



*Queen Alexandra's Royal Army
Nursing Corps Association*

THE GAZETTE

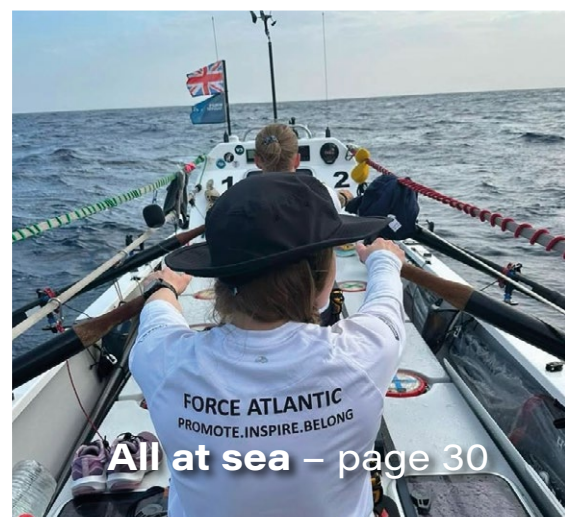
Vol 21 No 4 • Autumn 2025

A summer of celebration!

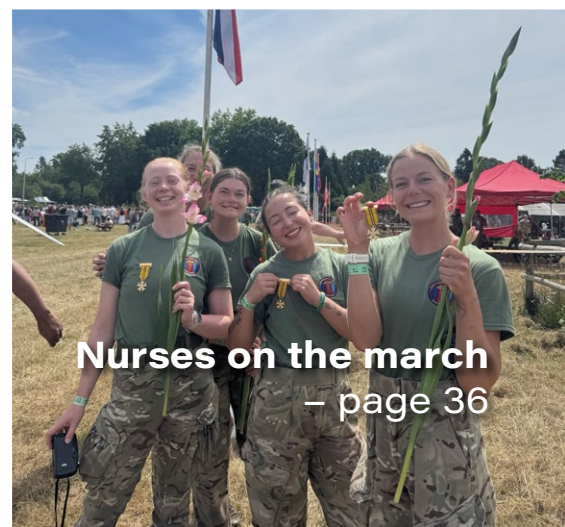
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All smiles at VE Day 80
– pages 14-15



All at sea – page 30



Nurses on the march
– page 36

Trustees and staff of the QARANC Association

The QARANC Association appoints a Board of Trustees to ensure that the Association fulfils its objectives as a charity. Each trustee has designated responsibilities, including being the Chair or member of a sub-committee. Each sub-committee reports to the Board. Trustees also carry out other tasks to help the Association run efficiently.



**CHAIR OF THE
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**VICE CHAIR OF THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Lt Col (Retd) Merrill Bate ARRC



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**Brig (Retd) David
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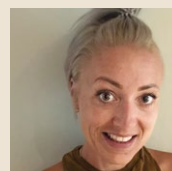
**Maj (Retd) Alisa
Lakeman-Ford**
Finance & General Purpose



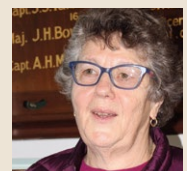
Maj (Retd) Dee Radford
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Finance & General Purpose



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Mwaura**
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WO1 Deborah Hamilton
Benevolence & Grants
Finance & General Purposes

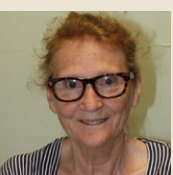


ASSOCIATION STAFF

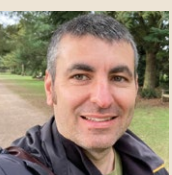
**Maj (Retd) Tracey
Buckingham ARRC**
General Secretary



Alison Roberts
Administration Officer



Sally Cranwell-Child
Treasurer



Steve Bax
Gazette Editor

Becoming a trustee

There is an ongoing requirement for Association members to volunteer their services as a trustee of the Association as existing trustees finish their period in office or resign from the position for other reasons. Please make any expressions of interest to the Tracey (generalsecretary@qarancassociation.org.uk) who will forward on the required application form to

you. The Chair will then contact you post review of your application. Trustees are unpaid but reasonable expenses can be claimed. Training is required and is supported by the Association. Board meetings are held four times a year, three by electronic link and occasionally at varied venues. Sub-Committee meetings are held when required.

THE QARANC ASSOCIATION



"Charitable Incorporated Organisation"
1163821

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VIEW FROM OUR OUTGOING CHAIR

Braving the storms and looking ahead to a bright future

I am sat at home, and we appear to be 'threatened' with a third heatwave and the prospect of a hosepipe ban; I think it best if I sit by the fan and contemplate our present and past situation.

I do expect you all have read the Members Update letter of 23 June (see page 6). The future direction of the Association is laid out and I need not discuss the letter's content here.

As I now step down from the post of Chair and hand over to Sue Bush, I have given much thought to my nine years as a trustee and the post of Chair. I have always been supported by a solid Board of Trustees and central office.

We have negotiated the effects of Brexit, a pandemic and several geopolitical catastrophes which have resulted in a dizzying financial rollercoaster. The Board of Trustees have always stood firm – well, we must be honest...at best we have mostly been gifted amateurs in the financial game – guidelines, policies and procedures were reviewed. The problems of managing the Association when we could not meet/had restrictions solved by readily accepting modernity, again reviewing policy and procedures, and getting on with the job.

The future of the Association is positive; I base this on the last nine years watching the development of a strong, knowledgeable and skilled Board that has displayed resilience and the 'can do, will do' optimism that as a Corps we were well known for.



To continue as a stand-alone Association, we need our members – you! So many retired are not Association members; we need to recruit, please do point out the benefits to non-members. I have already met one retired (non-member) who asked about the formation of the Royal Army Medical Service and the forming Association... she did not realise that we will continue and one who said the Association was for officers only!! The facts need to be publicised; let us all get the good old-fashioned grapevine going!

I would ask that you all support your Branches, that said both the Branches and the Board of Trustees cannot survive without volunteers coming forward to offer their services either on the Branch committees or as a Trustee. Please do give some thought to this, we need your knowledge and skills, and we do provide the training.

In conclusion, may I thank all past trustees, Branch committees and members for their support over the past nine years; it was an honour to be the Chair of a much-admired Association.

In Friendship

John DF Quinn

TRAVEL NEWS

Travelling in London

Every year QARANC veterans travel to London. Some for Remembrance Sunday, some for other events throughout the year, and some live in around the London.

Here is a guide to free or discounted travel

London Underground

If you already have a Veterans Railcard, you can get 1/3 off Anytime Day Travelcard when bought as part of your journey to London from outside London Zones 1-9.

If you have an Oyster card, you can get your Veterans Railcard discount loaded onto your Oyster card to save 1/3 on single off-peak pay-as-you-go fares on London Underground and Docklands Light Railway services. Take your Oyster card along with your Railcard to a tube station and ask a member of staff to permanently load the discount onto it.

Some veterans are entitled to free travel with a Veterans Oyster photocard.

If you receive ongoing payments under the War Pensions Scheme in your name, or Guaranteed Income Payment under the Armed Pensions Compensation Scheme you can apply by calling 0343 222 1234.

Travelling to London – Remembrance

Travel for Remembrance Sunday is FREE

This applies to the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph (arriving on the Saturday or Sunday and leaving on the Sunday), and all other Services of Remembrance taking place nationwide (Remembrance Sunday travel only).

Veterans travelling on these dates will need to show a Veterans Railcard, Veterans Oyster card, NOD-issued Veterans ID or other appropriate proof of service. Serving military personnel should be in uniform or in possession of a current MOD90 Ministry of Defence issued identity card.

A WELCOME FROM OUR NEW CHAIR

Our thanks to John

On behalf of the membership and especially the Board of Trustees, I thank John Quinn for his committed duty to the QARANC Association as Chair. The 'time served' – in excess of nine years, demonstrates the total loyalty and esteem that John has held for both the QARANC and the Association.

The tenure was not easy, the Covid period presented challenges and required innovative ways of working to realise aims. New ways of working led to new staff and structures and of course the challenges presented by the sad demise of the QARANC.

However, change is inevitable and needs to be managed and embraced – the evolution of the Royal Army Medical Service (RAMS) will bring opportunities and the ability of our Association to sustain itself in these changing times has been examined in detail, led by John. The Board agreed that the QARANC Association should retain its charitable status and continue its work into the future.

The Board of Trustees are committed to supporting the enduring benefits of retaining our Association, whilst also hopefully actively participating in the ongoing development of the RAMS Charity to ensure that our former serving members are supported appropriately in the future. The QARANC Association has and will continue to explore initiatives to maintain and hopefully expand its membership.



Going forward will require a collective effort from us all. In anticipation the Trustees and I wish to record our thanks to you for your ongoing commitment and support to our unique Association. Please do respond to any requests for feedback – this is your 'club' and is here to meet as many of your needs as possible in true 'friendship'. Please also support the Branches, whether that be by volunteering as a committee member or supporting their work or events.

Appointed as Chair in July 2025, I feel honoured to be able to serve the Association and am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with the Trustees and the membership to navigate the future. I look forward to meeting many of you soon and hearing your ideas. I assure you I will dutifully serve the Association to the best of my ability and, with the help of the membership ensure the Association continues its work and delivers its charitable 'objects' into the future.

Lt Col (Retd) Sue Bush RRC

Our branches – how old are they?

Which branch do you belong to? Do you know when your branch was established?

We have been doing a little bit research into the branches, especially how old they are, or we should say how young they are. We have a few gaps in the history of our branches so if you can help us we would be most grateful to hear you. If you believe the information we hold is incorrect then also inform us. Please contact Tracey on generalsecretary@qarancassociation.org.uk

We are still on the lookout for support to the branches. Some of our branches still require key appointments to be filled – is this something you can help out with. If you can assist then please contact your local branch to offer assistance. We really do not want to be closing branches due to no one to fill appointments. We want to continue celebrating Branch Birthdays. Your support really does mean a great deal to us.

BRANCH	OPENED	GAZETTE ENTRY	AGE 2025
Aldershot	16 January 1996	Vol 11, No 2 1996-1	29
Catterick	Unknown		
Chester	21 September 1954		71
Jurassic Coast	21 January 2012	Vol 14, No 4 2012	13
Midland	01 November 1950	Vol 1, No 4, Oct 50	75
Millbank	30 July 1954	Vol 12, May 55	71
Newcastle	01 July 1976		49
Northern Ireland	24 May 1967	Vol 5, No 8, 1967-2	58
Scottish	15 May 1950	Vol 1, No 1, Jan 50	75
Southdowns	20 July 2016	Vol 14, No 13, 2016	9
Welsh	20 April 1968	Vol 5, No 12, 1968-2	57
West Country	04 October 1968	Vol 5, No 12, 1968 - 3	57

To all QARANC Association Members

To all QARANC Association Members...

We are writing as Chair and Chair Designate of the QARANC Association to update you on recent events relating to the formation of the Royal Army Medical Service (RAMS) and its impact on the QARANC Association.

As the majority of you will be aware, Project VICTORIA continues to deliver, and following Royal Assent, the formation of the RAMS took place on 15 November 2024. The 'antecedent' Corps, the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), Royal Army Dental Corps (RADDC) and the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) now cease to exist and those who were serving at the time of amalgamation are now members of the RAMS.

During this time of transition and change, the QARANC Association has continued to support both serving and former members of their Corps and those eligible in accordance with the extant 'objects'. In addition they have been keen to advise and have attempted to influence the formation of the new organisation, the RAMS Charity currently being established to afford support in those who serve in or have served in the RAMS or any of the antecedent Corps.

As the Chair and Chair Designate of the QARANC Association we have attended a number of formal and informal meetings relating to the inception and future of the evolving RAMS Charity. We were able to seek advice from the Designate RAMS Trustees on how integration of our Association may or may not be implemented. Despite encouragement by the Designate RAMS Board of Trustees that the former Corps should consider an 'all in' approach and transfer assets and their membership to the RAMS charity, it was felt that this required a more in depth review. It was decided that an option appraisal and subsequent analysis should be undertaken. The QARANC Association Trustees set about developing a number of criteria that would need to be met to fulfil the expectation of an 'all in' approach ranging from not only the all-important views of the existing membership, but also fundamental issues relating to the proposed governance, financial and administrative management policies and practices to be adopted and practiced by the RAMS Charity.

Following much consideration, notably over the last 6 months and whilst respecting the views expressed by our wider membership, the QARANC Association Board of Trustees were unanimous in their decision that it was not, at this moment, in the best interests of our Association and its members to become a fully integrated component of the new RAMS Charity with the consequence of dissolving our existing Charity.

As a result of this decision the QARANC Association Board of Trustees have recommended the following:

- the Charity Commission are approached for permission to amend our Associations 'Objects' to reflect the recent change, in that we no longer have serving QARANC personnel as members.
- that our Association 'endures' for the foreseeable future supporting those in need, hardship or distress, maintaining contact, fostering friendship, and ensuring that the historical role of military nursing and heritage is preserved.
- that professional advice is sought as required to ensure compliancy with any future requests from the RAMS Charity

We acknowledge that a number of challenges lie ahead – the loss of our serving personnel as members (in that they are no longer QARANC) is an issue, we hope to review with haste through a comprehensive assessment of our membership criteria. This will enable those still serving who wish to retain their former contact with the Association to continue to do so and hopefully increase membership categories so enable more to benefit from some aspects of our purpose such as maintaining contact and fostering mutual friendship.

Despite the Trustees believing that the climate and conditions are not right at this time, they are firmly committed to assisting and supporting the RAMS Charity whilst it evolves and will, of course, review their decision regarding our Association on a regular basis. It is important that the wealth of knowledge from those who are currently appointed as Trustees, or who have played a part in developing our Association to what it is today, are able to proffer their experience and expertise if so requested to enable the RAMS Charity to develop into a highly respected and successful organisation of benefit to our serving community and the other beneficiaries it is to support.

It is understood and acknowledged that there has been a lot of angst and uncertainty over recent months regarding the future of our Association, however it was important to remain professional and ensure all the facts were available before committing to and sharing their proposed pathway. The Trustees believe that the QARANC Association can continue to deliver as required over the coming years whilst assisting the ongoing development of the RAMS Charity.

For the QARANC Association to continue to enjoy its current profile, status and success please remember that all aspects of your contributions, whether that be undertaking a role within one of the branches, visiting fellow members, enjoying social events, submitting or reading articles in The Gazette or through financial contribution or payment of membership fees, all are very much needed and appreciated and gives our Association the special place it has in our hearts. We must not forget that many have benefited from the Association in the past and it is hoped that many more will benefit in the future.

On behalf of all the Trustees and Administration staff, we offer our thanks for your patience over the recent months. It is hoped that your support will continue in the months and maybe years ahead as we navigate through uncharted territory to achieve our purpose whilst affording guidance and 'friendship' to our colleagues doing likewise in the launch and development of the RAMS Charity.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to have further clarification or information about the QARANC Association and we will do our best to answer them.

Yours 'In Friendship'



Tracey Buckingham's update from the 'engine room'

If you recall in the last edition of the Gazette, I mentioned an office move had just taken place. Well Alison and I have settled into our new office and the knees are much improved now there are no longer several flights of stairs to endure. So that is a bonus!

Since I last wrote anything to you we have sadly lost Lt Col Kerry McFadden-Newman ARRC who passed away following a short illness on 24 February. Kerry was the secretary for our Northern Ireland Branch, and one who I can say 100% lived up to our Association Motto 'in friendship'. Kerry was a remarkable person and will be missed by so many. See the tribute on page 12.

