



QARANC ASSOCIATION  
WELSH BRANCH  
NEWSLETTER  
November 2021



## Chair's Welcome

As we approach the end of the year, we can all reflect on the changes we and our families have had to make, as a result of the pandemic. This time last year, I was confident that life would get back to some semblance of order and to an extent this has been the case. We can see friends and family, go out for a meal and enjoy the theatre and cinema once more. Workplaces remain cautious, still encouraging staff to work from home (where this is possible) and for some staff this has been a revelation, as it allows more of a work life balance; for others not so good. Small shops have closed, dry cleaners and cobblers have little demand and sadly we can see these changes all around us, as businesses have had to adapt to survive. The biggest frustration I suspect for all of us, is hearing one more telephone recorded message blaming Covid for an organisations woeful performance, followed by your "call is important to us". It's enough to make your hair turn grey.

Personally I have enjoyed the flexibility of the new work norm. It can be quite amusing when on an important virtual meeting, you see someone's cat walk across the key board, or the doorbell rings to deliver yet another amazon parcel. It has been a look through the key hole experience into others' lives. Adapting to change and seeking the positives in whatever situation we find ourselves in, is what the military family do best.

I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter, which will be the last one of this year. I would encourage all of you to consider writing a small piece for our newsletter as we need your help to keep it going.

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to thank you all for your friendship and to wish you all the very best for you and your family a very Happy Christmas and a healthy, prosperous New Year.

Best wishes

Caroline

## Vice Chair & Editors thoughts

Time seems to fly by these days, Autumn leaves have fallen and Christmas fast approaching, must be time for a newsletter!

It has been great that so many members have been able to meet up at gathering over the past months. Don't forget the next gathering Christmas lunch on 10<sup>th</sup> December at Radyr Golf Club.

A plea to you all, I really want the newsletter to be an enjoyable read for everyone and not just a list of events. That can only happen if I have material to pull together. So, do you have a story to tell, your time serving, your current activities/work or a challenge you are undertaking? I would love to hear from you. If you have photos of an event that you have attended you could send those along with a caption. I am open to ideas and can be contacted at:

[mccreacrossli@btinternet.com](mailto:mccreacrossli@btinternet.com)

I look forward to catching up with many of you at the Christmas lunch and having lots of photos for the Spring Edition.

Diana McCrea



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## A.G.M.

The Annual General Meeting of Welsh Branch QARANC Association was held via Zoom on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The main point to arise is that two of the committee wish to resign at the end of the year (June) which means that there will be vacancies for the posts of Treasurer and Vice Chair. Please do consider joining the committee as the Branch can only function if the required posts are filled. If you are interested why not talk to one of the current committee members to find out what is involved. The committee re-elected are:

Chair        Caroline Whittaker

Vice Chair    Diana McCrea

Secretary    Rosy Hubbard

Treasurer    Marion Lewis

Events        Marilyn Williams

P.R.          Valmai Davies

# RCN Wales Nurse of the Year Awards 2021

Caroline Whittaker RRC OSTJ,

## Receives the Lifetime Achievement Award

This award recognises a nurse who has dedicated their life to the profession. Caroline is a dedicated nurse with a distinguished career within the armed forces as well as Occupational Health and academia. Caroline has a wealth of experience and knowledge as a nurse manager, nurse lecturer and Quality lead; has presented at National and International Conferences on Occupational Health (and published work). Caroline has a proven track record in academia and led the development of the Diploma in Occupational Health.

Caroline has had several overseas tours of Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan as an Army Reserve Nurse. A testament of her management and leadership skills and commitment to the nursing agenda have resulted in the awarding of the Royal Red Cross and the Order of St John.



Commenting on Caroline Whittaker's award, Richard Jones MBE, Chair, RCN Wales Board said: 'Caroline has had an exceptionally varied career and has shown incredible leadership in a variety of contexts in some of the most challenging of patient care settings on the international stage. Caroline is an exceptional example of a nurse manager and leader who goes above and beyond their duties, possessing such drive and passion that it takes your breath away. It's amazing how Caroline has fitted so much experience and achievement into just one lifetime, she is an inspiration and a worthy winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award this evening. Congratulations to Caroline'

What does this award mean to me?

I left school with no formal qualifications, so for me this award shows that we can all be winners if we work hard and care passionately enough for the people we serve and that above all else, we value the colleagues we work with.

This award throws a spotlight on the outstanding work of Occupational Health Nurses, Military nurses Regular and Reserve and for all the wonderful nurses with St John Ambulance Cymru Wales who give up their time to volunteer with this Charity

RCN Wales

## USK Castle Lunch

On the 19th September Association members of the Welsh branch together with family and friends attended a lunch at Usk Castle. Once again it was a wonderful opportunity for the members to celebrate friendship and comradeship in a beautiful and historic setting.

