World reporters, I, too, 'made my excuses and left'.

Come to think of it, in journalism, dicing with death in one form or another is a kind of norm. And the swiftest, most certain suicidal route to professional death via journalistic self-destruction is, quite simply, to get it wrong. Miss one fact, miss one detail, get the story confused, at best less than clear, is to dice with death each time.

Facts and comment, as my old boss was wont to muse. Comment is free, absolutely free. But facts? Facts are sacred. You can't make them up. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are or even what you would like them to be. Just remember: Facts are sacred.

Was it really 36 years?

It becomes the moment for memories. That I suddenly realise, is an opening sentence with roughly the same TOQ (Turn-Off Quotient) as *Have you seen my holiday snaps?* But you must allow an ageing Colonel his reflective moments at the point where he severs his formal uniformed connection with the Army after 36 years.

I shall skate over the National Service years, the amazing Army Emergency Reserve years, the two hilarious years as a County Training Officer with the Glamorgan Army Cadet Force, even my time as a company commander in an infantry battalion - skate over, because there's too much to say about it all, space is somewhat limited and there are stories best reserved, perhaps, for one's autobiography (publishable, of course) only post mortem. Enter, therefore 1970.

I had been bribed to pull together those in the Army Districts who bore the sonorous title off TA Observer Officer and from that nucleus to create a Pool of PR Officers, to be composed of professional communicators - journalists, ad-men, PR specialists and the like - and to weld them into some broadly coherent working group. We assembled at the splendid RA Mess at Larkhill.

The TAOOs were, to put it extremely gently, a curious bunch. Only two of the 12 were journalists: others included teachers and a GPO engineer. Nice guys, of course: remnants of the old and bold, the majors who were jolly decent chaps, of long and excellent service, and who should be 'kept on somehow, old chap.' So they had been appointed TAOOs - and that in itself was, perhaps, a measure of how un-seriously the TA had been taking the matter of Public Relations.

It was the cataclysm of Northern Ireland that sharpened the minds in the Army, the realisation that it was an honourable, courageous and a political task being performed with skill and distinction: there was nothing to be ashamed of.

For me, 1970 was the year Army PR 'grew up'. In company with many other like-minded officers, I had, after the first of what was to become 18 years 'continuous visiting of Northern Ireland, begun to urge (somewhat loudly, actually) that Army PR really could afford to be more mature, less defensive, more assertive and dynamic, and could find valuable professional reinforcement from within the TA.

To detail the way we evolved and developed the Pool would be tedious in the extreme. But, having assumed the mantle of Senior TAPIO, I was given total backing at all levels for my plans to make the Pool blossom.

The first objective, of course, was to 'professionalise' ruthlessly, to drag into the Pool - sometimes with much kicking and screaming - those journalistic professionals who didn't really want to turn their TA service into what some called a 'busman's holiday' by doing for the Army what most of them were doing in their civilian lives: after all, they argued, they'd joined the TA to do something different - like fire guns or even something quite insane, like voluntarily leaping out of a perfectly serviceable airplane.

But my skillful and charming combination of pressure (*I'm going to put the fix in unless.....),* cultured diplomacy (*Doyouwantanotherkickinthecrutch?),* promises (*You'll love Belize.. only little tarantulas there, honestly..),*and the absolute support I enjoyed from successive DPR(A)s and CPROs-HQUKL, we began to recruit the type of officer we needed, the type we are still recruiting and the type who presently wait anxiously for vacancies. For the Pool, long ago, 'arrived' on the military scene as a skilled, tough-minded, and forthright bunch - sometimes piratical and irreverent, tetchy and seemingly ill-disciplined, but always inventive and creative, totally trustworthy and utterly professional.

Lecturing on the importance and command function of P Info at Greenwich, RCDS, Sandhurst and the Staff College helped enormously, too: I am still astonished at the number of young generals (and a few admirals) who, very kindly, roll up to me at various functions and say *You won't remember me, but you bollocked me for something I said in....* - and then give a date which reminds me of just how long I've served. But most of them have long since taken the message on board!

Recruitment for the Pool was never as easy as it looked. The Pool in its earliest days had an uncanny knack of hiring people who turned out to be pretty kooky characters. I shall not name them. But on the occasional sleepless night I still find myself either squirming in recalled embarrassment or hooting with joyous laughter. At one time we had an attrition rate of 'early retirement' that, proportionately, approximated to the first battle of the Somme.

So you will understand why I shall never forget such occasions as working with a TAPIO (let's call him Major Fred), my photographer, on an armoured exercise in Germany. In Helmstedt, the Corporals' Club had cashed in on the influx of soldiery by turning two storerooms into a bar offering, at rock-bottom prices, excellent breakfasts and first-rate meals 24 hours a day (they - justifiably - made a fortune). At 0530 on our third day together, I strolled into the 'Corporals' Caff for breakfast. Fred was sitting at the bar drinking rum and blackcurrant. He did not look well.

Immediately, the duty corporal made slightly frantic eye signals towards me, finally jerking his head towards the makeshift kitchen they'd set up in the next room. Deftly, I followed him in. *It's the Major, sir.....Well? It's like this, sir: e's bin in 'ere all night.....So? Well, I don't know 'ow to put this, sir, not knowing you an' all that. But the Major's pissed out of 'is soddin' mind!*

I had come to much the same conclusion myself. What had convinced me, perhaps, was Fred's red-rimmed eyes, the slight shaking in the hands, the volcanic mound of 63 cigarette butts in the ashtray at his elbow, and the way he was quite unconsciously performing the kind of bar-stool balancing act only drunks are capable of. *Let's pour some coffee into him, Corporal.*

Tried that sir. Went bloody bananas, 'e did - give me a right bollocking. 'E thought it was rum and black and took a big swig. Red 'ot it was.....

After breakfast, I grasped Fred firmly by the elbow and said (dodging the fumes of stale rum *Off to the war then, Fred.* He gazed genially at me. *Alan, how lovely to see you! Been here long?* With me carrying his camera satchel, I marched him across to my Land Rover and set off at high speed to a vantage point where we would see the tanks. Fred threw up twice before we turned off the road onto the track. It had the makings of a rough day.

I got as close to the tanks as I dared. Fred took out his camera and clung to the Land Rover's wing-mirror. I ran off towards the tanks as they gathered speed for a real old-fashioned cross-country charge, smoke and dust clouding the first sunshine, adding tremendous atmosphere to what were unrepeatable shots. I'd raced a hundred yards towards them before I realised Fred was still at the Land Rover.

But, I thought, he was actually a skilled photographer - and he had his camera to his eye, and seemed to be blazing away. The tanks hurtled past and I walked back to Fred. As I reached him, his knees gave way and he collapsed slowly onto his back.

Good pictures, Fred? I asked sarcastically. *Triffic,* he slurred. *Boo'ful.....love them.* It was then that I noticed Fred's camera had no lens. Mercifully, things have changed. Nowadays, we have no 'urino-Rembrandts' (if I may coin a phrase) of Fred's kind. But the Pool still plays hard, drinks hard, and works hard - and it still has its 'characters, 'praise be! There will be others who will recall gaffes and triumphs, chaos and success, and who will refine the memories of colleagues in the history of the Pool. For, despite all the angst that follows military restructuring, the irritating identification of the so-called 'peace dividend' and the slightly - unbalanced belief that permanent peace really has broken out; the Pool faces a new set of challenges.

Not least among those challenges is its contribution to reminding the public, our 'shareholders,' that the Army, Regular and TA, matters more now, and in the future, than at any other time outside war. I have had the most enormous privilege of serving in, and commanding, the Pool. It has brought friendships and professional enjoyment that could not have been discovered in any other way.