We also must thank those branch personnel who have retired or taken up branch appointments. Without their dedication, time and commitment branches would not exist. Thank you to: Millbank Secretary and Treasurer Judy Cook and Adele Rutledge, Northern Branch Chair and Secretary Chris Jordan and Frances Dobbing.

Welcome to Hilary Ellis as the new Midland Branch Chair, Joy Duffield as NI Branch Secretary, Julia Jones and Elizabeth Ward as Millbank Secretary and Treasurer, and Paula Pearce as Southdown's Chair.

If you are interested in supporting your local branch, then contact them directly or email the office and we can point you in the right direction. Now more than ever we need our members, that is you, to take up the helm at our branches. There is a theme running here as both Sue and John mention the branches, but it really is important to look after our future membership.

In April Susie Squires stepped down as the QARANC Regimental Secretary and she is now enjoying her new job as Assistant Regimental Secretary Rifles. We wish Susie well for the future and thank her for all her support with the Association



during her time with us.

I was very fortunate to attend the VE Day celebrations at Horse Guards on 8 May. I was not sure if at such short notice from the Royal British Legion (TRBL) if we would make the event, however, in true military style and precision co-ordination a group of eight successfully navigated their way to London to meet up. It was an amazing event, that you can read more about this on page 8.

You will have seen the letter sent to all members regarding the Association's future, which is reproduced on pages 4 and 5. Such great news that the Association will endure and I know from the influx of emails and messages we have received in the office that this was news that you as members were waiting on. Thank you to those who took time to contact us, your messages do mean a great deal to us.

At the time of writing, we are busy preparing for the Reunion on 13 September at The Victory Services Club in London. A slight break in tradition, we are going back to holding an afternoon tea. We acknowledge that London does not meet all members needs in terms of location, cost, type of event and we do welcome your views on how best to provide a reunion. We also welcome volunteers to assist with the organising. We will have an update soon on future reunions and the 80th Anniversary of the Association in 2027. Watch this space.

*Tracey Buckingham ARRC
General Secretary*

“Without their dedication, time and commitment branches would not exist”



Your oven ready Gazette, tasty as ever!

Welcome to Gazette number 185. As ever we have prepared a dish of familiar ingredients, from the continuing adventures of our retired members and amazing feats of endurance from those still in service. Plus, interviews and your regular updates from senior Association figures. Truly sumptuous!

On pages 16-20 we have a first and a last. My first in-depth interview with our outgoing Chairman John Quinn, and quite possibly his last in these pages as he exits stage right for a well-earned retirement. John has been hugely supportive to me as editor, and I thoroughly enjoyed hearing his story. I am sure you will too.

There's also a serving soldier's perspective of career and family on pages 24-25; my interview with



WO1 Debs Hamilton. And Branch Chair Karen Irvine shares her career highs with me on pages 38-41.

The humanitarian toll of the war in Gaza is rarely out of the news. On pages 21-23 we speak to Chris Hunter about her first-hand experience of nursing in this and other conflict zones. We also have some lighter news with an enjoyable trip down memory lane on pages 27-29 as Olivia Barnes delves into times when QAs were in the news.

As always, this is your Gazette. So please feel free to pass on your feedback or requests for what you would like to see in upcoming editions.

*Steve Bax
Editor*

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Here are a few of the questions that we often get asked. If you have a question to ask us then please do not hesitate to contact us. In most instances you can contact the office on telephone **0300 365 0120** or email:

- General Enquiries - info@qarancassociation.org.uk
- Legacy's, Grants, Benevolence - generalsecretary@qarancassociation.org.uk
- Membership - admin@qarancassociation.org.uk

How can I find service record details.

Unfortunately, we do not hold any service records here at The Association. You can find more details on how to apply for records at www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records or by calling 0808 1914 218.

How do I submit an article for The Gazette.

You can submit your articles directly to editor@qarancassociation.org.uk. Submission dates are Spring Edition by 31 January. Autumn edition by 31 July. Please send photos as attachments to the email, do NOT embed them into a document as it makes them difficult to be included in The Gazette. For ease send 3-4 good quality photos (jpg format only). If you can provide names to the people in photos that would be helpful.

How do I apply for financial assistance.

All cases for benevolence, both serving and retired must come through one of the following:

- The Royal British Legion (TRBL)
- Poppy Scotland
- Soldiers, Sailors Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)

How do I submit an article for the Associations Social Media.

You can submit your articles directly to info@qarancassociation.org.uk

How do I let you know about an event we would like advertised.

You can submit your articles directly to info@qarancassociation.org.uk

How do I join the Association.

You can apply for membership via our website, complete the application form in the Gazette or contact admin@qarancassociation.org.uk for further assistance with applying.

How can I renew my membership.

Please contact the office for any current membership enquiries admin@qarancassociation.org.uk

How do I inform the Association of a change of address.

Contact the office with your updated details admin@qarancassociation.org.uk.

Can I change branch at any time.

Yes you can, just contact the office and we will change branches for you admin@qarancassociation.org.uk.

How do I make a donation?

You can contact at the office to make a donation via generalsecretary@qarancassociation.org.uk

How do I leave a gift in my Will.

You can contact at the office to discuss how to leave a legacy in a will to us generalsecretary@qarancassociation.org.uk

How can I raise money for the Association

You can contact the office to arrange to fundraise for us generalsecretary@qarancassociation.org.uk

I need to inform someone of a bereavement of a member. Who do I need to tell? Please contact the office.

I'd like to send an obituary to the Gazette, how do I do this.

You can submit your obituary directly to editor@qarancassociation.org.uk

I would like to be involved in the activities of my local Branch, where is my nearest. Please check out our Branches page on our website for more information for more information. A list of branch contacts can be found in The Gazette.

I would like to advertise my charity event on the QARANC Website.

The QARANC Association will only advertise events on our website and social media that raises funds for the QARANC Association. By exception it will advertise events if supporting one of the charities we have direct links with for benevolence (TRBL, SSAFA, Poppy Scotland, NFA etc)

How do I obtain event tickets.

We occasionally receive free tickets or invitations to attend functions organised by The Not Forgotten, The Royal British Legion etc. These are advertised via our branches or via our official Association social media pages. There is often a swift turn around on responses for these events. You could also register directly with organisations for event tickets.

What is the etiquette for the wearing of medals and headdress for veterans.

The general etiquette rules for wearing medals only allows the wearing of official awards.

- Medals awarded in Service to an individual are to be worn on the left breast of a jacket (or appropriate attire).
- Medals awarded to a deceased Service/ex-service person may be worn on the right breast by a close/near relative. No more than one group should be worn by any individual.
- The Veterans badge or QARANC Association badge may be worn on the left lapel by the position of the buttonhole in within appropriate position on other attire/dress.
- Unofficial medals or badges, other than Veterans or QARANC Association badge should not be worn when representing the QARANC Association.
- Unofficial medals that may have been purchased which do not have the Sovereigns permission to be worn is not allowed.

What dress should I wear if on parade, for example the Cenotaph.

In line with the Royal British Legion (RBL) and other Regimental Associations, it is recommended that parade dress is smart and appropriate, the norm is generally for dark colours. The QARANC beret may be worn and the Corps Scarf or Tie can be worn. No stable belts or Forge Caps are to be worn.

How can I obtain QARANC Association or Corps items/memorabilia.

The QARANC Association does not currently have the capacity to hold stock or sell items. Suggested places to purchase items is via the Museum of Military Medicine or we have found e-ay to be a good source.

Good Sources of Information

The GOV.uk website link provides useful information for both serving and retired: www.gov.uk/defence-and-armed-forces

The Office for Veterans Affairs is a useful resource area for UK Armed Forces veterans and their families, including help with finance, healthcare, employment, housing, social care and more: www.gov.uk/government/collections/find-support-for-veterans-and-their-families



QA's unforgettable visit to Buckingham Palace and Westminster

Linda Reed from Northern Ireland Branch reports on her visit to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party and a rare encounter at Westminster Abbey.

On 16 May, I was fortunate to travel over from Belfast to a garden party at Buckingham Palace with my friend Bernie Walsh. This event is held each year on behalf of The Not Forgotten Association charity, who look after war veterans and those injured or with a long-term illness. This year it was hosted by HRH The Duchess of Gloucester.

There are many celebrities who support the charity and attend the party. They are more than happy to chat and pose for photographs. This year there was entertainment laid on too, including music and the Beating Retreat provided by the Irish Guards. There were performances from Luke Goss and Russell Watson as well as The Not Forgotten Association's Anne Riley and Le'arna Castle of Swingtime Sweethearts with a special tribute to VE Day veterans in attendance.

Whilst in London my friend and I took the opportunity to tour Westminster Abbey as we had never been before. It didn't disappoint – an absolutely beautiful abbey with so much history. One of the vergers noticed my QA Association badge. We got talking and he was telling us about the private nurse's memorial chapel and the stained glass windows. This particular chapel is closed to the public, although it can be booked. We were invited to have a look at it, and I felt very privileged to be able to see the windows.

To reward them for their kindness I fell down two steps and sprained my ankle quite badly, scaring the two guides and my friend... it could only happen to me. So, our brief visit to London was one we won't forget.



Honouring the past and looking ahead to a bright future

Col Helen Winder, Chief Nursing Officer (Army), updates readers on what serving personnel have been up to in the first half of this year.

What a busy few months we have had. I want to touch on a few of the highlights which demonstrate what our nurses have been up to. The first celebration of nursing activity was the Chief Nursing Officer (Army) Symposium on 20-21 March at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. About 250 people attended, and Chief Nursing Officer for Wales Sue Tranka delivered the most inspiring speech on her vision for nursing.

At this event we celebrated the professional success and excellence of our RAMS Nursing community through the award of the Annual Nursing Prizes;

- Talbot New Cup – Sgt Sophie Steed
- Burroughs Cup – WO1 Jessica Brown
- Glover Prize – Capt Chloe Brambhatt
- Buckingham Cup – Pte Chloe Lang
- CNO(A) Medal – WO2 Stephaine Reed
- With a special award going to WO1 Deborah Hamilton for her significant contribution as the Senior Soldier for Nursing.

The CNO(A) symposium concluded with the inaugural RAMS Dinner Night sponsored by the Nursing Community on 21 March, where Professor Greta Westwood the CEO of the Florence Nightingale Foundation delivered the pre-Dinner Glover Memorial speech, where in nursing tradition we said farewell in person to those leaving service following distinguished careers: Col Helen Singh, Lt Col David Jenkins, Lt Col Susie Hines. Col Marie Richter, Maj Laura Jones (Barnes), Maj Pete Royal and Maj Pat Wilson were in our thoughts, but sadly unable to join us for a formal farewell.

On 5 April, we attended the inaugural RAMS turning of the pages at Westminster Abbey. This is a poignant moment of reflection, a couple of times a year, where books of remembrance have their pages turned so that new names are on display. RAMS personnel, including nurses, from the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) were part of the parading unit. In time we are hoping to place all the antecedent corps' books within Westminster Abbey.

The Florence Nightingale Service of Remembrance was held on 12 May. This an annual event is always well represented by nurses from the QARANC Association and RAMS. A Role of Honour for nurses who lost their lives in service during WW1 was



“This is a poignant moment of reflection, a couple of times a year, where books of remembrance have their pages turned so that new names are on display”

dedicated and joined the procession, and the book was escorted up the Abbey by a RAMS Nurse before being signed by the three Chiefs of the Nursing services and the CEO of the Florence Nightingale Foundation (our hosts for the event). That was epic, if a little nerve-wracking parading through the Abbey.

On 25 May, RAMS personnel provided medical support to the Royal Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace. This provided a unique opportunity for all ranks to support these auspicious events. The QA's own Tracey Buckingham was there in role with the Not Forgotten Association and retired RAMC personnel joined us in their new honorary roles as part of the palace guard.

We marked the inaugural RAMS Corps Day on 24 June, at the regimental HQ with a parade, a period of reflection and a sporting afternoon with Joint Hospital Group South-East (JHG-SE) before a curry dinner. My thanks to Lt Col Tom Beckett and Lt Col Ryan Mallin MBE for enabling this event through their respective Commands.

In July, we attended the graduation of our Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) out of the Defence Medical Academy, attended by Lt Col Maggie Hodge RRC as SO1 Nursing and Hd of the HCA Cadre. With 60% of their Level 3 Diploma in Healthcare already completed, the soldiers now move forward with a strong foundation and a passion for clinical delivery to their first assignments. Special recognition was given to two outstanding individuals: Top Student Award – Pte Thapa-Maga, and Top Academic Award – LCpl Bates.

DANE Graduation Symphony Hall Birmingham on 23 July was attended by all three chiefs of nursing services and celebrated the huge success of military nurses at their graduation. It was clear our future is in very safe hands.

There have also been some tougher times and my thoughts, and I have no doubt the thoughts of the whole nursing community, are with the family and friends of the late Lt Col Kerry McFadden-Newman ARRC, Major Samantha Young and Major Nicola Kemp, all of them taken too soon. Their lives were a blessing, their memories a treasure. May they rest in peace.



Kerry McFadden-Newman:

'A beautiful soul who touched so many lives'

The QARANC family is in mourning for Lt Col Kerry McFadden-Newman ARRC, Secretary of our Northern Ireland Branch following her sudden passing aged 49, on 24 February 2025.

'A light... a very bright light has gone out in Portrush.' Written by one of Kerry's dear friends in her hometown. I think that everyone who knew Kerry would agree that this is a very apt description of how we all feel after the loss of our dear friend and colleague, that indeed a light has gone out within the military community.

Lt Col Kerry McFadden-Newman ARRC was a force of nature, vibrant, caring, beautiful and had a zest for life like no other. Anyone who has ever met Kerry would never forget her sense of humour, her smile, her enthusiasm, her friendship and compassion, a beautiful soul inside and out who has touched so many people's lives.

Kerry Jane McFadden enlisted in the Queen Alexandra's Nursing Corps as a Junior Rank in 2000 after completing her nurse training in Bristol. Very soon after joining, Kerry served on operations including AGRICOLA and Op TELIC 1. She passed her regular commissioning board on return from TELIC 1 in May 2003 and passed out at Sandhurst that December. She spent two years in Germany, before serving on two gruelling OP HERRICK tours in Camp Bastion. For her outstanding work on HERRICK 18 tour she was nominated for the prestigious Associate Royal Red Cross, of which she was immensely proud. She also completed exercises in Jordan, Kenya, Gibraltar and San Diego.

Kerry was posted in the rank of Major as Regular Nursing Officer to 204 (North Irish) Field Hospital in 2014, where I worked closely with her as SNO. It was then that I got to know the qualities that made up Kerry. She was dedicated, hardworking, no half measures here. She was an advisor, a confidant, proactive, dependable, and a friend to many. She brought with her fun and laughter, and I am sure colleagues can recall the many antics she got up to,



I am sure colleagues can recall the many antics she got up to, she made us laugh until our stomachs hurt



she made us laugh until our stomachs hurt.

Kerry met her husband Guy at Frimley Park Hospital in July 2001, where Guy was also working as an ODP within RAMC. They married the following year. They have 3 children Caoimhe, Fionn and Teagan of whom she was immensely proud.