To set the scene, Usk castle was the site of the start of the Battle of Pwll Melyn also known as the Battle of Usk 1405 and was part of the Welsh War of independence against the English rule. Sadly, the castle has been a ruin since 1536.

On the day of the event the walls of the ruins were resplendent with red virginia creeper and ivy. The sky was blue the sun shone, whilst the views from the castle over the Usk Valley were stunning.

As members and guests arrived at the castle gates their first view was that of the QARANC Association tent, flag and Standard. All were welcomed to the celebration with a glass of sparkling wine. Time was allowed for catching up with friends, meeting new members etc. looking at the views whilst wandering around the castle grounds.

The marquee looked resplendent, decorated with flowers and red and grey serviettes.

A welcoming address was given prior to eating. We are so lucky in the branch to have a member Mo Humphries who organises the preparation and serving of wonderful home-made food at the lunch ably assisted by family and friends. This year she was ably assisted by her granddaughter who made the mini meringues for the pudding. I would like to take this opportunity to say on behalf of the Welsh Branch a "Big Thank You" to Mo and her family for all that you do for us in organising the food etc for this marvellous and unique event.

As usual there was plenty to eat and drink, accompanied by the sound of voices and laughter whilst we ate reverberating around the marquee.

Following lunch there was a "raffle marathon" with lots of banter and laughter as to who could win the most prizes. The late Fr Ray's winning total could not be beaten and he still holds the record.

Entertainment was provided by Graham & Ian the Dynamic duo. They entertained us with songs from the 60's. The music brought back memories for most of us, demonstrated by the sing along that accompanied them.

The afternoon was a wonderful opportunity once again to catch up in person with old friends and make new friends. All too soon the afternoon drew to a close. However, I'm sure we all left Usk castle with lovely happy new memories of a wonderful afternoon filled with conversation and laughter.

Like others I am looking forward the next event and our Christmas lunch in December.

Lt Col (Retd) Valmai Davies

## Remembrance Day 2021

For me Remembrance starts before 11<sup>th</sup> November. One of the roles I have the honour to undertake includes tidying up the war graves and memorial in Bronllys. Also tidying up and putting remembrance crosses on the war graves in Talgarth on behalf of the Town Council.

Remembrance Day dawned in Powys as a beautiful autumnal day with blue sky and sunshine.

Together with Maj Ann Thomas I attended the Remembrance service at Bronllys Church. It was good to see so many people attending the service. Part of the service was held in the church, then outside the wreaths were laid on the memorial. I had the honour of laying a wreath on behalf of the QARANC Association Welsh Branch.

In Talgarth Majors Jacqueline Wilding and Chrissie Owens together with family members attended the church service and subsequent service and laying of wreaths in the town square. Major Chrissie Owens laid a wreath at the memorial on behalf of the association.

Following the conclusion of the very moving services we all met up for coffee, then went for a lovely Sunday Lunch.

Lt Col (Retd) Valmai Davies



QA Memorial  
At  
National Memorial Arboretum

# 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital on Parade in Crickhowell

## Thoughts on the Day

I joined B Detachment 203 Welsh Field Hospital in December 1989 and have been attending the church parade in the ancient St Edmunds Church, Crickhowell, for most of my adult life.

The Detachment met up on Saturday to practice drill, prepare service dress and carry out a team building activity.

The church is an extremely beautiful building in 1303. It is dedicated to the Christian King and Martyr St Edmund and is exquisitely decorated with beams, carvings, rare stained-glass windows, a pipe organ and has pretty gardens surrounding it.

The Detachment congregated in the town carpark and marched into St Edmunds Church with other uniformed organizations and veterans of the parish. We have a great Padre at 203 Field Hospital, Padre Spain, who has instilled the importance of such services into the unit. The parade was marshalled by Sergeant Major WO2 Andrea Marfell QARANC of the Field Hospital, she did a



Sargent Major WO2 Andrea Marfell QARANC marshals the Rembrance Day Parade at Crickhowell

sterling job keeping the parade marching in time and maintaining discipline. The 203 detachment was led by Major Fiona Grew QARANC as it could potentially be her last parade with the unit. She is an outstanding nurse and leader.



Major Fiona Grew QARANC leads the 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital B Detachment North

The church service was led by The Reverend Rana Khan a very honourable man who recognizes the good work of other faiths. He told the story of a Hindu Orderly called Sukha to remind us how we can all live in harmony despite being different. Sukha cleaned army camps in France and worked at The Lady Harding Hospital in Brockenhurst, Hampshire during World War1. Sadly, Sukha became sick and died from pneumonia at the age of 30 in January 1915. As he was of low Hindu Cast, Hindus in England would not cremate him but the Vicar of the Parish where he worked in Brockenhurst, took mercy on him. He was given a plot in the Christian Cemetery at St Nicholas Church. On his gravestone, paid for by parishioners, words of thanks are written for all he did in helping soldiers that came back to Hampshire during the First World War. The Parishioners acknowledged his act of serving those who were different. (Many thanks to Simon Large, from St Edmunds Church, for reminding me of all the sermons details.)