You, too, are privileged to serve. I know you are proud of it - you have every reason to be. I shall not lose touch. From my eyrie ……. I shall remember you with joy: for your dedication, your companionship, your creativity and your magnificent support for me personally and for the Army we seek to serve. Don't forget, the 'old man' will be watching you!

Alan's name will continue within the Pen & Sword Club. His widow, Mrs. Rosemary Protheroe, once his Personal Assistant within the BBC, is to become an Honorary Member.

Charlie & Caroline Accept Honorary Membership as club's reputation grows

Two of the United Kingdom's best-known defence and diplomatic correspondents have accepted honorary membership of the Pen & Sword Club.

Former Press Association defence and diplomatic editor, Charlie Miller - who won the UK Scoop of the Year award for breaking the news of Princess Diana's death - and Caroline Wyatt, the BBC's defence correspondent, fresh back from another tour in Afghanistan will add to the club's growing reputation as a repository of knowledge centred around military media operations.

Charlie, Vice President of Boeing's International Corporate Communications, was a principal speaker at the World Public Relations Forum in Melbourne last November. He joined Boeing as the UK Communications Director before he served as the Communications Director for Europe, Middle East and Africa for a period of five years.

Today he manages a team of country communications directors and agencies in more than 30 key markets to optimise Boeing's corporate reputation and advance stakeholder relationships. Prior to joining Boeing Miller directed corporate media relations at BAE SYSTEMS and its predecessor company, British Aerospace where he worked alongside Club President Hugh Colver and National Chairman Mike Peters.

Charlie was the Press Association's diplomatic and defence correspondent and covered foreign affairs and defence for more than 10 years reporting extensively from troubled locations such as the Persian Gulf, Croatia and Bosnia.

Caroline Wyatt, the BBC's much travelled defence correspondent has featured in Pen & Sword Club matters in the last 12 months. She took part in the club seminar on the Future of Military Media Operations last September when her experiences of embed tours with the military was invaluable in discussing the improvement in media – military relationships.

Caroline was appointed BBC Paris correspondent in July 2003 and from November 2000 she was the BBC's Moscow correspondent, covering President Vladimir Putin's rapprochement with the West, improvements in Russia's economy and the situation in Chechnya.

She joined the BBC as a News and Current Affairs trainee in 1991, after gaining a postgraduate diploma in journalism from City University in London in 1990. From 1993 to 2000 she was based in Germany, as Bonn correspondent and then as Berlin correspondent.

Her experience of the Middle East dates back to 1998 and the Desert Fox campaign where she spent a month reporting from Baghdad on the Iraqi reaction to the British and American bombings. Caroline has also reported from Israel and was based in Albania and Kosovo in 1999, covering the NATO campaign and the subsequent return of Kosovo Albanian refugees to their homes.

Jacqui goes face to face with nine pirates

EU Naval Force Maintains the Fight In Indian Ocean

When I joined EU Naval Force Operation HQ as Spokesperson in March 2012 I didn't think that one day I would come face to face with nine suspect pirates, yet this happened a few weeks ago on board HNLMS De Ruyter, writes Lieutenant Commander Jacqui Sheriff, RNR Media Operations Specialisation, pictured left.

The Dutch warship had apprehended the nine men in two attack skiffs approximately 200 nautical miles off the Somali coast five days earlier and after gathering key evidence, went alongside Port Victoria to hand the men over to the Seychellois Authorities for prosecution.

A team from Sky News and members of the Seychellois media filmed the transfer and EU Naval Force achieved significant and positive media coverage as a result. As well as ensuring that men accused of acts of piracy are brought to trial, legal transfers such as this have helped to send a clear message to pirates, and importantly their investors, that the EU Naval Force will seek, where possible, a legal finish, and so avoid having to return them to the Somali coast.

The threat from Somali piracy really came to the world's attention in 2008, when over 24 vessels were attacked and 14 pirated off the Somali Coast. With over 23,000 merchant ships transiting the Gulf of Aden each year, many bringing goods in to the European Union, it was recognised that this strategic sea-lane needed to be afforded protection and quickly. As a result, EU Naval Force – Somalia, Operation Atalanta was launched as part of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy in December 2008.

Operation Atalanta's mission is threefold: the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy off the Somali coast; the protection of World Food Programme (WFP) and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) shipping and the protection of vulnerable shipping on a case-by case basis. In addition, EU Naval Force units assist with the monitoring of fishing activities off the coast and support capability development ashore, both directly through training and indirectly through other UN and EU missions.

A recent development by EU Naval Force has been the use of Autonomous Vessel Protection Detachments (AVPDs). The AVPDs have been a real force multiplier, with small protection teams of sailors, marines or soldiers deployed on board WFP or other vulnerable shipping, providing protection as these ships deliver vital humanitarian aid to Somalia.

Given the sheer size of the High Risk Area, thankfully it is not just EU Naval Force warships that conduct counter piracy patrols off the Horn of Africa. NATO's Operation Ocean Shield (CTF

508) and the Combined Maritime Forces (CTF 151) also play a key role in the fight against piracy.

The three main counter piracy task forces coordinate their efforts at sea with the 'independent deployers', such as the Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Iranian, Russian and South Korean navies, with this tactical level interaction delivering considerable diplomatic benefits.

Whilst naval forces have thus far tackled the symptoms of piracy, we are now seeing a shift towards confronting its causes, i.e. the political, security and economic conditions ashore in Somalia. As a result, EU Naval Force is increasingly providing assistance from the maritime flank to the UN, EU and AMISOM actors ashore as they seek to sustain the newly elected Somali Government and bring back national governance and security.

The EU is at the forefront of providing Local Maritime Capacity Building (LMCB), providing training to local police and military forces to tackle piracy ashore and in the littoral.

Over the past 18 months pirate attacks in the High Risk Area have reduced considerably; in January 2011 there were 32 ships and 736 hostages being held by Somali pirates off the coast. As I write, two ships are held, with 60 hostages. This significant and welcomed downturn can be attributed to the coordinated efforts of the counter piracy forces at sea, together with the Maritime Industry's use of self protection measures and embarked private armed security teams.

Also in May 2012, following an expansion of Operation Atalanta's mandate and Area of Operations, EU Naval Force carried out a disruption of a known pirate logistic dump on the Somali shoreline, thus denying pirates their previously enjoyed impunity to build up logistic sites along the coast to prepare for attacks at sea.

Despite this downturn in Somali piracy, recent disruptions of Pirate Attack Groups (PAGs) by EU Naval Force highlight that pirates are still intent on getting out to sea to attack ships. Therefore it is crucial that counter piracy forces continue to keep the pressure on pirates at sea, whilst seafarers remain vigilant and continue to enforce their self-protective measures. Pirates, who have become adept at changing their modus operandi to suit the operating environment, will exploit any complacency.

EU Naval Force has six warships and four Maritime Patrol Aircraft patrolling the waters of the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean. We remain ever watchful. www.eunavfor.eu

Eight Days in Mali with Operation Newcombe

Preparation and flexibility was key, says Darren

Newcomer to 7644 Squadron RAuxAF, former RAF Regular Flight Lieutenant Darren Scales once again proved the value of preparation and flexibility on a media ops deployment. Out of uniform, 'Daz' is a lecturer in media at the University of Lincoln and is managing director of award winning Backyard Productions.

I had been a member of 7644 Squadron for only a week or so when the Boss, Wing Commander Peter Clark called to ask what I was doing for the next few weeks? After 18 years full time service I recognised this line of questioning.

Full of nerves: I replied: *Nothing.* I was almost regretting my enthusiasm to please my new

master who wanted know if I fancied going to Mali*? Great...I think? OK Daz start the deployment preparations and I'll be in touch.*

Two weeks later and I was off on Operation Newcombe. My task was to join a photographer from the Air Command Mobile News Team and video document the C17 deployment moving Ghanaian troops from Accra to Bamako in Mali. Of course, and as expected, mission creep was to follow and soon I was also tasked to interview the troops, commanders and even the Minister for the Armed Forces. There was also a spot of media-minding and escorting duties on an unannounced Mali press event.