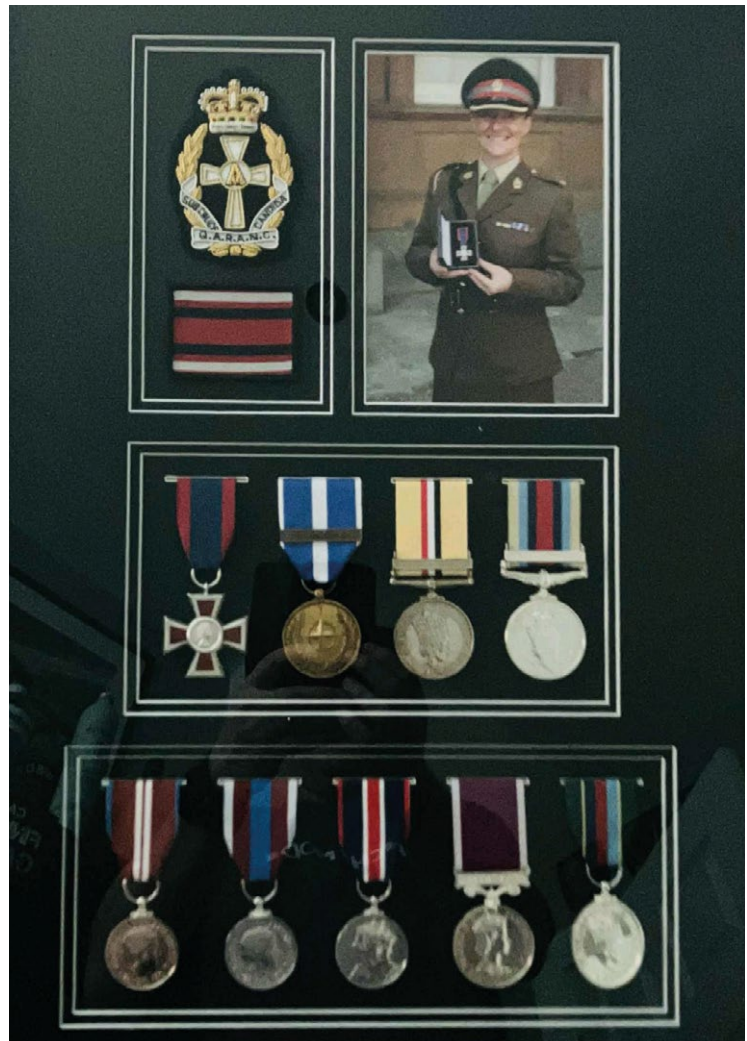
Kerry was delighted to secure a posting back to Northern Ireland, persuading her husband to settle here in her hometown of Portrush. After a short stint in Aldergrove Med Centre, Kerry transferred from Regular to Reserve service in 2018 within 253 Medical Regiment. She would go on to command 253's Squadron in Limavady. She was later promoted to Lt Col in 2023 taking up post as Senior Nursing Officer in 335 Medical Evacuation Regiment.

2024 saw Kerry achieving runner-up in the RCN Defence Nurse of the Year. She was always happiest cheering others on, so it was fitting that she got nominated herself. Kerry as usual using every occasion to praise others' qualities and making them feel proud of themselves.

Kerry joined QARANC Association NI Branch when she was posted to NI in 2014. She took over as Secretary in 2017, a role she undertook with her usual commitment and dedication. She turned everything around and consequently we now have a thriving and growing NI branch. Her attention to detail and drive were noted by all. She would have gone out of her way to help anyone in need. The motto 'In Friendship' was in her through and through. Her loss has left a huge gap within our QA community. Every trip brings us down memory lane and talking about how Kerry would have loved this.

This is from Guy, Kerry's husband. 'Kerry was a force to be reckoned with; her energy knew no bounds. As well as her full-time job as Veterans Clinical Adviser for Help 4 Heros, her role within the Reserves was almost full time too. Add to that Kerry's role as Secretary of QA Association NI Branch, her involvement in the Portrush Theatre Company for the annual Christmas pantomime, the Strictly Come Dancing event that Kerry won at Christmas, her involvement in the North Coast Traditional Music, Kerry always had time for family and friends and seamlessly moved from role to role. Always extremely supportive of our children's involvement in sport and of course their education. Kerry was due to run 2 legs of the Belfast Marathon this year to raise funds for our son, Fionn's upcoming rugby tour to South Africa. On the day someone dropped out and Fionn ran two legs, 11.5 miles. Kerry's drive and determination can be found in her children, where her legacy lives on.

In the Army we speak of our values, integrity, loyalty, selfless commitment, and so forth, but Kerry lived those values. She was the same Kerry, whether with a private soldier or a General but they knew that



Kerry was a force to be reckoned with; her energy knew no bounds

they had just met a leader. Her smile was infectious, and they would part company smiling, an effect she had on everyone.

Kerry would have made it far, no telling where her career would have taken her. We all mourn her loss, but the Army has lost one of the greatest leaders you would ever meet. Kerry was not only the epitome of an Army Nurse, or a gifted natural leader, she was a wife, a proud Mum, Daughter and Sister who adored her family, her friends and her hometown.

Goodbye to our friend and colleague, from all in the QARANC Association NI Branch. We miss you more than words can describe. 'A Void That Can Never Be Filled'

Lt Col (Rtd) Joy Duffield RRC TD

Mr Guy McFadden-Newman (former WO1 RAMC)

Guy passed away peacefully on 30 July 2025 and our sincere condolences go out to Guy and Kerry's family.

Our thoughts in particular are with their three children Caoimhe, Fionn and Teagan.

Forever in our thoughts.

An evening to remember, an anniversary to never forget

The 80th anniversary of VE Day was marked in style with a concert at Horse Guards Parade attended by The King and invited guests from across the country, among them eight QARANC Association members

The Royal British Legion (RBL) was allocating eight tickets to the QARANC Association to attend a VE Day commemorative concert on Horse Guards Parade. On the basis that you must be 'in it to win it', I submitted the required information to the office. I was still surprised however to receive a call to confirm that I was on the list for 8 May and needed to be able to get myself to London.

Tracey Buckingham, the Association General Secretary, had a protracted period of communications with the RBL until the final details of ticket issue and joining instructions were received. One early request from the RBL was that attendees wear red, white and blue so this allowed us to plan our outfits. The conundrum was to choose something suitable for a long day and to consider the probability that the evening would become chilly.

When the day arrived, eight lucky and very excited QARANC Association members met in the Horse and Guardsman pub on Whitehall. They were me (Moira Dixon), Lynda Simonds, Jules Fulford, Sally Grove, Kelly Vassallo, Lynda Simonds, Rod Eldridge, Tracey Buckingham and Robin McMahon.

For some it was a reunion of former colleagues from eons ago, some had never met before but, in true QA style, it was no time before the chatter, laughter and feeling of shared friendship was in full flow.

After a group photo we made our way through the customary ticket check and airport style security at the entrance, all went smoothly much to Tracey's relief. In the arena we were surrounded by thousands of excited ticket holders. There was time to find our seats, mingle with other audience members and check out the various refreshment stalls before the concert started.

The audience of 12,000 was a mix of all ages and backgrounds, we were surrounded by lots of groups



of scouts and guides who had travelled from all over the country. We had excellent seats with a great view of the stage, close to where many of the WW2 veterans were seated and just in front of the Royal Box.

As there had been so many VE Day events throughout the day, we didn't expect the senior Royals to be present at this event so imagine our delight when they arrived, including of course our Association Patron the Duchess of Edinburgh. Then to huge applause and a fanfare from the military bands King Charles and Queen Camilla arrived and took their seats. It was lovely to see that some of the veterans and their families were sitting amongst the Royal Family.



The concert was hosted very ably by the BBC's Zoe Ball who acknowledged that we had all got the memo about the red, white and blue dress code. There was a mix of military musicians, pop bands, West End acts, Actors and, most importantly, recordings of the stories of WW2 veterans and others who lived through WW2 such as evacuees and Bevin Boys. Their stories were poignant, humbling and emotional.

There was the story of Mary and Doreen who became evacuee sisters and have remained close ever since. Actor Richard Armitage read the account of three-year-old Jeff Borsack who was taken to hospital with measles. His parents promised to return the following day, however that night they were killed in an air raid. Jeff was brought up in an orphanage until an uncle found him years later. Jeff then joined Richard on the stage.

Sitting next to the King was 107-year-old RAF veteran Harry Richardson. He recounted how he met his wife Margaret and how her letters kept him connected to her and their daughter Penny. Then followed a hauntingly beautiful song by Freya Ridings which was accompanied by the military string section. The song was interspersed by Margaret's letters read by Doctor Who actress Varada Sethu. At the end there was a very special moment when the cameras focussed on Harry, Penny and the King who was seen to be in conversation with Harry.

The King spoke from the stage during which he touchingly and amusingly read a few excerpts from his mother's diary from VE Day. Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret famously joined the throngs of people dancing and partying in the streets.

It was rather chilly as the evening progressed. We were pleased to see that the veterans were well wrapped up and speculated as to whether the Royal Family had blankets over their laps. The upbeat music, such as Toploader's



“We were struck by the way the young scouts and guides were fully engaged with every aspect of the event.”

Dancing in the Moonlight brought everyone to their feet to dance along and the Union Flags were waved at every opportunity. We were struck by the way the young scouts and guides were fully engaged with every aspect of the event.

After almost two hours it was the concert finale. Callum Scott sang 'The White Cliffs of Dover' and Samantha Barks gave a fabulous rendition of 'We'll Meet Again'. At this point our wristbands lit up in red, white and blue in a sign of light and hope.

The Royal Family left to more rapturous applause, the King and Queen still waving their flags. Reluctantly we all dispersed into the streets of London, some had to rush off for trains. Lynda and I had time to repair to the pub for a glass of wine and to reflect on the events of the evening before returning to our hotel. The lasting message from all the VE Day commemorations is gratitude to those who served and to those who gave their lives. We must never forget their sacrifices and service.

*Maj (Ret'd) Moira Dixon
Lt Col (Ret'd) Lynda Simonds*





'The only career you'll have, is careering down corridors'

Outgoing QARANC Association chair John Quinn OSTJ recalls this prophetic quote from his old headmaster, as he gives a rare interview to The Gazette about his Army career and proving his critics wrong.

Having narrowly avoided an early discharge from the Army on medical grounds; John Quinn rose through the ranks to become a full Colonel and the Director of Army Nursing Services (DANS). In retirement he chaired the QARANC Association for nearly a decade, until handing the reins to Sue Bush in July.

Never one for a fuss, John would have been content to go quietly into his second retirement, but the Association could not let him disappear without a little fanfare. At the time of writing John's farewell leaver's lunch is pending and he agreed, after some coaxing, to speak to The Gazette about his life in service.

John lives in Hampshire with his wife, Ann, and their dear little dog Charlie, who has a sideline visiting the local hospice to spread a little cheer with Pets As Therapy. We asked John if he enjoys life as an ex-colonel, and his characteristic response is: "It's wonderful – just wandering about in jeans and people just referring to you as Mister Quinn."

John was born in 1952 in Arbroath, Tayside, to a Scottish-Irish father and Yorkshire-Norwegian mother – a "rather a peculiar mixture," he muses. John's father was in the Royal Navy, in the Fleet Air Arm, and his earliest memories are of Malta, where he played in the bomb craters with the other children.

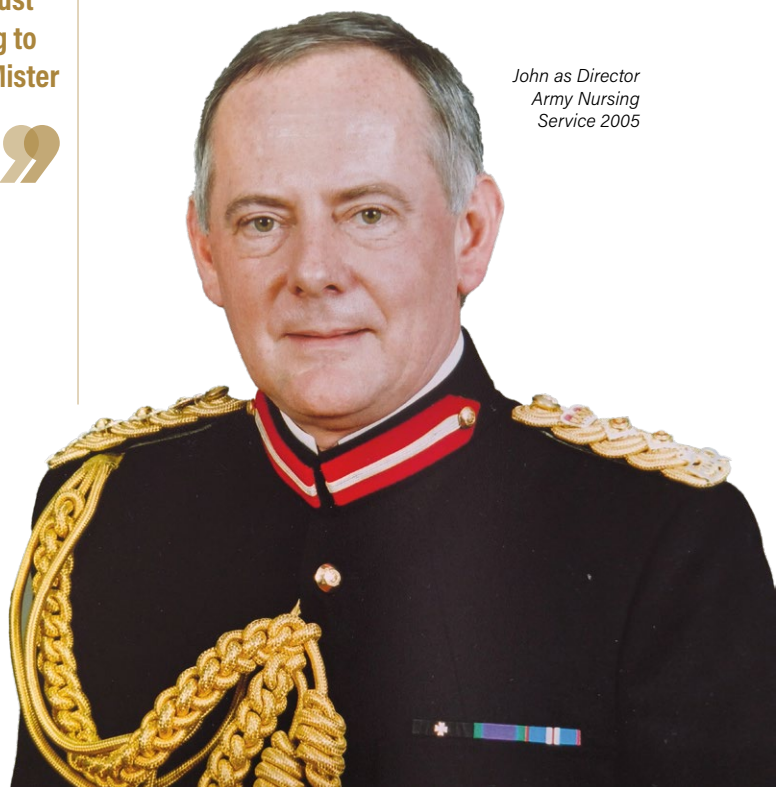
"I can remember starting school and speaking a language which wasn't English. My two brothers were born out there, and our mother used to take me to the markets because I could speak Maltese. When we came back to Britain, my brother and I realised we could sit talking in Maltese and nobody knew what

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”

we were saying. But that angered my parents, so we just stopped, and I wouldn't know a word of Maltese now if it was spoken to me."

John and his two younger brothers were later joined by a sister after his parents settled in Hull and later in Lossiemouth, Morayshire, which was home to a Royal Naval Air Station, HMS Fulmar, now a RAF station.

At school in northern Scotland, John continued his education by ultra strict nuns who he nicknamed



*John as Director
Army Nursing
Service 2005*



The Freedom of Rinteln Parade

'The Sisters of No Mercy.' He was a rebellious pupil, "fairly resistant," as he puts it. One day John put his hand up and asked his teacher what the Immaculate Conception was. "Well, I could see she was just about 'airborne', coming for me. I got physically beaten up by this nun and years later, when I realised what the Immaculate Conception was, I thought [how I was treated] was a disgrace but, I really never knew anything else."

John went on to a Benedictine boarding school – Fort Augustus Abbey, at the bottom of Loch Ness. The school closed in 2013. John remembers the regime being particularly strict but bearable.

"If you had your hands in your pockets in January, you got the strap. There were no actual radiators. It was just pipes running around the classrooms, and monks would come in and throw the windows open, even in January. They had a swimming pool outside, filled with water from Loch Ness, which I can tell you, was damn near freezing constantly."

When John's father left the Navy, the family returned to Hull, and for John this meant enrolling at Catholic grammar school (Marist College, now closed). Recalling this final part of his schooling, he jokes: "I was finally, brutalized before being ejected." However, if nothing else, the harsh schooling seemed to toughen up Master Quinn for the challenges and hardships of a later Army career.

"In many ways, it trained me for the Army. I remember going on a run somewhere, and one of the others saying to me, 'You love this, don't you?' and I said "you should have been at the schools I was at."

John developed a dreadful abdominal pain during his maths O Level exam, which was put down to exam nerves but got progressively worse in the night. He was rushed to hospital for surgery and thankfully recovered, but he passed only O Level woodwork, metal work, technical drawing and French. The headmaster was prepared to admit him into sixth form, but John announced: "I'm leaving, there's the world out there." The teacher's response has always stayed with him. "He said to me, 'Quinn, you're a wasted brain. The only career you'll ever have is careering down corridors.' You know he was right? I have been down quite a few corridors in my career."

John enrolled in night school to do English and Mathematics. His mother, being an English teacher,

"I remember going on a run somewhere, and one of the others saying to me, 'You love this, don't you?'"



was concerned that John's English was "dreadful," so he applied himself there. He rarely turned up for the maths lessons though, preferring to study at home and confident that he would pass the exam, which thankfully he did. John never retook the other academic subjects he missed due to hospitalisation.