See article Sukha the Hindu Sweeper for more information. Page 9

Following a beautiful traditional service with singing accompanied by an antique pipe organ and the reading of the Roll of Honour by students from Crickhowell High School, we marched past the dais and saluted local dignitaries. Our end point was the war memorial near the health centre. Here Reverend Khan continued to pray and give thanks for the



Capt Brian Pratt laid a wreath at the War Memorial

lives of those that were lost in conflicts past. A bugler played last post and the Officers Saluted and soldiers stood to attention, Captain Brian Pratt laid a wreath from the unit in honour of the fallen.

It is days like these that make me very proud to be a military nurse, and to have served in a theatre of war looking after all those injured in its battles. The unit was well turned out and looked very smart whilst they were on show to the town. The local police force managed the traffic and ensured our safety in a very professional fashion. These traditions that have been passed down through the generations make me appreciate times gone by, and I will continue to attend this parade whilst I have breath in my body. It has shaped the way I have grown up and has also made my children appreciate the sacrifices made for them in times gone by.

Major Andrea Davies-Tuthill

QARANC

# Remembrance Sunday

A poem written by Gillian Whittaker for her daughter Lt Col (Retd) Caroline Whittaker

The poppy is a symbol  
In France the fields were red  
A world War one memorial  
To the wounded and the dead



Each poppy was a soldier  
Who feared and fought and died  
Each poppy has a family  
That loved and mourned and cried

How many years have passed  
And the poppy means much more  
It signifies the sacrifice  
In each and every war

It represents the caring  
The QARANC  
Where ever there are wounded  
Our nurses there will be

So as we wear our poppy  
On Remembrance Day  
With pride we will remember  
The Scarlet and the Gray



Gillian Whittaker



## Sukha the Hindu Sweeper

Having read about the sermon delivered by Reverend Rana Khan at the Remembrance Day Service in Crickhowell, I became fascinated about the story of Sukha the Indian orderly and did a bit of digging on the internet! What follows here is a little bit about the man

Sukha Kalloo was born in the village of Mohulla in Uttar Pradesh region of India in 1885. Some say that as a low caste Hindu he only had one name so the surname Kalloo may be disputed. As a low caste Hindu he was also known as an untouchable.

Sukha spent his early life working around British Military establishments doing various menial tasks. In 1914, at the outbreak of World War 1 an opportunity to join the Indian Army Corps arose, he joined! Sukha was in the Supply and transport Corps with the title/rank of Sweeper. He went along with many other Indians, by boat, to the Western Front, in France. His job was to clean the military camps. It seems that he may also have acted as a stretcher bearer bringing injured and dead soldiers back from the trenches.

He travelled with injured soldiers to England, landing in Southampton and onward to Lady Hardinge Hospital, Brockenhurst. This hospital catered for injured soldiers from the Indian Army. Here he continued his cleaning role within the hospital.

Whilst working there he became ill, was admitted to the wards and died from pneumonia in January 1915. As an untouchable, low caste Hindu, the Hindus in England would not cremate him in the traditional way. The Muslims, as he was not of their faith, would not allow him to be buried in their cemetery. Unwanted in death due to his caste or creed. The Vicar of the Parish of St Nicholas, in Brockenhurst, stepped up saying that Sukha had died for us, we will bury him! So today he lies in the New Zealand War Graves Cemetery attached to St Nicholas Church. His headstone was funded by the parishioners of St Nicholas & different to that of the normal WGC headstones. The inscription reads:

THIS STONE  
WAS ERECTED BY  
PARISHIONERS OF BROCKENHURST  
TO MARK THE SPOT WHERE IS LAID  
THE EARTHLY BODY OF  
SUKHA  
A RESIDENT OF MOHILLA, GUNGAPUR,  
CITY BAREILLY, UNITED PROVINCES, INDIA  
HE LEFT COUNTRY, HOME AND FRIENDS, TO SERVE OUR  
KING & EMPIRE, IN THE GREAT EUROPEAN WAR  
AS A HUMBLE SERVANT IN THE LADY HARDING  
HOSPITAL FOR WOUNDED INDIAN SOLDIERS  
IN THIS PARISH.  
HE DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON JANUARY 12TH 1915  
AGED 30 YEARS.  
BY CREED HE WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN  
BUT HIS EARTHLY LIFE WAS SACRIFICED IN THE  
INTERESTS OF OTHERS.  
"THERE IS ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL WHO IS  
OVER ALL AND THROUGH ALL AND IN ALL." / EPHESIANS IV. 6



Sukha's headstone in the New Zealand War Graves Cemetery in Brockenhurst

Diana McCrea

Unfortunately I ran out of room for references. If interested please contact me