Arriving in theatre on the C17, we were located just outside the airport in a hotel (great for internet access and uploading rushes to the UK). There was barely enough room for all our kit but we made the best of it - setting up an edit desk, photo floor, and tech area. There was a lot of dust outside, so having a safe area to keep the kit and lenses clean was very important.

Very quickly we were working alongside the RAF detachment, getting to know the team, personalities and itinerary. It was valuable to know details of the movements plan and who was going. Where. This allowed me to plan smart and warm-up the talent ready for interviewing later.

For our first mission, we arrived at 0400 local ready to film the processing of Ghanaian troops and the loading of their kit. Before boarding a General from the Ghana Army arrived to thank his troops after which they erupted in a local chant complete with traditional dance. It was very impressive and powerful, comparable perhaps to the All Black Maori Haka battle chant before a rugby match, only this time with weapons!

The Ghanaians were taking many vehicles and crates of supplies all loaded on by the RAF movers and a few Ghanaian drivers, which made for an extremely exciting exchange of 'directions' as the 4-tonne trucks were reversed - perhaps a bit too quickly onto the C17. Knowing the itinerary, I had already set up a Go-Pro camera to time-lapse the loading which gave a nice new perspective on the mission.

Flying to Mali meant having to take the minimum amount of kit. We were going armed, so the last thing I wanted was to be weighed down with surplus kit when reaching for my weapon. Soon we were on our way, and if there was a certain feeling of uncertainty and nervousness; nobody likes heading into an area of potential conflict (well except perhaps the Regiment, and there were plenty of them on board to look after us).

During transit, I was able to get some cockpit shots, HUD and even a couple of interviews. It was very handy to have my 'sidearm' a small HD camcorder, which could easily fit in the cockpit and my pocket, leaving the bigger, more bulky main camera out of harm's way.

Arriving in Bamako International Airport the RAF Regiment were the first to leave the aircraft, securing our defences, followed very closely by me filming. It was funny - as soon I put the viewfinder to my eye - any concern

about the risks faded away as I focused on the job to capture the moment.

The off loading of kit and troops is very swift, but not swift enough for the media. As the trucks moved off, a group of French embedded journalists rushed over to the C17 hoping to get shots. The RAF Regiment Commander was concerned at the journalists running towards his aircraft. The logical action, so it seemed, was to locate and use the detachment's media 'expert' to deal with them - that would be me!

Not knowing any discernible amount of French, and the journalists were just as competent with the English language, I was tasked to take control of the group, keeping them a safe distance from the aircraft and making sure that they did not film anything sensitive to the operation. I very quickly developed sign language and seemed to appease the journalists.

I was then able to escort them around the exterior of the aircraft clearing them to shoot a few pieces to camera. The Regiment Commander was pleased with the result, appreciating the presence of 7644 Squadron and giving him another option other than simply forcing themedia back. Now we had positively engaged with international media.

Soon we were routing back to Accra; another chance to get some cool cockpit shots, especially of the night landing. Our run-in with the journalists had made our relationship stronger with the team and getting interviews was easier than ever.

On arrival the crew returned to the hotel for a well-earned rest, but not for me. It was up to the hotel room to begin editing and upload. After a few hours the packages were ready to send back to the UK. Soon it was all done – but it was now 0430 in the morning.

As the rushes were received, PJHQ, were pleased with the shots and fed back new taskings including an instruction to interview the Minister for the Armed Forces, pictured here, during his visit to Bamako. As expected details on timing, location and angle were limited so it was a case of trying to plan for every eventuality.

The latest plan was to interview him in the terminal during the afternoon for around 20-30 minutes - nice and quiet with plenty of light and time. However, by the time the Minster was available, it was 2100 and I had 10 minutes with him next to the C17 which was running on two engines (the APU was u/s). We had gone from a quiet, bright interview to a dark, noisy aircraft pan; not a problem.

I had prepared my questions on the flight over and written them down. Using the Minister as a sound break between the C17 and the microphone, I passed him my list of questions to prepare his answers, giving me a few moments to set up. Popping on my LED light I was able to get the shot, sound, light and interview in less than 10 minutes.

After eight days in theatre, I had sent back 13, four-minute rushes and seven interviews. PJHQ appeared pleased with the shots and testimonies which were then used to brief senior Ministers, and formulate press releases for distribution.

The takeaway for me was the value of preparation and flexibility. You may deploy to do one job, but MUST be ready for a whole load of others, especially if you are only a team of two.

Territorial Army – recruiting now. They're ready. Are you?

Major Paul Smyth, Media Operations Group (V) head of the Army recruiting account at H+K Strategies tells of the new campaign to recruits reservists. When thinking of the Army, what springs to mind? Military skills and effectiveness? Combat operations and peacekeeping? (Who'd have thought removing your sunglasses was so important?) Award winning cooking?

And when asking the general public to think of the Territorial Army, what do they think of? A quick straw poll research (involving typing 'Territorial Army' into Google images and asking a couple of colleagues here at H+K Strategies) reveals the misperception of TA soldiers as a happy blend of Dad's Army and Gareth from The Office. This is precisely the challenge facing Capita, the group responsible for delivering recruiting services for the Army, and the communications campaign we have been working on here at H+K Strategies.

The Army has set out its intention to increase the trained strength of the Reservists across all three services to 35,000 with 30,000 from the TA.

Sapper Nick Langhorn being filmed from Afghanistan.

This recruitment target is backed by a significant investment of an additional £1.8 billion in equipment, training and support to meet this goal. So there are more opportunities than ever before for people looking to do something extra with their time and seeking a rewarding experience outside of normal working hours in one of over 200 roles. My team were astounded by the range and variety of roles available with the TA and there really is something for everyone, from doctors to nurses to musicians.

Yet not everyone appreciates that members of the Territorial Army are trained and ready to serve alongside regular soldiers. So how to find a powerful way to bring that to life and show people that while they are going about their normal weekend routine, people just like them are serving on operations? The answer: pick the viewer up off the sofa and plonk them right in the middle of the action with a TA soldier serving in Afghanistan.

To kick start its extensive campaign TA LIVE, which began this February, Capita in partnership with the Army Recruiting Group has launched innovative, attention-grabbing adverts (even featuring MOG (V) like this one with Cpl Mike Hubbard) broadcast live from operations in Afghanistan.

The groundbreaking advertising campaign created by JWT London with production partner ITN Productions captures TA soldiers going about their everyday duties as Reservists in Afghanistan alongside their Regular counterparts.

With each advert running for approximately one minute, the viewer is transported directly to the front line. There they get to witness first-hand how people with very similar lives to theirs are volunteering to serve their country as a fulfilling second career.

Ground breaking, live TV adverts have only recently been made possible by technological developments and there has never been an advertising campaign like this. The variety of challenges included coordinating a production schedule and communications campaign with no confirmed cast and an embargoed location; armour plating a satellite truck, hostile environment training and a plus seven layer sign-off process. Yet despite the odds stacked against us, the advertising launched for the first time on the 16th and 17th February and went live again on Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th February.

But what about the people who are already doing something more with their weekend and aren't actually on their sofa? Well, what the TA does have is a whole army (sorry) of members who are ready, willing and able to demonstrate and educate people about the opportunities available with the TA and its contribution to the defence and security of the nation. TA units and local communities from all over the country are backing the campaign and have been taking part in over 150 demonstrations and public events which will run through February, March and April at popular regional spots to show what the TA is all about. Members of the public have been able to try on kit, handle equipment and find out from the soldiers themselves what it's like being a member of the TA.