Encouraged by his mother to get into a 'good career', John became a trainee quantity surveyor and found it super tedious. "There I was, nearly 18, sitting here counting bricks. I could tell you how many nails it would take to build somebody's house, but it wasn't for me," he reflects many years later.

Thankfully, Salvation was at hand in the form of the Army Careers office just across the road from the job. John considered joining the Royal Navy, but being red-green colour blind, the only job he could have secured was cook. He told the Army he was happy to do anything, and they assigned him to the Parachute Regiment. He left with the Queen's Shilling and a travel warrant, wondering how he might break the news to his mother.

As it happened, she found the warrant in his pocket as she was putting his trousers in the wash. "She went bananas," recalls John, but he stuck to his guns and left home for Army life.

His new career was nearly short lived. At that time the Army would carry out spinal survey x-rays on soldiers prior to parachuting and on return to the unit his platoon Sargent separated him from others and ask what was wrong? The hospital had phoned and said 'Quinn is not to parachute.' It transpired that when John had fallen out of a tree at age 10, he had done lasting damage to his back. Suddenly the back pain he had suffered from on and off, which had been dismissed by the adults as growing pains, made sense.

The orthopaedic surgeon was amazed that John had got into the Army in the first place and been physically able to do the training. This perseverance impressed him, and rather than discharge John, the

surgeon provided a lifeline - he could stay in the Army (medically downgraded) but would have to transfer to something more suitable. John chose to join the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC).

At the RAMC Training Centre, a surly TTO quickly deflated young John's dream of being a State Registered Nurse (SRN). "I tell you what you're going to be," he said indignantly, and threw John out of his office. A couple of days later, a travel warrant arrived for a journey to Catterick by train. On arriving at Darlington for the next leg, John found he had not been provided with a bus pass. Luckily, a kindly bus driver took pity on him.

At Catterick, Private Quinn learned he had been assigned to train to be a State Enrolled Nurse (SEN), below his expectation. This made him determined to progress as quickly as possible. "Right, I'm going to devour every book they have got here," he thought, and in lessons, whenever a question was asked, up went John's hand. "In the end, they got fed up, and were like, 'Put your hand up class, but not you Quinn.'" After nine months, John was summoned to the tutor's office and packed off to Cambridge Military Hospital to start student nurse training. He made sure the travel warrant included a bus pass this time.

On arrival, John was told dismissively by a major: "You won't pass." This was the wrong thing to say (or perhaps the right thing) as it made John more determined to pass the SN3 exam.

He qualified in 1975 at Millbank, London, where he was held in high regard by the Ward Sister and put him on the off duty as 'Corporal Quinn', even though he was a private. They also appointed him Night Superintendent, running the hospital after dark and able to give instruction to a sergeant. When a visiting general found out he was furious, and John was quickly promoted Local Acting (Unpaid) Lance Corporal. John applied for Commissioning.

Once commissioned in 1977, John posted to Rinteln, in Germany, planning his journey meticulously. However, he hadn't realised that he should have arrived the day before and not set off on the day the posting was to begin. This made for an inauspicious start with his new matron, but John quickly settled in and spent an enjoyable three years in Germany. His first Regimental Medical Officer (Assistant) (RMO(A)) tour of Northern Ireland was completed in 1979 with the Devon and Dorset Regt. John also completed the Unit Expedition Leaders course in Norway.

John was posted to the Cambridge Military Hospital in 1980 and completed the Intensive Care

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Course at Guy's Hospital. Posted to Woolwich in 1983 he ran the burns and plastics unit, which he thought himself unqualified to do, but his superiors dismissed his concerns saying, 'We just think you're a good manager.' In fact, the consultant did his best to hang on to John and would block any attempts to transfer/post him. John used this to his advantage by agreeing to stay on, as long as the Army consented to post him somewhere exotic next, like Hong Kong.

During his four years with at burns and plastics unit, John was summoned to see Matron, who looked "rather nervous". He explains, "It was a Friday afternoon, and I got this call to see Matron. She said there had been a problem and I would have to do another tour of Northern Ireland. This was Friday afternoon, and I would be expected to go on Sunday. I had to finish my shift and tell the burns and plastics unit, 'Okay, folks, I'm off now for four and a half months'."

The tour was with the King's Own Royal Border Regiment and John, a captain at the time, was the RMO(A). The male nurses were assigned this role (there wasn't enough doctors to supply all Regs with an RMO) which involved looking after the general health and wellbeing of the troops and joining the patrols to get to know the boys. In those days, female nurses did not perform these duties, although that changed some years later.

In 1987, John headed to Hong Kong with his wife, and he enjoyed two fascinating years tackling various conditions/tropical illnesses. He was promoted to Major while there, and when his time came to an end, John moved on to Hannover, where he became the in-service training officer and set about updating his job description that had not advanced since the Second World War. Every three months, John would work in Berlin and was able to visit East Berlin, then still behind the Iron Curtain.

In 1990, when Kuwait was invaded by Saddam Hussein, John was at joint headquarters in Rheindahlen involved in the planning and preparation of field hospitals.



Ops room in Belfast, performing role of secondary watchkeeper



Med Centre 1 Devon and Dorsets, stitching one of the boys



Belfast 1979 – RMO(A) 1 Devon and Dorsets

John expected to be dispatched to the Gulf but was instead grounded at the QA Training Centre in Aldershot, to his intense disappointment, although he did become the management instructor.

As men were admitted into the QARANC in 1991. "Lots of the male nurses complained of the 'pain and suffering' under some old QAs but for me, having grown up in seriously religious education, I was very much of the view of 'get on and deal with it,'" recalls John.

Spells at the Cambridge Military Hospital and Frimley Park Hospital followed and John was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and posted to Catterick as Matron.

The then Defence Secondary Care Agency, had wanted to close Catterick and to advance this agenda, they tasked John's unit with the almost impossible burden of providing nurse cover for six months in the Balkans. This left John's team at Catterick severely stretched, but he got a team together and worked out a plan of cover, keeping everything going.

"The DSCA were not happy," he remembers. The Defence Chief Nursing Officer was amazed they had managed to keep the place going. "I was on the off duty for the ITU, and if needed everybody would come into work. There were no days off in the Balkans, so our view was that we would not take days off either – should the situation arise. That's how we would do it"

Later as SO1 Nurse at Land Command, John travelled to the Balkans twice yearly to see how the medical units were performing, and he also went to Nepal to investigate problems of long-term sick Gurkhas. Actress Joanna Lumley got involved with the Gurkhas' plight and put rocket boosters under the issue, forcing Parliament to act.

“Don't take the job. All they'll do is make you open fairs, pat babies on the head, and blame you for everything.”



John was posted to the Army Medical Services' Career Management Division in Glasgow as an SO1, 'the first QA to do that job' and was told it would be a "career terminating post" because it was so difficult. "As always, if you want to sort a problem out, send a QA," says John with a chuckle. John was promoted to Colonel and posted to the Healthcare Directorate, MOD London.

Another big job came calling in 2005, when John was put in the frame to be Director Army Nursing Services (DANS), the forerunner of today's Chief Nursing Officer (Army) role. John's boss, a two-star general, advised him: "Don't take the job. All they'll do is make you open fairs, pat babies on the head, and blame you for everything."

John confirms, "I never opened a fair nor patted a baby's head, but it is true that I was blamed for everything. That goes with the territory." His ground-breaking appointment as the first male DANS did have difficult moments, these soon resolved. After five days in post, a new QA uniform was announced



Ladies Guest Night at BMH Hong Kong in 1988 in tropical mess dress

which removed the veil and Tippet. It had been decided by the Dress Committee, but rumours that John was responsible stuck.

At the QARANC Association Reunion Lunch in Cardiff in 2022, John was asked about it. "I told the lady, 'It wasn't me. I had only been in post five days,' but she wouldn't have it."

While in post, John was appointed Queen's Honorary Nurse (QHN). This brought regular invites to functions at the Palace, like investitures. "I would be there dressed up like a Christmas tree and would scan the people for any potential issues. If there was a very heavily pregnant woman in row six, we would sit her near the exit etc."

The QHN had a small army in the background, from doctors and ambulance crews, which John could contact/direct, but there were thankfully never any incidents.

"After functions you would get exactly three minutes with the Queen or Prince Charles. I think the Royal Family have got an internal clock, as they know they've given you three minutes. I will say that the Queen was a wonderful woman, sharp as a razor. She spoke very quietly, I can remember leaning forward and down just to make sure I did pick up exactly what she was saying.

"I once told Prince Charles, as he was, now the present King, that the rehabilitation centre he had visited, and thought was 'marvellous' wasn't big enough. I said, the way that warfare is fought today, we have specialist troops very far forward, and we will get more and more injured people coming back. They did put portacabins in the grounds at RAF Hedley Court, which might have been down to HRH expressing concerns."

Then, in 2008, Army life came to an end as John retired. He chose to do something completely different and anonymous by returning to Scotland to help a friend run their bed and breakfast business. After a spell there, John relocated to London and met with Sue Bush, Colonel Commandant of the QARANC at that time, who asked if he would become a Trustee of the Association. Sue was also performing as the Regimental Secretary, we didn't have one then due to a civil service moratorium.

John settled into understanding the role of a trustee and reflects that, "It was fast apparent that the CNO post (a secondary post) was too busy for

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1984 when John ran the Burns and Plastics unit QEMH

them to be managing the Board of Trustees and related Association work so I was asked to step in as a temporary chair." By the third year the post was made permanent.

After nine years in post, John stepped down in July and was succeeded by his friend and admired colleague Sue Bush. Reflecting on the decision, John notes: "At 72, one must expect a bit of slowing down and of course, the other great problem is if you are in a position for a long time, you are less disposed to accepting new things and you can become 'stale.' I think that's a reason why the Army moves people around.

"Sue has been Colonel Commandant and Regimental Secretary. This gives her an astonishing foundation going forwards. She has also been a trustee with Star and Garter Homes and other works, so she has a lot of valuable connections."

Asked what the future holds for John, he responds with typical dry wit: "A box in a crematorium probably." He would like to travel with his wife, and they will continue to enjoy their little dog. Is a return to QARANC circles on the cards?

"There's usually an unwritten rule, don't go back until you have been gone a year because you don't want to tread on other people's feet. No doubt I will turn up again like a bad old penny!"

Colonel (Rtd) Quinn was in conversation with Gazette Editor Steve Bax.



Major Quinn as Del Boy, Adventure Training in 1994



Training team visit to Jordan in 1998



'I'd rather stitch up patients than retire and do knitting'

Major (Rtd) Chris Hunter has received a Humanitarian Award from HM King Charles after putting her safety on the line to deliver life-saving care in Gaza and Ukraine.

"I know my family would prefer I just put my feet up and started knitting or something – but I'd far rather help stitch up patients who need our help in Gaza," says Chris Hunter.

A retired Major with 32 years' service in Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, Chris continues to put her considerable skills to good use by working as a theatre nurse at the Diana Princess of Wales Hospital in Grimsby, her local hospital, and has travelled to Gaza twice and to Ukraine to deliver frontline aid with UK-Med.

The plucky grandmother, who is in her 70s and has no intention of retiring yet, was awarded a Humanitarian Medal by HRH The King at Buckingham Palace on 18 February. It was a special moment and a well-earned recognition for all of Chris' efforts including putting her own safety on the line to help casualties of two of the world's deadliest current conflicts.

News of the award reached Chris by email. "It just said, congratulations on your award and I would be invited to the palace to receive it. I thought somebody was pulling my leg to start with. I took my granddaughter Alexis with me, she's 11. The King asked me what work I did. And I was saying to him that when we were in the hospital in Gaza, you could smell the patients before you could see them, because the infection rate was so bad, and because there were that many people, you could only do the dressings maybe every other day.

"I know my family would prefer I just put my feet up and started knitting or something – but I'd far rather help stitch up patients who need our help in Gaza"

"He just pulled a face and went, 'Oh, really!' It was interesting, talking for about five minutes, and then to my granddaughter. The King was really interested in what we were doing. Alexis had to write a story for her school. I think it was a bit overwhelming for her, but a lovely experience for both of us."

Chris joined the Territorial Army in 1982. She initially planned to join up in Plymouth where she learned midwifery, but a move North meant that 212 in Sheffield became the beneficiary of her services. Later she settled in Grimsby and joined 250 Field Ambulance.

This led to deployments to Bosnia and Kosovo and after that, two tours each of Iraq and Afghanistan. Chris has also been out to Cyprus and to Berlin (before the wall came down and after). In fact, she keeps a souvenir chunk of the Berlin Wall in a plastic bag at home.

While in Iraq and Afghanistan, Chris and other reserves we required to join the regular Army temporarily. In 2003-04 she joined the Army Cadets, providing medical cover and trained at Aldershot at the QA nurses training centre.

She is part of the Manchester based UK-Med, a civilian organization which delivers aid to the injured in conflict zones or to the victims of earthquakes, famine and other natural disasters. "I've been part of them for, maybe five or six years, and in January last year, they rang and asked if I would go to Gaza.

I obviously said, 'Yes,' and then things were set in motion, and I went out to Gaza from January to March 2024," explains Chris.

The field hospitals where she worked in Al Mawasi and Deir El Balah were established with Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) funding, and have treated more than 300,000 patients as part of the UK's humanitarian response to the Israel/Gaza crisis.

Chris and colleagues were put into Shuhada al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir El Balah province, doing theatre work and reviewing all the dressings from the cases that were being operated on, or injuries that were coming in. Casualties included a conveyor belt of blast injuries, amputations, traumatic amputations, abdominal injuries, head injuries, children that lost limbs.

"One little girl, 18 months-old, had a left hand blown off and couple of fingers on her right hand, and had got a fractured leg and head injuries. Her parents had been killed, and she was being raised by a sister who was only about 15-years-old." These were among the horrific cases Chris dealt with on her first tour.

She went to Gaza for a second time in April to June last year, expecting to be there for two or three weeks.

"You sort of went from day to day wondering what you were going to eat, and the local population had even less than we did"



Chris with Carine Horsbrough in Kosovo with a local lady

However, Egypt closed its border with Israel, and it became extremely difficult to get people or medicines in or out, and the tour ended up being about close to 10 weeks.

Chris recalls: "We set up the field hospital and worked the theatre under tentage. We were doing Midwifery, delivering babies through C sections, things like that. Nowhere was safe in Gaza, we couldn't go out for a walk, and we needed to remain in the area where we were staying. If we needed to go somewhere, we had to let the Israelis know the vehicle we were in, who was travelling, the route etc., it all had to be done officially. When we were in al-Aqsa Hospital a couple of the bombs went off close to us, so there was nowhere safe."

How much thought did Chris put into her personal safety? She laughs and admits: "none". The mission took priority over other considerations. Despite this, there were hairy moments, such as when some Palestinian families clashed outside the hospital and it resulted in the death of a young man. The hospital staff were threatened with being shot if they did not hand over CCTV footage showing who was responsible, and Chris and colleagues were moved to a United Nations building for their safety until the situation was resolved.

Despite this, Chris' impressions of the Palestinian people were positive (most were very friendly) and she was impressed by the knowledge of the local doctors, "they knew what they were doing," she says.

Chris is careful to avoid taking sides, condemning the abhorrent Hamas terrorist attack against Israel on 7 October 2023 alongside the carnage in Gaza currently. "The majority of people that are being injured are the children and the elderly," says Chris.