Here at H+K Strategies, we have integrated with the multi-channel communications campaign to coordinate sofa spots and broadcast interviews for senior Army spokespeople, organize internal and external social media engagement for the campaign and media manage over 150 events up and down the country. On Saturday 16th February, our team deployed to Cardiff, London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Liverpool, Newcastle and Portsmouth to help manage seven extensive TA open events to demonstrate to the public what the TA is all about. To date, we have written over 100 press releases, spoken to over 300 journalists, organised over 30 broadcast interviews and gulped down over 300 cups of tea.

Major Emma Bruce, AFCO Glasgow, being interviewed by BBC Scotland TV.

We've been delighted to see that public interest and press coverage is ramping up, with national and regional print and broadcast outlets reporting the contribution that TA soldiers are making to the defence of the nation and featuring the opportunities available. Registrations of interest from new recruits doubled in the week that the campaign went live and even regular recruiting saw a spike in numbers.

Hopefully you've already seen the TA LIVE campaign in action, but if not, you've got plenty of opportunity with over 100 more events to come over the next couple of months and a new bust of activity after the summer.

Royal Naval Reservists punch above their weight on Joint Warrior

RNR Media Ops Specialisation newcomer, Lieutenant Mark Whatley, a former Regular, is Administration Manager for Help For Heroes, based at Catterick, in civilian life. He was attached to the Royal Navy's in-house magazine, Navy News, before joining Joint Warrior.

With land and maritime forces from Dragonia (the north of England and most of Wales) and Pastonia (or Scotland) facing off in the Wallian Archipelago (commonly known as the British Isles) and a heavily-armed NATO Multi-National Force en route to try to smooth out any tensions in the region, the world seemed on the brink of war.

Step in Royal Naval Reservists to save the day… Well, not quite, but without the volunteers, NATO's premier joint military exercise off the coast of Scotland would not have been possible.

From the island of Stornaway to the bustling Operations Room in Faslane Naval Base, 55 Reservists from all over the United Kingdom pulled out the stops to provide much-needed augmentees which allowed the Royal Navy to deliver this massive combined exercise.

Without the Reservists - more than 30 ships, 65 aircraft and over 10,000 personnel were involved - the exercise would not have been able to count on stores when the ships needed replacement parts, or transport around the north of Scotland when people needed to be moved, or even an up-to-date Twitter feed to help move the scenario along for its followers.

With so many personnel and assets involved in this year's Joint Warrior, the Northwood-based Joint Tactical Exercise Planning Staff (JTEPS) relied heavily on much needed volunteers to fill gaps.

Lieutenant Rob Thurmott, a Media Operations Officer from HMS President in London, joined the Royal Navy Reserves in December 2012. The former Royal Navy Warfare Officer now works as a Procurement Manager for New Century, which provides police and military skills mentoring programmes.

He spent two weeks as the Deputy Director of the Dragonian Media Operations Centre, working out of Faslane but helping the Dragonian Navy win the battle for hearts and minds. He said: *Joint Warrior is a fantastic opportunity to train in a multinational environment; the pace of the exercise coupled with the unpredictability of the scenario ensured a high sense of realism throughout*.

Captain Martin Quinn, the Royal Navy Reserves' Force Generation lead, visited the Reservists taking part in the exercise and added*: Reservists go to Joint Warrior for one of two reasons. Either they are there providing professional support at the Operational Performance Standard (OPS) – so effectively doing the job they are trained to do, side by side with their regular colleagues.*

Alternatively, a small number of them are there to validate themselves at the end of their training to demonstrate to their branch managers that they have reached OPS, which is exactly what Joint Warrior does for the ships taking part in that it proves that they are ready to deploy on operations.

It was also clear that the Exercise Directing Staff, led by Captain Phil Titterton, valued the contribution made by the Maritime Reservists. Captain Titterton, who hands over the reins at JTEPS later this year, said: *Joint Warrior is a wonderful opportunity for members of the reserve to build upon their core skills and a cost-effective way for all three Services to bring their Reservists up to OPS.*

With such praise, there is real pressure on members of the Maritime Reserves to perform to the highest standards. If this year's exercise is used as a benchmark, Reservists should look upon Joint Warrior as a professional target, a milestone in their naval careers, and use it to prove to themselves and their Regular colleagues that they truly can fulfil their potential and make a real difference for the Royal Navy.

Under the Future Reserves Programme FR20 there will be a 50% uplift in reservists with even more roles and opportunities. Reservists will continue to be integrated with Regulars and be an integral element of the Whole Force Concept

Scratchings extends its to thanks Lieutenant Commander Sue Lloyd, RNR MOS for her assistance in collating this story.

Memories of Malta…more action and interest than Ian expected

Between 1970-72, Major Ian Proud was the MoD information officer on the George Cross island and played a delicate game

Sitting on the seafront at Redcar in February 1970 watching the horizontal sleet whistling past my company car, I saw an ad in the Daily Telegraph for Army public relations in Malta. PR in the Mediterranean, just then, seemed to be more attractive than selling advertising for the North Eastern Evening Gazette.

A couple of months later I was in MoD Main Building waiting to be interviewed by the then DDPR (A) Bob Blackman. I also discovered there were 42 applicants for the post and I was the only non-journalist, but I knew how to use the media to my advantage - or my client's advantage - and I was also the only

TA officer amongst the applicants.

At the end of September I reported as a freshly minted Assistant Information Officer for my induction course. Part of the course included being sent to Colchester to meet the Eastern District Command PRO, Bill Holmes. The most important lesson he taught me was how NOT to take photos. To emphasis this aspect of a pro's responsibilities lie handed me a thick handful of stunningly bad photos he had been sent to accompany local boy stories. Part of Bill's job was to distribute the local boy stories to the relevant local newspapers. So the photos had to be good or else he spiked them.

After four weeks I flew out to Malta. My flat was not yet ready, so the PR department's secretary booked me into her brother's rather nice Sliema seafront hotel, the Eden Rock. I was rapidly found a flat.

My office was in HQ British Troops Malta, the Auberge de Castile - the most prestigious of the auberge of the Knights of Malta. Today it is the office of the prime Minister; I was soon in a whirl of producing local boy stories and posting them back to the CPROs in UK for the local newspapers.

After six weeks and well settled in my flat in Ta' Xbiex, I received an invitation to a cocktail party at the Eden Rock Hotel, courtesy of our secretary, Eileen Curmi. I found myself being shown off by Eileen - she had as her boss a much younger man. At one point Eileen introduced me to some one who looked familiar. Georgie, she said, Meet my boss.

Then turning to me she said, *Ian, meet Dr George Borq Oliver, our Prime Minister.* After the usual pleasantries I asked Eileen how she knew the pm. *Oh!* she said*, we shared a desk at school.* That epitomised Malta as a close-knit community where everyone knew every one. As a result of that party I also was introduced to the Governor General, a couple of ministers and about four MPs.

In addition to producing LBs, I also handled the press coverage and facilities for my Commander and the various community relations activities undertaken by the local battalion, the Devon and Dorsets. I discovered that the local media would use my material wholesale. Not that it was necessarily of interest to the Maltese, but the editors wanted to attract readers from the 3,000 MoD personnel stationed on the island and ramp up the circulation figures. So I started to produce for the local newspapers as well as the home market.

Just as I was hitting my stride. MoD PR produced one of its regular reorganisations which meant that Malta would lose its S02 PR. So my direct boss, Maj John Hyslop, DERR, was posted. To add to the upheaval, HQ British Troops Malta moved out of Pembroke Barracks. As John left I replaced him on the HQ British Forces Commanders' Committees (HQBFCC) and became the PR advisor and gopher.

So I was no longer the Army PRO but the Joint Services PRO on the strength of HQ British Troops Malta. This committee was chaired by the Flag officer Malta, a charismatic Rear Admiral, and with the Commander British Troops Malta, the AOC Malta, the Deputy High Commissioner and the Command Secretary with a Group Captain as its secretary. Not bad for an AIO.

The re-organisation coincided with the local elections and the Nationalist Party was ousted by the Malta Labour Party and the only in-house PR capability for the MoD on the island was a 26-year-old newcomer. A discreet note from the HQ to DPR (A), Brigadier John Archer, led to me being promoted in the field.

My practice of supplying local newspapers with a daily news feed, meant that they depended on me for at least half a page of copy daily in order to keep their British readers, - which, of course, meant they could charge more for advertising. I was also seen a much appreciated news agency. So when we were confronted by a delicate diplomatic problem I was able to call in favours.

The current diplomatic problem was that the British Government had to be seen at arms length from the Italian Government in order not to inflame Maltese sensibilities. When 11 Group flew into Hal Farairfield with a company of Paras to practice drops over Sicily, it was supposed to be very hush-hush.

The Paras were lodged at the north of the island. Like any Army unit the Paras posted orders on the notice board which was, unfortunately, by the main road, and an enterprising journalist cycled to the camp and read the Orders complete with the timings and locations for the exercise in Sicily. There was a complete flap and meltdown in British Forces HQ.

HQBFCC was immediately convened. A journalist had seen the orders, so obviously I had responsibility of killing the story. There had to be no mention of Sicily. How could I kill the story? A complete squadron of Hercules and a company of Paras were on the island and there was no way they could be hidden, which meant the story really could not be killed.

Polishing up my brass neck and overcoming any ability to blush, I visited the news editors on the island; about eight of them. Being totally honest I reminded them of the well-known sensitivities of the Italian link, so whilst I had no objection to them carrying the story, please could they not mention Italy or Sicily.

The next day I was waiting outside the Committee room waiting for the start. I was assailed by the Rear Admiral gesturing to the story of the exercise plastered across the front pages. Pointing to the papers I asked if there was any mention of Italy or Sicily in the reports, which there was not. With great delight I indicated the double page spread in the Times of Malta and showed the where a chisel had been taken to the metal printing plate and the offending word Sicily had been cut out in about three places.

Just before Christmas 1971 my phone rang. It was the news editor of Malta TV who invited me over for a Christmas drink. Something in his tone and timing sounded as if it could be interesting. Jumping into my car I shot across the island. Sitting down in his office I was asked, *would you like a Cisk or Hop Leaf?* I opted for Cisk and as he poured the drink he calmly said, *I have one of my reporters outside the cabinet Room in the PMs auberge. Don Mintoff is shouting and can be clearly heard outside. He is telling his Cabinet that on Christmas Eve he is going to tell the British Forces to leave the island.* Making my excuses and asking if I could go back for the drink later I dashed back. On the way to the office I detoured into the British High Commission and related my news to the information Secretary. *Oh, he said dismissively, we hear rumours like this all the time.*

Back in the HQ I sought out the SOI G3 and reported to him. He took it at face value. Phones rang, signals were made and the most unusual order was issued. From that day until rescinded the dress for all social events was to be Duchess of

Richmond's Ball. The subtlety of this was that no Maltese at any level would have any inkling as to what was meant by such a dress instruction. And it worked.

Dom Mintoff, the Prime Minister of Malta, leaving RAF Luqa for talks in London in February 1972.

From left to right the British High Commissioner, the Deputy High Commissioner, the Station Commander RAF Luqa and Air Commodore Ted Colahan, AOC Malta.

It was however slightly odd being at Christmas social events with the ladies dressed in party finery and service personnel in woolly-pully order. On Christmas Eve, Dom Mintoff told the British Government to withdraw troops from the island. Having had a few days notice, MoD swung smoothly into action to implement its contingency plan leaving the FCO to ask its High Commission that if the MoD knew of this threat, why had they not picked it up?

As part of my job I had to peruse all the local newspapers. As the Malta News and L'orrizont were the same, one in Maltese and the other in English, I managed to teach myself to read Maltese, albeit somewhat shakily by comparing each article first in English and then in Maltese, waste of time or not it proved useful. After Mr. Mintoff told the British to leave the island, the British press descended on the island in droves.

At one stage whenever I drove I was followed by a convoy carrying up to 126 journalists. Most of them stayed in the Phoenicia Hotel, much to the hotel's delight. In mid January I was doing my daily check, with emphasis on the Malta News and L'orrizont, as they were mouthpieces for the Malta Labour Party. Looking at coverage on the British withdrawal I thought it had a hint of scandal. Calling in my clerk, Doe Darminin, I asked him for an accurate translation. Looking at it, he said: Mr. Proud, I cannot do it, you are too young for this.' Come on, Joe, I must know.

Somewhat reluctantly he revealed that some British journalists were filing inaccurate reports because they are getting information from women who are known to be prostitutes.' Rapidly typing out the translation and pasting up the cutting I drove to the Phoenicia Hotel and into its packed bar where I announced that I knew why their copy was being spiked, under played and not given the prominence it deserved. The next day all the British newspapers gave front-page coverage to the allegations made by L'orrizont. After that the Maltese Government gave up on any more attempts at black propaganda.

Overall my first 18 months in the Government information Service had more action and interest packed into it than I ever expected. It was made even better as I was in a very short chain of command, directly reporting to the HQ's SOI G3, instant access to the Commander and on call to the two other service commanders. It made the next appointment, in the MOD press office, seem very mundane.

Faith in a foxhole

Major Mervyn Wynne Jones writes for Threshold Magazine and considers the demanding role of the army chaplain and how they combat emotional fatigue.

In the far distance, gunfire and mortar crackles in the latest round of violence and death. Across the harsh and dusty landscape that makes up this little corner of Helmand province in Afghanistan, the only unarmed man in the patrol breaks formation for just a second, gestures to the commandos on the horizon and says: *Welcome to my parish - these are my parishioners.*

British army chaplains - often called 'padre' by their military colleagues - face extraordinary challenges when offering a pastoral ministry to soldiers. The stark reality of chaplaincy with the infantry in a combat zone is captured in the above newspaper report. Chaplains are a source of care and reassurance to all around them, often at times of extreme hazard and stress. They frequently embrace the role - in all but name and often at point of crisis - of counselor.

Whether flying by helicopter to an exposed patrol base harassed by the Taliban so as to be alongside the comrades of a gravely injured soldier, or lending an ear to a battalion commander for whom leadership can be a lonely and weighty responsibility, or taking a soldier to one side to break the news of the death of a relative back home, or listening to the Regimental Sergeant Major whose marriage is faltering and who cannot reveal his turmoil and vulnerability, the chaplain deployed in an operational theatre knows that each and every day can present unforeseen challenges.

The former Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams, in a 2003 pastoral letter to British military chaplains serving in the Gulf, noted: *Few join the armed forces without having thought deeply about the personal cost of service or the possibility of being put in harm's way, and the Church has never shrunk from sending its clergy to serve as chaplains wherever military people find themselves. You stand in along and honourable tradition of Christians bearing witness to the love of Christ in hard and dangerous places.*

The 151 full-time chaplains (there are part-time Territorial Army chaplains too) of The Royal Army Chaplains 'Department are ordained Christian ministers drawn from several denominations who provide care for all faith groups in their charge. Most of them are men.

The chaplain's role - pastoral, spiritual and moral, and unique in a military environment because the post-holder is accessible to and alongside all soldiers, regardless of rank or status - is described by chaplains as one of a 'ministry of presence': of being where soldiers are so as to listen to them. They must show active concern for the personal needs of all troops assigned to them, regardless of religious background, and for those who profess no religious faith at all.