"I went down to the basement at Al Aqsa hospital, and I just saw families hiding down there trying to protect the children. The floor in the hospital was full of people trying to get help and be treated. It was just a nightmare for them, because there's nowhere safe. They tell people to go to the hospital, and then the hospitals are damaged by bombs.

"One day we ran out of water and saline to rinse the wounds out. I spoke to our engineer, and we managed to get some saline that had been pumped-up from a well, and then it went through a UV light and became sterile. We bottled it. You're having to think sideways all the time how you can improve the situation."

Chris lost two stones in weight due to the shortage of food and water. "You sort of went from day to day wondering what you were going to eat, and the local population had even less than we did. Yet they would still come and sit down and share their food. The people I worked with and came into contact with were so grateful for the help we gave them."

Chris, unsurprisingly, feels guilty at being able to return to the safety of the UK when her time in Gaza ended. Particularly as contacts in Gaza tell her that the situation there remains desperate. She plans to return again next year, to provide further medical assistance.

This year, from April to June, Chris served in Ukraine. She received a call from UK-Med requesting she help at a hospital in the city of Zaporizhia, about 20kms from the front line of the war with Russia. The patients

were mainly local civilians who had been in the apartments that had been bombed, but also frontline soldiers. Many of the latter required amputations of arms and legs because tourniquets were being put on in the wrong position, and the soldiers were not reaching the hospital until hours or days had passed. "By the time they got to us, the limbs weren't viable," says Chris with sadness.

Basic training in the right places could make a big difference. Chris tried to get to the bottom of who was teaching them. It appeared they were following the American practice (from Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts) of pre-emptively applying a tourniquet to limbs, in case they got blown up. Some tourniquets were applied in the wrong places with disastrous results. Chris recalls: "One soldier in his 20s had to have both arms amputated. There are going to be a lot of people with psychological problems and trying to adapt to use prostheses and things."

There were lots of shrapnel wounds to be treated, but different to Gaza as there were fewer child casualties. Chris visited Dnipro and found the city "beautiful and clean with no litter" adding that, "You wouldn't realise there was a war going on because the shops were open and the shelves were full, people were still going out to restaurants – the only time you realised something was happening was in the hospital theatres and at night when the alarms went off".

Life is continuing as normal in parts of Ukraine, much like in Britain during the Second World War, reflects Chris, adding that it was in stark comparison to her experiences in Gaza.

"I'd only been back a couple of weeks, and UK med had emailed me and said, 'Would I go back?' but I need time to decompress and get my head screwed around the right way. I went to work in NHS instead! I'll probably be going back to Gaza, maybe not this year, but next year."

Chris has a busy life in Grimsby. As well as family and work commitments, she also belongs to the St John Ambulance and recently received her 50 Year Service Medal. She left active service with the Army in 2015 and has continued to be involved with the QA Association.

She has never retired from nursing and is still working with intentions to continue for as long as she is fit and healthy. "I'm not sure what retirement is actually," she laughs. "I've been a theatre sister and a theatre nurse for a lot of that time. I've done Midwifery, and when we were in Iraq, I was on the infection prevention ward, the isolation ward, because I'd done tropical nursing. I'm a standard bearer for the Royal Army Medical Corps (as was), so I have had the opportunity to the National Arboretum in Staffordshire and carry the standard."

"I know I am elderly and aged, but I just feel as though I've got so much to offer. I have a lot of experience and skills which are best used supporting people who really need our help around the world."

*Chris Hunter was speaking to
Gazette editor Steve Bax*

The medal design presents laurel wreaths symbolising victory in overcoming a crisis, interwoven with a banner proclaiming "For humanitarian service". The obverse of the medal will bear the effigy of the Sovereign. The ribbon design reflects the different paths for humanitarian service and the variety of services involved in such responses. The ribbon has a central stripe of white to represent civilians and peace, with four narrow stripes on either side of red, light blue, dark blue and purple. Red represents humanitarian organisations and light blue the NHS. Dark blue and purple represent the other services.

With great pleasure we record that our Chairperson Chris Hunter was awarded this medal by the King and Queen 18th February 2025



Chris helping in Ukraine



A soldier's perspective

WO1 Deborah 'Debs' Hamilton marked 21 years in the Army in August and was the last QARANC Representative Sergeant Major. Here she speaks to Gazette editor Steve Bax about some of her career highlights and balancing work and family life.

Born in Edinburgh, into a military family (her father was in the RAF and grandparents served in the war) she did her nurse training in civvy street but always intended to join up as soon as possible.

"I always wanted to do something different, and as corny as it sounds, I wanted a job with a purpose," explains Debs. She always wanted to be in military but was initially unsure of what form that would take. "I did a law degree first, but it wasn't as front focused as I thought. I'd always looked after people and children so I started to think that nursing would be a good fit."

Debs' legal training wasn't wasted though – the discipline she had learned came in useful and the legal side studies would occasionally crop up in the field of nursing.

Her first posting in 2004 was to Frimley Park, now Joint Hospital Group South-East (JHG (SE)) and in no time at all she was knocking on Matron's door and putting herself forward to be deployed. So it was that after just six months, Debs was sent to Iraq on Op TELIC 6 and she embraced the opportunity fully. As well as working in a ward she managed to get out with the infantry and visit some of the stations.

She was also part of Op TOSCA in Cyprus for six months and volunteered for as many opportunities as possible, and she credits the reason she got them as either "perseverance or annoyance" (of her seniors). This included going on exercise with SCOTS to Belize doing jungle training, and Debs provided medical cover – "an amazing experience".

At 3 Medical Regiment in Morley in 2005, Debs took part in the rifle training course, and this cemented her ambition to become a Phase 1 Instructor. At Pirbright she quickly settled into her new role and enjoyed seeing the progress the trainees made during their basic training. "The feeling on pass-off day was just phenomenal marching onto the parade square with your Troop and seeing all the proud families was very emotional. Winning best section was always a bonus," she says.



"I always wanted to do something different, and as corny as it sounds, I wanted a job with a purpose"

After two years, in which reserve courses were also launched, Debs was posted to 1 Scots in the Regimental Aid Post, who were preparing to participate in Op HERRICK, the big push in Afghanistan. They trained in Kenya and Debs recalls it being a "really busy exercise" with plenty of heat casualties and learning. The conditions were challenging for helicopters to get in and evacuate patients, so the medical team had to adapt to prolonged field care.

There were lighter moments: "Being on patrol and giraffes just walking past was so surreal. One of the lads even got dragged from his sleeping bag in the night by a hyena!" chuckles Debs.

She deployed to Afghanistan on Op HERRICK 17 with the COs TAC group. Her abiding impression was of the kindness of the Afghan people and sadness at what was happening to their country. Debs was awarded a GOC commendation and has fond memories of the homecoming parade along the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, seeing her family in the crowd and Princess Anne presenting the medals at Holyrood. It was a mixed emotional day remembering those who hadn't come home to their families.

Debs met her other half Dean in the Scots. He is also from Edinburgh, and they have two children. Daughter Brodie was just a year old when Debs was



promoted to SSgt and posted to 1 Medical Regiment in Germany. Ramsay was born in Paderborn in 1977 and has pride in telling everyone he was born in Germany.

As a young mum Debs took on a Bulldog commander course (tanks) and was sent on exercise to Canada. Luckily her parents flew over to look after Brodie. With dual serving parents, childcare can present an added challenge with deployments, but Debs feels the Army strives to strike the right balance between career and family.

"My children are now 10 and eight and I think it is difficult as they get older especially as a dual serving couple. Dean, my partner is currently with 1 RANGER and is home every two to three weekends. When I am away on visits or meetings, I need to write a full itinerary for the fridge before I go anywhere, and I am sure this is relatable to so many others! The children have mixed emotions where they miss their dad, and he misses so much like school sports and football matches.

"It is difficult where you try to be everything for your children but want to give your all to your career. I think we put pressure on ourselves to be the best we can be in everything we do but we all need to make sure we look after our own wellbeing."

She adds: "My daughter says she is lucky to have both parents serving and that makes her special. My daughter read a poem at last year's Remembrance service and my little boy spoke about Remembrance and the significance of it at Beavers. They are both proud to be part of a military family."

During her time at 1 Medical Regiment, Debs was troop SSgt and was able to complete my PHC specialist training by doing some clinical time in the Medical Centre.

Debs was assigned to Redford Medical Centre and able to focus on her clinical skills again and she made some strong friendships. Moving every few years is exciting but the downside is it can be tough when strong bonds are formed. Whilst at 1 Medical Regiment, Debs was trawled to go to Jordan to teach medics - "Jordanians are some of the most welcoming people I have ever met," she says. "The country is stunning with so much history. The opportunity to float in the Dead Sea and visit Petra were unforgettable."

Debs was posted to DMS Whittington as the Specialist Nurse Training Coordinator where she is still currently assigned. In this role she has worked with Nurse Education Advisor's (NEAs) from all three services whilst carrying out specialist training. At the



"We truly have inspirational people within the Corps who display the values and standards with the highest regard"



time of publication, she is due to take over the role of RSM Defence School Health Education.

"I was so honoured and humbled to be appointed as QARANC Representative Sergeant Major taking over from WO1 Caz Olive who was a great ambassador for the Corps. Within my time I have been so proud of the nurses and HCAs either regular, reserve or veterans I have had the pleasure to meet. We truly have inspirational people within the Corps who display the values and standards with the highest regard."

AT opportunities have included diving in Kenya, skiing in Colorado and Austria, and a diverse career. Meeting Queen Camilla at the Field of Remembrance, attending the Florence Nightingale service at Westminster Abbey and Founders Day at the Royal Hospital Chelsea are also highlights - lunching with Barbara Whilds our QA pensioner and hearing her interesting stories.

The Coronation was another moment of great pride (for Debs and the nation). The QARANC marching contingent were "exceptional" and the pride for the Corps, Army and the country was so evident. "It was just the most surreal experience, marching down the Mall and giving three cheers to the King in Buckingham Palace Gardens were feelings of pride I will never forget. Nailing the 12-6s drill move too cannot go unmentioned."

She concludes: "I am forever grateful to have been the last QARANC Rep Sergeant Major and the first RAMS Senior Soldier Nursing. I wish WO1 Meghann Bradbury the best of luck as she takes over the role. I know she will be a fantastic role model and advocate for the RAMS nurses and HCAs."

Debs will be continuing with the QARANC Association as a member of the Board of Trustees.



'Women in War' silhouettes unveiled at Bomber Command Centre

Women in war have been memorialised with silhouettes, commissioned from Standing with Giants, installed at the International Bomber Command Centre (IBBC) in Lincolnshire. Jane Davis reports.

By 1943 in the UK, 90 per cent of single women of working age, and 80 per cent of married women, were working in the armed forces, industry and other wartime organisations. Long-held notions of the limited capabilities of women became untenable in the light of their vast and varied contributions. Yet their courage, achievements and commitment are still insufficiently recognised.

The 10 women memorialised in the IBBC silhouettes were chosen to illustrate the range of qualities and capabilities displayed by women in World War II. Their stories – bold, brave, committed and sometimes tragic – are told, together with the histories of the many new and different organisations with which they and other wartime women were involved.

They include Sister Mollie Evershed and Sister Dorothy Field (known by her middle name, Anyta) who died saving wounded servicemen on the hospital ship SS Amsterdam in August 1944. Mollie became a nurse in 1937 and joined the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) in wartime. Anyta trained as a nurse at Kings College Hospital, London and was acting as Matron on the Amsterdam, a converted North Sea ferry positioned off Juno Beach to receive servicemen wounded in the battle when it hit a mine.

Thirty of the crew died that day, along with 55 patients, 11 prisoners of war, and 10 medical staff, including Mollie and Anyta. Instead of making for safety, the two nurses returned from their lifeboat to help save wounded servicemen trapped on the ship. Both died when it sank, but they had helped to save 75 patients.

Both were posthumously awarded the King's Commendation for Brave Conduct and are the only two women whose names are recorded on the British Normandy War Memorial.

Madeleine Damerment, also among the silhouettes, exemplifies the suicidal bravery of women agents returning to occupied France and often ending up in Nazi death camps. A member of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), Madeleine was executed in Dachau concentration camp.

Scientific breakthroughs achieved by women physicists, for so long deemed by academia to lack the intellectual capacity of men, are represented by Joan Curran – Inventor of 'WINDOW' – the use of chaff to confuse enemy radar.



Instead of making for safety, the two nurses returned from their lifeboat to help save wounded servicemen trapped on the ship



Dorothy Robson, who joined the Royal Aircraft Establishment, was responsible for developing tools used in precision targeting, reducing collateral damage and her nickname was "Bombsight Bertha". She died aged 23, trapped in the nose of a Halifax bomber which crashed on a short mission to check its bombsight.

Lettice Curtis was the first to fly and deliver to operations a Lancaster bomber. Her story illustrates the physical endurance of women aviators, piloting the full range of heavy and difficult aircraft into operational positions, taking the same responsibility as men.

Margaret Hourigan – Sergeant in WAAF, was among those who spent long nights plotting and recording aircraft movements, analysing radio intercepts and reconnaissance photographs and debriefing crews, and was mentioned in Dispatches.

Muriel Blake carried out the critical but difficult task of packing the huge life-saving silk parachutes into aircraft. And Renee Woods was a canteen worker killed aged 23 at RAF Waddington in May 1941 when the Navy Army and Air Force Institutes (NAFFI) was destroyed by the Luftwaffe.

The organisational skills behind the Women's Voluntary Service, as well as women's gradual ascent of the military ladder that would bring them to command are exemplified by Stella Charnaud – philanthropist and founder of WRVS. As Baroness Swanborough, she became the first female life peer to take her seat in the House of Lords in 1958.

Each of the silhouettes was unveiled by a "Modern Giant" and I was honoured to be asked to unveil Molly and Anyta's silhouettes, alongside twelve other women with similar qualities and capabilities to those being memorialised.

During the celebrations there was also the first ever all female crewed fly past consisting of an A400M Atlas a Perfect T1 and a Eurofighter Typhoon.



Three times QA nurses hit the headlines!

Olivia Barnes shares a selection of the member testimonies she has gathered as part of the QARANC Association Oral Histories project, this time focusing on those who appeared in the printed press.

The QARANC Association Oral history project has now recorded the memories of over 50 volunteers. The time spent in the Corps ranged from 22 months to over 30 years, but common to all volunteers is a sense of pride to be called a QA and the friendships they made that have lasted many years after leaving active service.

We hope to give a flavour of these recordings by highlighting members who had press photos taken to be used either in advertisements or promotions.

Margaret Ann Harris ARRC (nee Jones), known as Maggie, served from 1973-1983. This photo of her from 1980, was taken in Aldershot beside a helicopter, and used for an Army calendar.

Maggie includes among her highpoints, being part of the Royal British Legion remembrance service in the Royal Albert Hall and the Florence Nightingale service in Westminster Abbey. She also remembers winning a £10 book token as the QA Officer Award for the highest marks in her class 1 exams.

SSgt Harris was the first non-commissioned officer (NCO) to be awarded ARRC in 1980, she found out in a very unusual way when someone on the ward asked her if she had seen the newspaper.

Maggie recalls: "I was flicking through the paper, and I saw Army QARANC, I saw RRC and ARRC, and then 'Acting Sergeant Staff Sergeant M A Harris ARRC'. So I am looking at this thinking, there must be two of us! I had no idea; nobody had mentioned a thing to me. I thought my claim to fame was going to

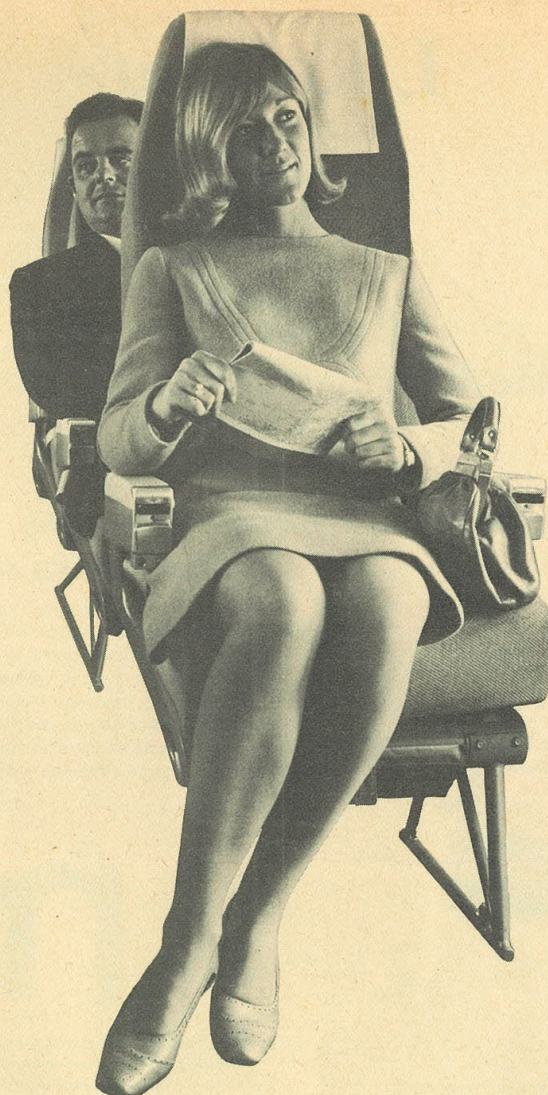


be walking across the Albert Hall so I got the paper, and I took it to the chap behind the bar and I said can you read this and tell me what you think. He read it and said, 'I think that's you love!' I phoned the ward back up and spoke to the Captain and Commanding Officer and he said the commanding officer wants to see you at 2 o'clock in his office.

"I said, 'OK, obviously it's about this New Years Honours' and he said, 'well you will just have to wait and see! He had got the ARRC as well at the same time as me, so I went to see the CO and he just said, 'I have got a letter for you,

"I thought my claim to fame was going to be walking across the Albert Hall"





MEET THE GIRL WHO RAN AWAY TO SCHOOL

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and so cover every branch of nursing, including midwifery and pediatrics. Second, there's the happy fact that many of these hospitals are situated in exciting places like Hong Kong, Cyprus and Germany. And third, there's the starting pay of £5.3.3 per week rising on promotion to £11.12.9 with all found. When you qualify as a S.R.N.

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To: Matron-in-Chief, Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps., Department M P 6 (A), Lansdowne House, Berkeley Square, London, W.1.

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Address

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Applicants must be aged 17 years 10 months-33 years.

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Name: _____

Address: _____

Occupation: _____

I am a RSCN, I qualified in (year): _____

Applications must be received on 12th and April 11-18

QA'S QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S ROYAL ARMY NURSING CORPS



Nursing Mirror, 26 July 1968

many congratulations' and handed me this letter. It said that Her Majesty, The Queen had given me the Royal Red Cross second class and that was it."

Winifred Jean Field (nee Jeffers), known as Philippa, was photographed posing in an aeroplane at Brize Norton during her service years of 1964-1968. This glamorous snap appeared in the Nursing Mirror weekly magazine dated 19 April 1968, under the headline 'Meet the girl who ran away to school! The text promoting the QARANC as an exciting career where you could be 'flying to the Far East to study for your State Registered Nurse's certificate.'

Philippa had been put on a charge and demoted from LCpl to Pte for copying an officer's signature on a late pass whilst in Singapore. So, she was amazed to bounce back from this and become the face of the QAs.

Reflecting on the article, Philippa muses: "I suppose they were thinking of the education the courses that you get. I mean look at the end of the day what a wonderful life. Everything was there the training the accommodation you know I'm 76 now so I appreciate these things. Maybe at that time I didn't."

After leaving school, Philippa was working for the Air Ministry at St James Palace and bored of filling out forms and logs. On passing an Army Careers Office in her lunch break she decided to join the QAs and train as a nurse, her mother had also been a nurse. She remembers how wonderful it was to be young carefree, working in an amazing country and a privilege to be in the QARANC:

"It was a wonderful time, and it was a wonderful time to be alive in the mid-sixties it certainly was you had wonderful, wonderful accommodation I mean St Georges Square and Cadogan Gardens hello you can't really get better than that can you and be posted to BMH Singapore"

Philippa was a member of the Army swimming

“How very lucky I was to decide to join the Army. I mean that... how to fit in with people and to enjoy life. I have liked every job I did

team and enjoyed every minute of her time as a QA. She served at the Cambridge, Singapore and Millbank and now lives in New Zealand, married to Peter. She worked for Air New Zealand as an air hostess and then in their medical unit.

Rosaline Trinkwon RRC (nee Sprat, formerly Timms) served from 1964 to 1992. Known as Roz, she served in many places including, Colchester, Rinteln, Iserlohn, Hong Kong, Cyprus, Catterick, Headquarters United Kingdom Land Forces (HQUKLF), Woolwich and Shrewsbury.

Roz originally signed on for a three-year short service commission but ended up serving 28 years, rising from Lieutenant to Colonel and retiring as Director of Studies.

She posed for a photo while in Cyprus and had no idea where it would be published or how it would be used. A visitor from USA to a medical meeting in England saw the photo in the Nursing Mirror, 26 July 1967 edition, and was taken with Roz.

He wrote to QA headquarters asking to be put in touch with the officer as he would love to meet her. Roz was summoned to the Matrons office at BMH Rinteln with no idea why and was surprised to receive his letter. They exchanged letters and phone calls and decided to meet. At this first meeting he proposed to her saying he fell in love with her on seeing this photo, however Roz was not quite ready for marriage.

Her other photo, also taken in Cyprus shows Roz and a pupil nurse who Roz would love to reconnect with. She would love to find out is any of our readers recognise her or have any information about what became of her. She last made contact in Hong Kong when she had completed her conversion course and had become a midwife.

Roz concludes by saying: "How very lucky I was to decide to join the Army. I mean that... how to fit in with people and to enjoy life. I have liked every job I did."



One application turned into the journey of a lifetime for Cpl Emma Gibb, who was part of the first all-female military crew to row across the Atlantic Ocean, alongside Imy, Sheri, and Becca, in what's known as...

The World's toughest row!



When I first applied, I never imagined I would be chosen as part of the crew. But on 11 December 2024, I sat in trepidation on our 8.5-metre ocean rowing boat Rosie, next to Sheri and Becca, with lmy at the stern. We waved to the cheering crowds and our loved ones as we departed La Gomera for Antigua – 3,000 miles away.

We are Team Force Atlantic: nine women from both the Regular Army and Reserves. Four of us formed the rowing crew; five made up our indispensable support team. Our goal? To become the first all-female Army team to row an ocean and to promote our team values- promote, inspire and belong.

The World's Toughest Row is a 3,000-mile unsupported crossing from La Gomera to Antigua. We lived aboard Rosie, who was just 8.5 metres long and 1.5 metres wide. We rowed in two-hour shifts: two rowing while the other two rested. But that rest period included everything from eating and self-care to maintenance. On average, we got just 4–5 hours of sleep per day.

In preparation, we underwent a rigorous training programme: strength and conditioning, physiological testing, extensive rowing ergometer sessions, and nutritional and psychological coaching. 2024 was pivotal—our focus turned to water-based training, building the skills essential for survival and success on the open ocean.

Until April last year, I was a reserve rower—training with the crew but knowing I likely wouldn't set off with them. Then came a call from Kate, our fourth crew member and my friend. She told me she was stepping away to pursue her lifelong dream of becoming an instructor at RMAS. I was immensely proud of her—but suddenly, my reality changed. I had to shift my mindset from waving the team off, to being on the boat, waving goodbye to my loved ones.

During the crossing, our team faced relentless



storms, towering waves, broken oars, and even a close encounter with a shark. We battled salt sores, seasickness, exhaustion, weight loss, and hallucinations. Throughout the journey, we confronted not only the unpredictable weather but also personal and team challenges. It was never going to be easy, but facing these obstacles and striving to overcome them showed us that we could succeed — even in our lowest moments.

Yet, amidst these hardships, we were rewarded with breathtaking sunrises and sunsets, the shimmering





Milky Way above, playful pods of dolphins, a joyous disco to ring in the New Year, and my most memorable moment — reading letters from home on Christmas Day.

Above all, we were deeply touched by the outpouring of support and love from people back home. Their encouragement was overwhelming, humbling, and a constant source of motivation. Our daily routine of sharing short messages from friends, family, and even strangers reminded us why we were doing this — to show others what is possible.

Fast forward to just 24 hours before we reached Antigua, I noticed a white glow in the dark distance. The realization dawned on me that our journey was coming to an end. A wave of excitement and sadness hit me — excitement to see everyone waiting for us in English Harbour, but sadness knowing there would be no more Atlantic sunrises or sunsets, no more life aboard Rosie, who, in just 46 days, had become home.

Even now, four months after stepping ashore, writing this brings back that bittersweet feeling — sadness that it's over, but also happiness for being part of something bigger than myself, and pride in the incredible achievement we made, and the lives our

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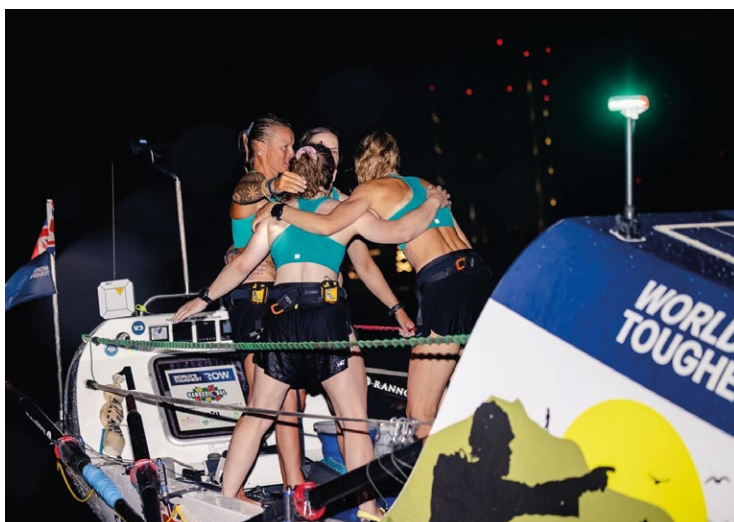
campaign touched.

This journey tested every part of us — physically, emotionally, and psychologically. It was a profound experience unlike anything I've ever known. There is so much I've learned from this adventure, but the most important lesson is this: never give up.

Our vision was to create a legacy, promote women in adventure, and inspire others to believe in what's possible. We supported The Girls' Network, a charity close to our hearts that empowers young girls to achieve their ambitions.

What united us was our shared purpose—but each of us had our own motivations. For me, it wasn't about personal glory. It was about being part of a group of like-minded women, each passionate in her own way, but united by a mission to showcase what women can accomplish together. As the journey progressed, my perspective deepened. I came to see this challenge not just to highlight women's achievements, but as a demonstration of the potential of Junior Non-Commissioned Officers. Despite holding one of the lowest ranks in the Army, I am proof that rank doesn't limit capability. We strive to excel—regardless of title.

Most importantly, I wanted to show that you don't have to be the best or the elite to take on something





this monumental. We are proof that with shared purpose, relentless support, and a refusal to quit—anything is possible. This wasn't about individual greatness. It was about collective achievement. And together, we've shown the boundless potential of people united by purpose.

On January 26, 2025, in Antigua, we accomplished our challenge —and more—becoming the first all-female military team to row across any ocean. We were not alone on this epic adventure- joining us on

the Atlantic were the phenomenal all-female Navy team. Eight women, two services, one mission: to push boundaries and inspire others.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in our campaign- from our sponsors, colleagues and to our friends and families, and every single person who cheered us on. Your support has been nothing short of incredible.

Cpl Emma Gibb





JHG(N) fitness is tested in gruelling Hyrox challenge

Members of the Joint Hospital Group North JHG(N) tested their limits by taking part in a running and exercise race.

In an era where fitness is increasingly integrated into our everyday, whether it is in military or personal life, I had the opportunity to organise a fitness event for JHG(N). The event was based on 'Hyrox'; the fitness race that combines running and functional movement exercise in a high intensity format.

It also offered an opportunity to enhance team spirit, promote wellness, and push participants to great physical feats. For me personally, bringing the event to the unit provided a chance to improve my leadership and management skills in my secondary role as a Physical Training Instructor (PTI).

The original format of 'Hyrox' was adapted to allow individuals to begin in a staggered start format and compete for the fastest time. There was also a Commanding Officer's Cup element where departments could compete against each other.

This combination of running and functional exercise ensured a complete workout, demanding both cardiovascular endurance and full-body strength of the participant. We also managed to raise £240 for the QARANC Association.

The fastest times were achieved by Sgt Helen Brittain (ODP) in 42:37 minutes and Pte Kian Bremner (HCA) in 51:54 minutes respectively. In the CO's cup, the theatre department of the unit took first place and Ward 1 (acute medicine) took second.

With careful planning, reliable resources, and a

The original format of 'Hyrox' was adapted to allow individuals to begin in a staggered start format and compete for the fastest time

supportive atmosphere by the Chain of Command and specifically my event 2IC - Sgt Lorna MacDonald (RN) - I have been able to create lasting memories and strengthen the bonds within the unit.

Hybrid type races will further provide an exciting opportunity to set new standards in unit-based fitness events and pave the way for future competitions and wellness initiatives amongst unit personnel.

LCpl Prabin Tamang (HCA)

The event was made up of:

- 560m Run
- 800m Ski erg
- 560m Run
- 50 Hand release press-ups
- 560m Run
- 50 Sit ups
- 560m Run
- 50m Burpee Board Jumps
- 560m Run
- 800m Row erg
- 560m Run
- 560 Farmer Carry (16kg)
- 560m Run
- 50 Wall Balls (6kg)

Professional development and a great escape!

With the formation of the Royal Army Medical Service (RAMS), Standing Joint and Regional Command Medical Branch decided it was a good time for a cohesion day.

Although you can't change the past or predict the future it is imperative that we know these times very much influence our present. So, with that thought in mind, our day started with some continuous professional development.

We had an excellent presentation for Wng Cdr Peter Gaal on how his role coordinates the medical elements of a Service Inquiry (SI). This role covers from SI initiation right through to recommendations. We then had a fruitful discussion on three published Service Inquiries having a full range of personnel from our branch that ranged from Admin Officer to Competent Medical Authority. This element of the day was noted to be "so highly recommended if you have not done this before" and "probably the best and most useful CPD I have done in my career".

We found that in our busy work life (which will continue for some time to come) it is imperative that the fundamentals must be done right to maintain safe people and systems. As medical personnel we are a key part of that, whether to be directly or indirectly.

The team then proceeded to Guildford for an Escape Room. Although these have been around for quite some time, we still had members who were new to this. This did prove a point to note as only one team got out! Alice in Wonderland Safe Systems clearly not a standing order for all.

We may Be the Best in many areas but clearly not so much in classic children's novels.



Nijmegen march felt like a celebration of human resilience

This year JHG (SE) took part in the 107th Nijmegen four-day marches, made even more special by it being the 80 years anniversary of the end of World War Two.