Soldiers and officers share feelings with and unburden concerns to the padre, knowing they can reveal vulnerability, anxiety and anger without risk of blight on reputation or career, and that what they say will remain confidential. A significant element of the chaplain's job is a counselling role, although hardly stereotypical. One-to-one contact with soldiers is a routine part of the chaplain's day. To the extent that the Rogerian person-centred principles of trust, empathy, being heard, understood and not being judged are experienced in that encounter by the perhaps troubled soldier, there is a relational aspect to the interaction and a strong link with therapy, its purpose and its practice.

Crucial to a full appreciation of the effectiveness of an army chaplain as a provider of - among other key aspects to pastoral ministry - psychological support to those in their charge is an understanding of the uniqueness of their status and role. The chaplain is a commissioned officer in the army but actively sets aside his or her rank when interacting with personnel of any rank, be they private soldier or commanding officer. This is recognised by personnel of all ranks, as is the fact that the padre - in not carrying a weapon and in being a religious and not a fighting man - is someone who is among and alongside but not necessarily entirely of them.

This distinction, with the potential for personal challenge, accords the chaplain an ability and, indeed,

obligation to act both as moral compass and prophetic voice. Situated within but also subtly alongside a military unit and its chain of command, the chaplain is regarded as accessible, understanding, empathic and caring and, importantly, as exemplifying 'goodness'. The chaplain is highly valued as someone to whom a soldier - regardless of rank - can talk confidentially, openly and, often, with an emotion that is concealed from his or her peers.

Chaplains work tirelessly and selflessly to be available to anyone seeking care, reassurance and understanding. Soldiers want to be heard and often it is only the chaplain to whom they can turn. In the absence of a counsellor, the soldier will seek out the chaplain to fulfill that need and, given the choice, will often choose the chaplain anyway.

A 2010 Church of Scotland report notes the 'uniquely challenging vocation' of the military chaplaincy, whereby chaplains 'visit the sick, absolve the penitent and offer counsel to the anxious, the bewildered and the bereaved'. Not surprisingly, there are considerable personal challenges inherent in the role of army chaplain, particularly when deployed to operational theatres such as Iraq and Afghanistan and, in previous decades, Northern Ireland and the Falkland Islands.

For my MA research I used the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) qualitative model to explore the lived experience of five army chaplains. My interest was not in the purely functional aspect of their role but in the less easily defined pastoral nature of their ministry and, specifically, that element whereby they become or come to be regarded as a provider - explicit or implicit - of psychological support to those with whom, and whom, they serve.

The research revealed four main elements to these padres 'experience of their role: 'offering a presence' (embodying Christ and goodness), 'feeling useful and necessary' (worth and purpose), 'giving of oneself (selflessness), and 'managing vulnerability' (functioning optimally). In 'offering a presence' - that is, embracing all that constitutes an unselfish and considerate interaction with others that is recognised within the Church as a 'ministry of presence' - the chaplain experiences a faith-driven sense of duty, obligation and care for all in his charge, underpinned by a profound Christian love and respect.

This manifests itself in being alongside and empathising with them, in sharing all their hardships, in listening to them and hearing them, in permitting them to feel vulnerable when necessary, in holding them, loving them and affirming hem as individuals, in supporting them and caring for them, in letting them know that they are understood, and in sharing the same bomb- and bullet-strewn highway. If the job is to be done well, then it has to be done and with commitment and conviction.

In 'feeling useful and necessary' there is a sense that, by offering so much of themselves so willingly and in being constantly present among those in their charge, chaplains value - and to a considerable extent need - validation of their role, and are motivated by feelings of worth, focus and purpose. In the unique hardship and danger of their chaplaincy role, knowing that others need them, accord them esteem and value what they are doing helps affirm them in their ministry.

Such feelings can be engendered by the value placed on their presence as a listening ear, a source of comfort, a moral component, a prophetic voice, and a source of professional expertise in the grim business of sudden death and bereavement. However, such feelings can sometimes be frustrated by a misunderstanding among military colleagues as to the pastoral role of a chaplain. Some padres find themselves regarded simply as 'welfare workers' and are boxed off in that specific area of activity.

There can be concern too when chaplains find themselves regarded, perhaps cynically (some might argue necessarily), as a 'force multiplier' whose role is to help a soldier regain or maintain emotional equilibrium in order to be able to continue to fight the enemy.

Commentators have noted that diplomacy and care are sometimes needed to serve both God and country, and that a collision between the two is at times inevitable. Chaplains deployed to a combat zone must have a well-developed view of the religious, moral and ethical issues that arise from the potential conflict between serving both God and the military.

My research revealed a profound - and entirely willing obligation felt by chaplains for those around them that tapped into the very foundation of their calling and from which there is no stepping back, regardless of adversity. So, third, in 'giving of oneself, a chaplain is constantly considering how best to be there for everyone else. The chaplain rejoices with those around him and revels in their buoyancy and, in times of crisis, also holds, revives and strengthens them, and absorbs their shock, distress and tears.

Yet all the while he may be experiencing his own fear, discomfort and loneliness, and the sense that he must carryon regardless, for the sake of those around him. Strength and personal resilience featured prominently in their search findings, but stress, exhaustion and emotional toll also emerged as possible outcomes of a pastoral ministry in an operational theatre (and sometimes while serving in a UK garrison).

While a chaplain is generally expected to be therefor everyone else - indeed, he may place that obligation on himself anyway - he himself often has no one to whom to turn. The evidence from other clinical and caring professions - not least counsellors - reveals the risk of compassion fatigue and burnout from constant exposure to stress and the distress of others. Clinical supervision is routine and sometimes mandatory in many professions, and the potential requirement for formalised peer support and discussion.

The experience, to a greater or lesser extent, of emotional and physical fatigue on operational deployment emerged from the research as the norm, not the exception. Thus, finally, the chaplain has to 'manage vulnerability' - his own. A sense of self-awareness emerged in the research, and an evident acknowledgement of strengths forged and weaknesses uncovered on operational deployment.

Chaplains can be amazed by what they manage to do and what they encounter in a combat zone. These padres recognised the necessity of considerable personal and practical resilience on which to draw in order to cope with periods of high tempo activity, stress or danger.

Faith is critical to the chaplain's ability to do his job and, with it, the priestly disciplines of prayer and renewal of calling. However, solitary adherence to faith, while the foundation of all they do and are, needs to be augmented by the company of others, most notably fellow chaplains or, at the very least, fellow Christian soldiers.

In other words, the ability to share and to offload is essential to their wellbeing; human warmth and interaction with peers who understand them in the same way that they offer understanding to others are critical to their ability to continue in times of adversity. Pre-deployment training, ongoing support from the Army Chaplaincy chain of command while in

an operational theatre and a post-deployment decompression package involving, at the very least, a contemplative retreat shared with their fellows are all regarded as important. The concept and role of a religious director - which equates directly to a clinical supervisor in counselling - emerged from their search as a valuable resource: someone with whom the chaplain can share, offload and revive.

Mervyn Wynne Jones qualified as counsellor in 2011, having previously had a peripatetic 25-year career as a civilian UK armed forces press officer. Using the experience of some 20 years' service in the Territorial Army too, he intends to specialise in trauma counselling for military veterans and is currently establishing a peer mentoring and support service called Change Step for veterans accessing the services of Wales drug and alcohol charity CAIS. He is a trustee of the Churches Counselling Service in Wales (CCSW), and a member of the executive committee of the BACP Private Practice division.

This article is based on his MA Clinical Counselling (University of Chester) research dissertation titled 'Faith in a foxhole: the army chaplain as a provider of psychological support to soldiers.

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THE NEXT GENERATION OF SEAFARERS

In the end life is about communications, says David

My final assignment in the Royal Navy was not ostensibly a media post writes Commander David Carpenter, the new Chairman of the Sea Cadets Association in Scotland. Straight from the media team commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar in 2005, I joined the Clyde Naval Base at Faslane as the Navy lead on a construction project that became known as the Neptune Village.

Life isn't like that. Part way into the brief it became clear that communication would be the key to a successful outcome. And that was five years away. Almost every aspect required explanation from accommodation moves, temporary feeding places, demolitions, new shops, new messes, the introduction of Pay As you Dine (PAYD), the likely demise of the Welfare Fund's facilities under a partner contractor and well, life at Faslane just wasn't going to be the same again.

I talked for England for five years; a regular slot in the Clyde Courier magazine, road shows to explain PAYD, a forum to see that stakeholders were apprised of likely changes when their submarine was about to leave for patrol and a DVD walk through by Channel 4's graphic consultants of the development to show that the changes had a logic and a conclusion. You've seen it on Grand Designs and we had it at Faslane.

Came the great day and the scaffolding had gone, the deck polished, the builder's man rigged the curtains over the plaque and First Sea Lord on parade to do the honours. I changed my cap for a hard hat and returned to construction in Edinburgh. No more Navy or so I thought but there was a tweak on the thread when I was asked to become Chairman of the Sea Cadet Association in Scotland.

I had been a cadet at school, of course, and recall joining a frigate of the Dartmouth Training Squadron at a mooring in the River Dart below the Naval College. We slept in hammocks, witnessed Up Spirits and went away in the sea boat manned by fellow cadets.

So if supporting the 37 cadet units around Scotland involved supporting cadets in training and going to sea, then that was the job for me.

The Sea Cadet Corps is run by the Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC) the parent charity of the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC). The Ministry of Defence is the co-sponsor of the SCC providing a small number of Royal Naval and other staff at headquarters in London, the Offshore Team at Gosport, in Area Offices in the rest of the country and the support of training.

It follows that the Sea Cadet Units themselves and the Association I chair, raises the residual funding that amounts to about half the total cost of running the Corps. In fact, the average Sea Cadet Unit has to find around £1,000 a month in a core running cost. My Association is a branch of MSSC and has no direct responsibility for the units in the branch area. The units are remarkably self-sufficient and would likely resist any interference in the running of the units however well intentioned.

My Committee confines itself to advocacy within civil society of the benefits of maritime youth training and raising funds as well as awareness of the work of the Corps. There is little difficulty in showing a public benefit to this work.

The Sea Cadet Corps is a rewarding and effective youth organisation producing good role models for other youngsters. Scotland is a part of the UK with a strong maritime connection; thousands of miles of coastline deriving from islands and inlets.

Maritime Scotland spans the spectrum of trawling, renewables, lifeboats, oil support, Northern Lights, fishery protection, ferries and the Coast Guard.

It is no surprise that the Sea Cadet units around the coast read like the Reports from Coastal Stations; Fraserburgh, Peterhead, Thurso, Wick, Kirkwall….

and so on. Each name known throughout the United Kingdom and each name speaks of our seafaring heritage.

The current big project is the new training ship. Following sea service of over 40 years, the brig TS ROYALIST has reached the end of her working life. A new ship will have her keel laid sometime this summer to be in service by 2015. Should any member, or an organisation to which they belong, be able to contribute to the £5.6M cost of this ship; details may be found at http://www.sea-cadets.org/new-shipappeal

So I take up the task with buoyancy and determination. We aim to encourage good citizenship, provide experience and adventure for young people. Worthwhile qualifications are offered by organisations such as the Royal Yachting Association, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and vocational qualifications in seamanship and engineering. Life skills are taught whilst having fun and making friends. So in the end, life is all about communication.

How my brand-new, jinxed Land Rover became a mean and grudging transport of delight

Have you ever put petrol in a diesel tank, or the opposite? Well it's more common than you think. The AA has special trucks that travel around sorting out such mistakes. Even your Editor has done it twice. Here former TAPIO Major Gerry Nicholas, bravely and honestly tells his own tale of a Land Rover that failed to survive.

I have one self-deprecating yarn from my days at HQ Wales, when, as a Volvo diesel owner/driver - and anxious to get to an important event attended by my boss, Lieutenant-General Peter de la Billiere - I noticed that the brand new long-wheelbase Land Rover I had been issued was registering red, tank-empty. With no time to spare I pulled into the first-available civilian garage and filled the tank to capacity and paid a cool £40 out of my own pocket. Not something recommended in the Army as it takes forever, if ever, to recover.

Feeling very pleased win myself, I drove away from the garage, with minutes to spare to reach my destination, when suddenly the green prima donna starting coughing and spluttering. Then came an ominous succession of loud cracks before the vehicle juddered to a stop by the roadside. Then it dawned. This 4 x4 operated on petrol and not diesel. It was the day I realised the Army still ran a mixed fleet and I learned the hard way always to check the fuel gauge before leaving barracks.

Since this was before the advent of the mobile telephone, I was obliged to hike up several highways and byways, until I found a public phone box and telephoned MT at HQ Wales only to have my desperate call routed to Sennybridge. From there a recovery vehicle, eventually arrived while I stood sheepishly by the roadside as the vehicle's tank was syphoned-out and the system thoroughly purged.

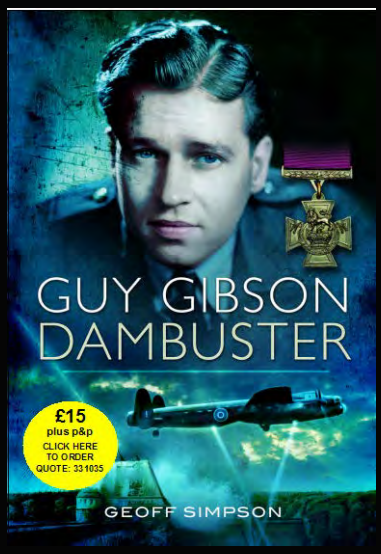
Seven days later the same Land Rover was re-assigned to me while I covered war-games on the *Roof of Wales* - only to come to grief again. Negotiating a winding narrow track up the mountain the vehicle suddenly refused to go further and started to roll back. I slammed on the hand brake but with a mind of its own it decided to roll over leaving me to exit from the passenger door as it teetered on the mountain edge and I viewed the heady drop below.

It was a canvas-topped vehicle, and if it had turned over one more time I would most certainly have been crushed, decapitated, or both. Thankfully it stayed put and lay on its side like a dead horse, which had fallen at a jump in the Grand National. I summoned help and after a two-hour wait on the gale-swept mountain a recovery vehicle - bearing half a dozen equally soaked REME Territorials - trundled on the scene from Llandovery to save the day for me. But not the poor, unfortunate Land Rover.

The recovery went drastically wrong. Pivoting wildly the precariously dangling vehicle was squashed like a Dinky toy by the LAD's steel hawsers.

Needless to say a military Court of Enquiry was convened . I was exonerated with regard to both incidents - but, as you might guess - thanks to my 'friends' at the HQ the incident has been kept alive. I have no doubt the tale continues to be embroidered more and more by the re-telling and is now part of TAPIO folk lore.

A new look at Guy Gibson VC – 70 years on from Operation Chastise



The raid on the Mohne, Eder and Sorpe dams by 617 Squadron was the most famous RAF sortie of the Second World War. Its leader, 24-year-old Wing Commander Guy Gibson, was one of the war's more enigmatic and controversial characters. Together, the facts behind both the Dambuster's raid and Gibson's dramatic career make the most compelling story of human strengths and weaknesses, of great skill and ingenuity and outstanding courage, writes club member Geoff Simpson of his new book Guy Gibson: Dambuster.

Little about Gibson's life is not cloaked in mystery, he adds. From his troubled childhood to his mental state and the confusion surrounding his death, Gibson's life was complex and complicated. Even since Gibson's death, his beloved dog, Nigger, has been the subject of considerable controversy.