The legendary Nijmegen March celebrates 80 years of freedom in the Netherlands and is characterised by its multinational military participation in endurance road marching, covering over 100 miles.

Teams from some 36 nations took part, and Joint Hospital Group South-East (JHG (SE)) contributed a team of 15 serving personnel, a mix of pharmacists, nurses, perioperative practitioners and healthcare assistants.

After the opening ceremony at Camp Heumensoord, the team prepared for what was to be four days of gruelling road marching, through a beautiful city and surrounding towns in an electric atmosphere of festivity and excitement.

The first day of the marches started at 0545 for the JHG (SE) team. We were full of nervous excitement for what the days ahead would entail. Day one covered 45 km and is known as Blue Tuesday, traversing through towns of Lent, Bommel, Elst, Valburg and Oosterhout. The streets were filled with blue bunting and balloons. Highlights of the day included walking across Waal bridge overlooking the river Waal. This famous crossing marked the US 82nd Airborne Division's advance during Operation Market Garden in 1944 – the largest allied air assault operation in history.

The atmosphere throughout was incredible, with passing cars sounding their horns to cheer on the marchers, and a very well-dressed 'disco boy' – a spectator who supplied us with lively music and dancing to keep us going! What a sight he made. Another memorable moment during the first day was passing through the town of Brieneshof. Here we were cheered on by what seemed to be the entire population of Nijmegen, dancing on the street and supplying the marchers with fruit, sweets and cakes



Spirits were very high, despite a few hours of torrential rain



non-stop all day, and loud DJs playing amazing music to get us through the pain in our legs. This really helped the team's motivation as we neared the end of the day, finishing with the civilian marchers in the city centre then completing a final 5km solitary march to Camp Heumensoord to rest.

The second day is referred to as the Pink Day. The team marched through many different and vibrant towns including Weurt, Beuningen, Wijchen and Alverna. Marchers and spectators wore pink to honour members of the LGBTQ+ community who historically were not permitted to participate. Now, this day is one of the biggest and well-known LGBTQ+ events in the Netherlands and symbolises a culture of togetherness. The team passed through towns decorated with pink flags, balloons and flowers. JHG (SE) grouped together and carried some pink trinkets of our own in support – which the local spectators enjoyed. Spirits were very high, despite a few hours of torrential rain upon departure and into the morning march.

The 'Magic Mile' was the highlight of the day – and certainly lived up to its name. A stretch of town with locals lining the sides of the road cheering loudly, children and veterans saluting us with beaming smiles as the military teams marched through. It was an emotional and prideful moment seeing military veterans now care home residents showing their support amongst the endless crowds. All exhaustion evaporated and gave us the strength we needed to complete the second day's march back to Camp Heumensoord.

Day three was a day of approximately 38 km marching through rural areas: past lakes, woods, farmland and seven Hills. The day of Groesbeek – symbolic for the landing of 8,000 paratroopers during





Op Market Garden, and the site of the Canadian War Cemetery. The team started in high spirits knowing the halfway point was surpassed. The sun was shining bright after the previous day's showers. As per usual, the streets were lined with supporters with high fives and snacks at the ready! Temperatures rose throughout the afternoon, necessitating more frequent shaded water stops and the refreshing dunking of jungle hats in buckets of cold water. The march passed through Mook, Malden and Groesbeek, populous areas chanting "the British" and "the girls". The song of the festival was now well known; 'Baila la gasolina' playing on repeat with a chorus of spectators singing along, proved impossible not to join in! After a long 13 hours of marching the team once again made it back to Camp Heumensoord.

The fourth and final day of the marches is the longest and most unforgettable experiences of our lives. After an exceptionally early start, we taped our feet, laced up, and prepared mentally for the final time. To our surprise and joy, locals were awake just as early, cheering us on even before sunrise.

Day of Cuijk, memorable for its pontoon bridge crossing of the River Meuse, was alive with music, applause, and cheering crowds. LCpl Thapa states



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“marching through that town felt like stepping into a celebration of human resilience”. That it was! The finish line came in a blur of cheers, medals, and emotion. JHG (SE) was the first British Unit to cross the finish at Charlemagne. But the final act—800 British soldiers marching together through the town centre—was the perfect closure: five kilometres of applause, unity, and pride.

For the team, this was more than four-day marches. It was a joyful triumph of team and individual resilience – shared by every aching step, every cheer, and smile along the way.

Captain Liam Yeo



'I wanted to be a chemistry teacher but found my true calling as a QA nurse!'

Karen Irvine, who chairs the Scottish Branch of the QA Association, speaks to The Gazette about her life and career, and successfully rebuilding her branch...

"Having a morning at home is a novelty," admits Karen, when we meet up on Zoom. She has been caring for her mum, with many trips to the hospital of late. The pair are very close and once went on an extended European road-trip to celebrate the conclusion of Karen's two year posting in Cyprus, but more on that later.

Karen was born in Glasgow in 1961, and did her student nurse training from 1979 at the North Eastern College of Nursing and Midwifery, at Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow. Karen's mum, Irene, had been a secretary and her dad, George, was a buyer for a big grocery company. "There was absolutely no Army connection in my family at all, apart from my paternal grandfather who did national service," Karen says.

Growing up she had wanted to be a chemistry teacher, finding the subject "fascinating" and benefitting from a good teacher who made the subject interesting. However, Karen reveals, "my downfall was maths, I was never very good at maths and to get into university to do chemistry, you needed to get a good maths pass."

A rethink was needed and nursing started to suggest itself as a job that would be interesting, involve working with people and provide some structure. After training, she worked as a staff nurse at Stobhill for 18 months in a surgical and vascular unit. "Having vowed I would never darken the doors of a maternity unit again, I found myself applying to do midwifery training," she laughs, explaining that at that time a second qualification was required to climb the career ladder.

On completion of that course, Karen returned to Stobhill Hospital and worked in the recovery area. She recalls it was a busy department serving eight operating theatres. There was not much opportunity for speaking to the patients though. "You brought them in, they came out of theatre, they recovered, and you would take them back to the ward. It was just a snapshot of the patient experience," says Karen.

When they advertised for a Ward Sister, Karen decided to apply and see what happens. To her surprise she got the job, and in late 1985, she became the Ward Sister for a 56-bed general surgical & vascular unit, aged just 24.

Karen had a great role model in Annie Woods, the Senior Sister. From Southern Ireland, she had a reputation for being hard task master and a good teacher – as well as being popular with the patients. "Nurses were a bit in awe of Annie," recalls Karen. "She knew absolutely everything that was going on in that ward,



Having vowed I would never darken the doors of a maternity unit again, I found myself applying to do midwifery training



and I decided to try to follow her lead. I would make sure I knew the details of everything on my watch to do with the patients, so that if anybody spoke to me, I could respond with knowledge."

Karen held the role for four years but as the 1980s drew to a close, she started getting itchy feet and looking for another challenge. One of the girls who Karen had met during midwifery training had joined the Army as a midwife. Karen visited her and started thinking about the Army as an interesting possibility.

She stopped by the Army careers office in Glasgow's Queen Street and registered her interest. Then went on holiday for a fortnight and thought little more about it. She came home to a letter inviting her to present for an interview with what was back then called the Women's Service Liaison Officer,

Karen passed the interview and was sent to Aldershot for three days to undertake a pre-selection course and attend a second interview at Empress State Building in London. Despite feeling like a "fish out of water" in a new environment



and far from Glasgow, she made some new friends and was reassured by them.

Shortly after new year, in 1990, Karen received a letter to say she had been successful and was to report to the QARANC Training Centre in Aldershot for the student officer course. She turned 29 on the course, had no ties and was looking forward to seeing the world. Karen intended to join for three years, little realising she would stay in the Army for close to three decades. However, something about it had "ticked the boxes" for Karen.

She also made lifelong friends on the course who she would bump into in the following years, and despite the passage of time, they would pick up where they left off. Karen recalls: "I remember at the Royal Pavilion when the postings were being handed out, I said to Ross McCullough on my course, 'I'll be fine, as long as they don't send me to orthopaedics,' and of course my first posting was to the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital in Woolwich on the orthopaedic wards! On the first day, I remember standing in the Ward Manager's office thinking they were all talking a foreign language with different terminology and weird Army ranks, like Lance Corporal of the Horse!"

Looking back, Karen thinks the Army had been keen to fill a gap in her CV and take her out of her comfort zone. It turned out to be a great experience, despite Karen "almost hyperventilating" when trying to navigate her way around the M25 and London traffic with just a map in the days before Satnav.

Another new experience was the "split shift or 2-5", which started at 07.30 until 13.00, returning to finish the shift at 16.45 until 20.00. Those extended lunch breaks proved quite useful for running errands and catching up on personal admin, no online banking in those days! She started at QEMH in June 1990 and by September she learned she would be deployed to the first Gulf War – a big surprise.

"I never thought for a moment I would be deployed – we had not seen any active operations, outside of Northern Ireland, since the Second World War. My mum was distraught because she'd encouraged me to join the Army and now her only child was due to deploy to a war zone," says Karen.

Her pre-deployment training didn't get off to the best start. While on the bus to Saighton Camp, Karen realised to her horror, not to mention embarrassment, that she couldn't find her ID card. She cursed her stupidity, but she managed to sort it out on arrival. Later, back at Woolwich and packing up her room, she found the ID card in the pocket of the jacket she had worn the day before leaving for pre-deployment training. Suffice to say, Karen has been careful never make that mistake again.

Karen was stationed at 33 Field Hospital in Al Jubail, Saudi Arabia, in a tented hospital which she remembers was "very dusty, lots of sand everywhere, and keeping the place clean was a constant challenge". It was all-hands-on-deck, putting up tents, building the beds, stocking the hospital and filling sandbags (the latter being a regular chore). The waiting game started, where Karen and others wondered whether peace talks might prevail, and in the meantime, they saw patients with regular complaints like appendicitis and sports injuries.



'I'll be fine, as long as they don't send me to orthopaedics,' and of course my first posting was to the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital in Woolwich on the orthopaedic wards!



She recalls: "The engineers were brilliant and could build all sorts of things for us, but still we had to learn to make-do and adapt. How do you put a double tubigrip on somebody with an injured ankle or knee when you've got nothing to widen it up to get it over very painful joints? We found big canisters of popcorn in the American NAAFI equivalent and used those as a wide applicator for legs. For finger injuries we used Smartie tubes. There was no integrated bed rest, so we fashioned sturdy cardboard boxes into a triangle shape. Before we threw anything out, we had to think whether we could use it for something."

Then the war started. There were lots of SCUD missile attacks. The American Patriot missile defence system could shoot these down but when the alarms sounded at night, everyone had to get into their IPE and get under their beds or if they were on the ward, get 'kitted up' and then make sure the patients were protected.

Karen gave her best, and at the conclusion of the war, she was returned to Woolwich and subsequently posted to BMH Iserlohn in Germany, for 18 months. On returning home, she did a refresher course in midwifery at Frimley Park Hospital and then started working at Louise Margaret Maternity Wing at Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot.

While there, Karen deployed to Bosnia on Op Grapple, in 1994. She joined a medical support team in a small single-ward hospital, which despite its size was well equipped with a lab, X rays and blood transfusion, so emergencies could be dealt with. "For anything we couldn't deal with, we would stabilise and then evacuate the patient," Karen explained.

She was grateful to be deployed with Irene Penney, a theatre sister and fellow Scot, and they were a great support to one another. One Sunday afternoon, they returned from the unit and were enjoying a cup of tea on the balcony when gunfire started. It initially appeared their lodgings might be under attack, but thankfully it turned out to be local people celebrating Easter Sunday by firing weapons in the air!





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hearted



Later, Karen's team relocated further north and rebuilt the medical facilities within a large warehouse. She reflects on the experience saying: "You never think you're going to cope with stuff like that, but you get through by pulling together, and it just all works."

A posting BMH Rinteln followed and then to Hong Kong in 1996-97, the final year of British control before handing back to China. Karen left Heathrow in a blizzard and flew into Hong Kong for the Chinese New Year celebrations, experiencing the hair-raising approach to Kai Tak Airport through high rise buildings. Her new colleagues were waiting and whisked her off to the mess to get changed and join the celebrations – a "good way to get over jetlag" she was assured. "I remember getting to my bed at something like two or three in the morning and thinking, this is just crazy," said Karen.

While there she undertook combined midwifery and practice nurse role, and worked with RAF practice nurse Jacquie Merritt, who she is still friends with today and is godmother to one of Jacquie's children. Karen remembers Hong Kong as one of her "standout postings" because it was so different culturally to everything previous, although she admits, "If I thought driving in London was scary, driving in Hong Kong was definitely not for the faint hearted."

After Hong Kong, Karen returned to Catterick in the UK for a year before being posted to Cyprus in 1998, to run the maternity unit at the Princess Mary's Hospital at RAF Akrotiri. During that two-year posting she was promoted to the rank of Major. At the end of the posting instead of flying home via RAF Brize Norton, "a pretty dull way of ending two years in Cyprus" she thought, Karen embarked on a road trip

across Europe with her mum. They caught a ferry from Cyprus to Greece and drove across the country to catch another ferry into Italy, then up through Austria and Germany, and finally home.

She recalls, "Mum wasn't very good as a navigator. Every night, the Atlas would be out and we would be plotting our route, but it was an amazing experience for both of us."

Not long after Karen found herself back in the UK, first at Frimley Park Hospital, followed by Edinburgh as Matron at the Medical Reception Station in Redford Barracks. "It was an amazing experience being back in Scotland and close to friends and family. I had lots of visitors, and my weekends were very busy with people wanting to stay in Edinburgh," she recalls.

During her earlier time in Catterick Karen had attempted to put down roots, buying a house in Northallerton. She had about 10 months use of the house before she was posted to Cyprus and despite best intentions, never went back to live there. Instead, she was posted to Birmingham and then London, where she eventually decided to put the house on the market. During this time Karen continued to learn and gain qualifications, completing a BSc in Clinical Governance via distance learning with the University of Glamorgan.

After serving as SO2 Clinical Policy in the Defence Medical Services Department in Main Building in London, which was a "real eye opener being involved in tri-Service policy making," she was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and appointed as SO1 Clinical policy at HQ Army Primary Health Care Service at what was then Former Army Staff College in Camberley. Having bought a house in Marlborough as a second attempt to put down some roots, she was deployed to Afghanistan to HQ Joint Force Support in Camp Bastion, with responsibility to set up the assurance system with the Field Hospital. She remembers Afghanistan as a "kinetic environment with lots happening and people working at the top of their game all the time" which was inspiring. On return she moved to a Healthcare Assurance role



within Army HQ in Andover. At last, she had the opportunity to live in her own house.

Karen had not expected further promotion, but to her surprise she was made a full Colonel and dispatched to Rheindahlen as the Clinical Director for British Forces Germany Health Service. That posting was a "real eye opener" as it was a quasi-commercial environment and something new for Karen. Her focus was on how the Army could ensure that its people were in receipt of the right care at the right time and the contractor was meeting their targets and milestones.

Karen left Germany in December 2014 at the end of her three years and to her great joy and surprise learned she had been awarded the RRC in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 2015. She recalls a telephone call, "The DG wants to speak to you. I got that sinking feeling when somebody really senior wants to speak to you on the phone. The General came on to say I had to keep it quiet until midnight, but I had been awarded the RRC first class. I was struck dumb, probably for about the first time ever!"

The investiture was at Windsor Castle with HRH The Princess Royal and Karen's mum attended with her. They reflected on Karen's journey, from being waved off from Central Station in Glasgow as she set off for Gulf War, her mum in tears, the investiture at Windsor Castle. "I think it's been a bit of a journey for mum as well," Karen says. Sadly, her father had died a few years earlier while Karen was in Cyprus.