Guy Gibson: Dambuster aims to draw together all the available evidence in examining Gibson's remarkable life and, probably avoidable, death. In this latter respect, much new information has come to light in recent times, allowing a more complete assessment of the facts.

The story also tells of the relationship between Arthur 'Bomber' Harris and Guy Gibson, as well as Gibson's relationship with the diverse group of men he recruited to join him in a remarkable raid upon the dams in 1943.

Gibson might well have been a flawed hero, but hero he unquestionably was. The raid on the dams was only one operation in nearly 200 sorties, but it is the one for which he is remembered and the one for which he was awarded the highest gallantry medal – the Victoria Cross.

The book is available at a discount price of £15 from Pen & Sword Books Limited.
Email: pen-and-sword.co.uk Quote order 331035

HAC all ashiver at Churchill's Funeral

Major Mike Glynn, TAPIO, stirred by the London ceremonial for Prime Minister Lady Margaret Thatcher remembers his role in 1965

Sir Winston Churchill's State Funeral was on 30th January, 1965 - the last one for a Commoner, preceded by those for Wellington and Nelson. Taking part and not generally known and largely forgotten was the Honorable Artillery Company.

The unit provided the largest TA marching contingent. Its gunners - selected from its concurrent three HAC batteries, Royal Horse Artillery – fired a long salute from the Tower of London. Forty-five of the regiment's Special Constables were on duty along the processional route stretching from Whitehall to Trafalgar Square, up the Strand to St Paul's Cathedral and alongside the Tower of London. In the Cathedral, other HAC Members were seen in various roles.

It was a major event, winter-cold, with large, silent crowds packing the pavements. There are newsreels of the funeral via Pathe News at http://www.britishpathe.com (in Search type Churchill Funeral), one briefly shows the HAC Battalion marching, but there are no regimental archive photos.

So two other Battalion soldiers who were with me on the 'accelerated' slow march that day have added their memories to mine: Ex-Royal Regiment of Wales Major Martin Everett, then a sergeant – later an HAC officer - who retired in 2011 as curator of the Regimental Museum, Brecon. Among many other things, he was also a Fellow of Royal Geographical Society. He continues to help with the HAC archives and is pictured left, below,

Mike Roosen, following his HAC service, joined the Light Cavalry. He's still an HAC and LC member, albeit on extended leave of absence via living in Sweden. Fluent in several languages, working variously in European/US advertising, economic development and fine art, he's now a public speaker, writer, toastmaster and master of ceremonies under his original family name of Vanderosen.

Me? After many moons in journalism, UK and international marketing, sales and publicity (including media relations), I retired to a Welsh farm 14 years ago, where I still draw my published cartoons. I rejoined the TA, 1987-93, as an officer in the former 1 Wessex battalion doing promotional, defensive, crisis, battlefield and anti-terrorism media relations part-time for the Regular army, which led to my Kuwait Desert guest appearance in the 1991 Gulf War at three days' notice. (No problem, I'd camped for a while in the Sahara and worked in the Middle East. All that was new was a war zone!)

It was a sudden military experience. So was Churchill's funeral, via an HAC call to my magazine's editorial office. *Lance Corporal Glynn would you like to be in the HAC squad marching on Sir Winston Churchill's funeral?' Er – well, yes.'* It was unexpected, the 90-year-old former Prime Minister was alive, but largely unbeknown to the world had been terminally ill in a coma for 10 days. His State Funeral, as a Commoner, was approved by the Queen and planned five years earlier.

Ok, said the HAC, *you're rehearsing all this weekend!* It became the first of at least two Saturdays and Sundays intensive drilling, which included slow marching endlessly in front of Armoury House, learning then-new SLR (Self-Loading Rifle) funeral drill, tucking the weapons under our left arms, changing arms on the march, auditioning for the role seven hours each parade. Initially 80 HAC soldiers had been asked to volunteer, via which 60 other ranks – plus three officers - would be selected.

Among them were myself, Everett and Roosen. As a 22-year-old bachelor, I was sharing a London flat with Roosen and others. Amazingly we'd both been chosen for the Funeral squad, perhaps because we were two of the tallest in the Battalion, with me at six feet five inches and Roosen a couple of inches shorter. Height helps.

On the day, we each were to wear our fringe-Guards peaked cap, a khaki greatcoat over a battle dress uniform, a belt round our waists with a bayonet suspended from it. Mid-week, Roosen was cleaning the belts and polishing their brass bits and I was shining the boots via melting a tin of polish on the stove of our bachelor flat. The following evening I arrived late without my key to the apartment. I was locked out. The others had grilled some chops and tried to eat them covered in my black glossy stuff. I was persona non grata for a wee while. Neither I nor the chops were flavour of the month.

Then came the day, after a night on camp beds in the Prince Consort Room. It was a coach trip to Horse Guards Parade for a 0700 parade. We stood in the expanse, while non-marcher comrades straightened our kid and glossed our boots. *Right,* said the RSM, *We'll show those chocolate soldiers*, we jointly remember him saying. Perhaps he meant the nearby Sandhurst Cadets standing in military lines

We marched off in ranks of six, with myself and Mike in the rear echelon, through the echoing Horse Guards Arch into Whitehall to halt and reverse arms before a mass of respectful, sombre spectators. Behind us the Guards' bands began to play accelerated slow marches. They were half-a-pace faster than usual and we'd had to rehearse this so that the parade's schedule could be maintained. Difficult.

The bands' bass drummers set the march-pace, the beat triple-echoed amid the buildings, over the heads of the silent crowds. Under Blackfriars' Bridge the music bounced off the roof and walls. Consequently Roosen momentarily lost the step, with my dyslexic feet doing a fair imitation of Fred Astaire and Lance Corporal Glynn behind him forced to follow his Strictly Come Dancing parade steps.

Marching in public is a concentrated business. Maintaining the step, erect, confident, earnestly listening to orders over the bass drum beat. We knew the crowds would note any mistakes, along with TV and other international media coverage, to be filmed or published detrimentally to the regiment's pride.

About nine military bands dictated the procession's pace for the Tri-Services' long marching columns and related participants. Others lined the route, with spectators' faces in the winter freeze as blue as the RAF's greatcoats, Martin Everett recalls. The thousands of onlookers had been waiting for hours. Aside from the music, the silence of the assembled pavement crowds was eerie.

Meanwhile, during the service, the marching parade having halted, we were permitted to peel off in ranks to the adjacent tented loos near Cannon Street Station (well, the Honourable

Artillery Company should always be near a cannon).

Cold in our khaki ranks we awaited the service and its aftermath. Nearby, Martin Everett remembers a broadcast of the events was heard on a transistor radio. Then came the most solemn moment. We'd stood shivering at ease during the service and while Churchill's coffin was being taken to the Tower to be loaded onto a barge, the Port of London's Survey Vessel 'Havengore,' and taken up the Thames as dock workers' cranes dipped in salute.

Highland regimental pipes followed the movement, with their lament drifting upwards towards us as we slow-marched. The bands behind us were silent; all that could be heard was the steady sloof-sloof of our feet. It was a moment to remember, until the spell was broken as we reversed arms and strode to Armoury House at a regular pace. The HAC gunners returned from firing their 25-pounders, with the brass shell cases to be kept and engraved as souvenirs of the occasion. Martin Everett explains: *They fired 90 rounds, a unique number, one for each year of Churchill's life. Not a lot of people know that.*

Mike Roosen/Vanderosen adds: For me, being part of the HAC Infantry Battalion contingent on Churchill's Funeral was a wonderful privilege and an specially emotional experience. Amen to his words.

Contributions of ideas and copy for Scratchings are always welcomed by the Editor, Mike Peters. Please make contact on michaelpcoms@btinternet.com. Deadline for the July edition is the last week in June. Copy shuld be about a page and a half of A4 in 10pt Arial and sent as a Word document. Photographs and illustrations are also welcomed.