Karen had continued studying for her Master of Laws in Legal Aspects of Medical Practice while in the Germany, finishing her dissertation there. Looking back, she has no idea how she fitted in studying around a very demanding job, and there were a couple of times she was on the phone to her mum exhausted and sobbing. Karen found the resolve to overcome the difficulties and achieve her goals. "I had to prove to myself that I could hold down the job and do the course, but honestly, it nearly broke me," she confesses.

In early 2016, Karen was selected to become Chief Nursing Officer (Army). "It was an absolute privilege to serve in that role and I felt a genuine sense of responsibility to make the right decisions, because those decisions would ultimately have an impact on patients and our personnel. The best part of the role for Karen, was meeting personnel out in the various Units.

However, she recalls: "If you're out at units, meeting people, attending a graduation parade or promotion boards, when you come back you've got to catch up on the work you missed for that day. I was based in Andover but would frequently be up and down to Lichfield, to DMS Whittington, or to sit on Boards at the Army Personnel Centre in Glasgow so there was a lot of travel involved too." Karen was especially grateful to have Lt Col Lynn Adam as SO1 Nursing, who she had first met and worked with in the Gulf.

After two years as CNO(A) Karen retired in May 2018. It felt like the right time. "If I'd retired two years earlier, I would have felt I still had something to accomplish, whereas I felt when I left in 2018, I had done as much as I could have done," she says. Most people thought Karen would settle into a good NHS



"I had to prove to myself that I could hold down the job and do the course, but honestly, it nearly broke me"

job, but she decided instead to "have a gap year" and enjoy herself.

While in Spain, at a house she owned with her mum, Karen made the decision she was not going to apply for NHS jobs and would instead enjoy being retired. However, the QAs were not done with her, and Karen was encouraged by Laura Murray, the outgoing Chair of the Scottish Branch of the QA Association to stand for election as Chair in September 2018. She formed a small committee with Sheila Jones as Secretary and Ron Buist as Treasurer.

The early months were a challenge, it felt as if we were constantly on the phone to Laura asking a multitude of questions, she must have been fed up with us! The membership is based across Scotland with the biggest proportion in the central belt. However, these days the Branch is getting more members in the Highlands and Borders. Under the trio's stewardship the Branch has grown from 70 members to the current 130.

Karen explains, "We have a summer event and a festive lunch and every month a coffee catch-up somewhere in Scotland. That has worked well and we had thought it would be members local to the specific area who would attend but instead we've found that a number of our members will travel to virtually everyone, no matter the distance involved. As we say in the Branch, "what's not to like about a coffee with a tasty scone and some good chat".

Scottish Branch was the first Branch to be formed in 1950. Karen and her committee have served seven years and are keen to hand over to a new committee once successors can be found. "We need to hand over before we get too stale! Hopefully over this year we will have more people coming forward with a view to them taking over, one day!" she says.

Karen keeps herself busy, living in Newton Mearns on the outskirts of Glasgow. She remains forever grateful for the varied career and opportunities to experience the world that the Army and nursing has provided her, and above all proud to be a QA.

Interview by Steve Bax

letters and contributions



Can you help Lizzy identify the QAs in these photos from 1947?

Dear Gazette,

I have loved reading the Spring 2025 Gazette that included a reprint of the very first Gazette from 1950 – amazing! My mother was also a QA when it was QAIMNS and served in India during partition in 1947. In fact, it was the strangest coincidence that in 2016 I deployed to Islamabad in Pakistan as part of a Defence Engagement Programme and walked down the same corridor that my mother had served in when it was BMH Islamabad when it was part of India!

I wonder if Gazette readers know the names of the QAs in the photos? The QA in the top left-hand photo looks exactly like my mother – who at the time would have been Sr Mary Pidgeon, as then, as you're probably aware, all the QAs were known as "Sister" and didn't have a rank, although they had officer status.

I write this note on the D-Day anniversary. My mother deployed to France on D-Day+10 to set up a field hospital. All the QAs had to wade ashore with their tippet and veil on as they were told it was "good for the morale of the troops!"

Best wishes,

Lizzy

Dr EMM Bernthal PFHEA PhD MEd BSc(Hons) RGN RM

Editor's note: Can you help Lizzy to identify the QAs in the photos, or do you have any memories from deployments at this time you would like to share? Email gazette@qarancassociation.org.uk

Dear Gazette,

I was in Ypres recently with my husband, supporting a Charity Cycle Ride from Gheluvelt Park in Worcester to Gheluvelt in Belgium.

His Regimental Museum was one of the beneficiaries. Following a superb visit to the Passchendaele Museum I visited the grave of staff nurse Nellie Spindler in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.

As you can see from the photo, it is heartening to see that it has been much visited with remembrance crosses left.

Kathy Jackson, 1974–1981



Cpl Iqra Shahzadi, who readers may remember from the 'Breaking Boundaries' article in the Spring 2024 Gazette, shares her poem (see the next page) about the significance of the nurse's uniform.

March



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

Uniform

Born from cloth, crisp and white

Woven with care, a symbol of light

From the moment you're worn, your journey begins

In the heart of the ward, where healing wins.

You rise with dawn, neat and pressed

A reflection of hope in service dressed

Through the hum of the hospital's busy day

You move with purpose come what way may

You cradle the weight of lives in need

From the 1st breath to the final deed

You absorb the tears, the joy, the pain

In your fibers, stories of loss and gain

Every stain that mars your sheen

Is a testament to where you've been

A drop of blood, a smudge of ink

Each mark a memory, each tear a link.

Through countless washes, you endure

The spin, the tumble, the relentless cure

Yet with every cycle, you emerge anew

Ready to face what you always do.

You bend, you stretch, you never complain

Through the long shifts and the endless strain

In the quiet of night or under the sun

Your duty is constant, never done.

But as the days turn into years

You start to fray, yet show no fear

For you've served well, through thick and thin

A silent warrior, where lives begin.

And when your threads can bear no more

You retire with grace, your battles worn

Laid to rest but not in vain

For you lived a life with purpose and gain

In the life of a nurse, you played your part

A faithful uniform, with a beating heart.

Now rest, dear cloth your work is through

The lives you've touched will remember you



NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCH

'Extraordinary theatre' and a moving Corps Day remembering Kerry

Northern Ireland Branch updates on events from earlier this year, including the loss of Kerry McFadden-Newman ARRC, Branch Secretary 2023-24 who will be truly missed. RIP.

On 12 February members of the QARANC NI met at the Grand Opera House Theatre in Belfast to see the National Theatre UK and Ireland production of Warhorse. Adopted from the Micheal Morpurgo novel by Nick Stafford and featuring the Handspring Puppet company, it showcased their interpretation of this story.

Having booked months previously we were eager to watch this much acclaimed show. The Sunday Express called it "an extraordinary piece of theatre", and we were not disappointed. It highlighted the futility of war with the atmospheric and set design being second to none. A very moving show, it surely brought back memories of the horrors of war for those present who had served recently in areas of conflict.

The touching story of a journey of love between a boy and his foal to a young soldier and his search for the warhorse that his adult horse had now become. At times the silences spoke louder than the thunder of cannons and explosions and the exquisitely performed puppetry exposed the savagery of men and horrific spectacle of horses caught on the barbed wire. The actors' narratives were punctuated by songs delivered gently and sympathetically, expressing loss, sadness and joy when soldier and steed are reunited.

As we stepped out of the Theatre having travelled on an emotional roller-coaster, many audience members were still visibly moved to tears.

Then, on Sunday 23 March, the Branch celebrated Corps Day at Ballylesson Church, Drumbo, Belfast. The service was presided over by the Reverend Mervyn Jamison, also Padre to 210 MMR.

This service was well attended by past and present members, but it was bittersweet as we had all recently attended the funeral of Lt Col. Kerry McFadden-Newman on the 3 March, after her sudden passing.

“It was a pleasure to see so many members past and present for both the church service and tea party afterwards”



This was to be our first Corps Day without her guiding hand and effervescent spirit.

Padre Jamison brought a personal touch to the service and thought it fitting that Kerry be remembered with a few thoughts and words prior to the act of Remembrance, and church service. Several of us said prayers or gave a reading. I was able to read the nurses' prayer, but with some sadness and felt it was very poignant choice for the occasion.

It was a pleasure to see so many members past and present for both the church service and tea party afterwards held in the adjacent church hall. As always it was a great spread provided by QARANC members who were rewarded with a hearty round of applause for their hard work.

Lt Col Kerry McFadden-Newman was truly a cornerstone of this event, integral to its organisation every year. Kerry and her family were present in our thoughts, prayers and tributes during the service and tea party.

For me, this was my last as a serving member of 210 MMR, as I have recently retired. I was surprised but pleased when it was suggested that I cut the first slice of the cake to celebrate the QARANC Corp Day. This annual event continues to cement and rekindle friendships. It is a chance to reconnect with the QARANC family who are always there to support each other in the best and worst of times.

We left having enjoyed a wonderful day but keeping the memories of our dear friend close to our hearts. The act of Remembrance, a timely reminder keeping us focused on those who have died in service, and those in the QARANC who continue to serve.

SUB CRUCE CANDIDA

LCpl Christine McCormick





NI Branch enjoys spectacular views of walled city

A not-so-great summer's day saw a few Northern Ireland Branch members head off to Derry for a history tour and afternoon tea at a prestigious hotel in the city.

We met early on a Sunday morning at the new Grand Central Station to board the train from Belfast to Derry. It was a journey that took us on a route with the most spectacular views along the north coast. A short walk from the train station took us to the beautiful Guildhall where we met our guide for the morning.

A very informative tour around the city walls learning about our own history over the years. This is the only remaining complete walled city in Ireland and one of the finest examples of walled cities in Europe. Built in the 17th Century, composing of seven gates and 24 restored cannons, it winds around the inner city for 1.5km providing a unique promenade to view the original layout of the original town.

On completion of the tour there was time to sample a good pint of Guinness before making our way across Peace Bridge to The Ebrington Hotel for afternoon tea. The hotel is housed in a historic building that was once a military barracks dating back to the 1800s. It is on the site of a former 29-acre military and naval base, now transformed into a vibrant area with restaurants, cafes and public spaces.

The hotel itself incorporates the original clock tower and other listed buildings and as we walked up to it, we knew we were in the original parade square. The red brick buildings behind the hotel were all transformed but very much still looked like a military camp. Having had a wonderful afternoon tea, it was a quick walk back to the station for the train home. A brilliant day out making memories with good friends.

Lt Col (Rtd) Joy Duffield
NI Branch Secretary



ALDERSHOT BRANCH

Aldershot Branch views Florence Nightingale letters on visit to Ascot Priory

On 12 May 2025, the Ascot Priory hosted a delightful afternoon tea and service to celebrate International Nurses Day



Capt Portia Nunn and Cpl Chetri with Aldershot Branch Chair Pat Gibson MBE

Members of the Aldershot Branch of the QA Association visited Ascot Priory in May alongside two serving members, to mark International Nurses Day.

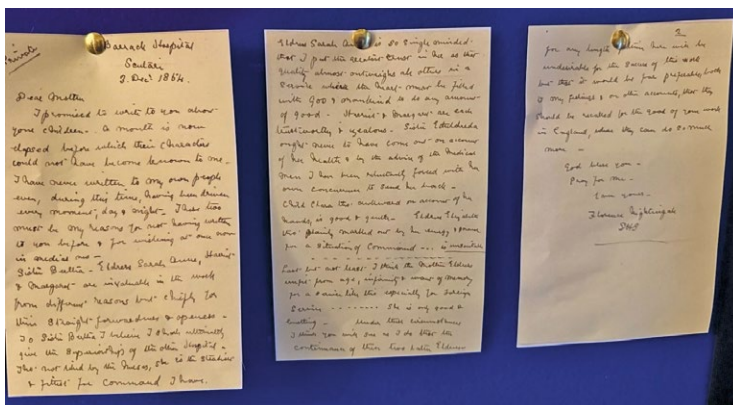
Ascot Priory holds a rich history and a special connection with Florence Nightingale. In 1854, Mother Emma Langston sent nurses to the Crimea to assist Florence Nightingale in her pioneering work. Recently, letters from Florence to Mother Emma have been discovered and are now proudly displayed at the Priory.

Following the service, guests were invited for a 'cup of tea,' which to our pleasant surprise, turned out to be a full afternoon tea, complete with an array

of sandwiches, miniature scones, and cakes. This wonderful spread provided an excellent opportunity for everyone to engage and interact with the residents of the nursing homes, their families, as well as the dedicated nurses and carers from both Residential and Nursing Homes.

The event was not only enjoyable but also meaningful, strengthening the bonds within the community. We look forward to the possibility of being invited to such a lovely occasion again in the future.

Rhonda Gornall





JURASSIC COAST BRANCH

Jurassic Coast Branch cracks the code for a great day out!

The Branch got together to mark Corps Day and later to visit Bletchley Park.

The first Corps Day for the Jurassic Coast Branch, since the formation of Royal Army Medical Service (RAMS) took place on 22 March at Littlemoor in Weymouth, Dorset. 19 members and 13 guests attended a service led by Rev James Menzies, who is an Army reserve Chaplain with the Royal Wessex Yeomanry. His father and brother had both been cap badged Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). James had done a lot of research, and his sermon was very moving.

Lunch followed at the Heights Hotel on Portland with spectacular views of Chesil beach. It was a lovely day catching up with old friends and making new ones.

Then, on 21 June, 16 of us dynamic dinosaurs and friends visited Bletchley Park – an amazing place. Before the visit it was hard to visualise the sheer scale of secret work that was carried out here.

Our amazing guide George took us on a tour from the inception of Bletchley through to how the appropriate people, from mathematicians to

We were taken through how so many small pieces of information were pieced together

crossword experts, chess and bridge players, or those who could sit in the most uncomfortable offices for eight hours at a time day after day, worked here. Most importantly these were people who would keep Bletchley's secrets for the rest of their lives. Most of the eventually 7,000 staff were women.

We were taken through how so many small pieces of information were pieced together to eventually break the German Enigma codes. The rules were strict; you could only talk to the people in your own and the adjoining hut and talking to other people even at lunchtime about work was forbidden. The re-constructed huts on the very warm 21 June gave us an inkling of what working conditions would have been like for those working here during the war.

We very much enjoyed the day and, as a ticket is valid for all visits during a 12-month period, I am sure that many of us will be returning.

Marjorie Bandy



SCOTTISH BRANCH

A magnificent anniversary celebration with extra chocolate!

Time has flown by this year; I can't believe we've just had our longest day and one day later it's blowing a "hoolie" with heavy rain showers interspersed with fleeting moments of sunshine. Not for us a prolonged heatwave in the high twenties or thirties. A week of sunshine in May will have to do for us north of the border.

As is our usual habit, we held our Corps Day celebrations at the Royal George Hotel in Perth. It was fabulous to catch up with our members again in person and it was especially nice to welcome some new members for whom it was their first time at a Branch event. We gathered early enough to enjoy coffee and homemade shortbread and after a good blether we carried on through to lunch, where yet again the hotel did us proud.

From March onwards it was all systems go with the preparations for the Branch 75th Anniversary celebration in Glasgow. Chocolates, and I mean lots of chocolates, to be made and boxed, place cards to be written and a lovely commemorative card put together by Sheila or Madam Secretary, as she is otherwise known.



It was all systems go with the preparations for the Branch 75th Anniversary



The day itself was fabulous with bright, warm sunshine, which certainly added to the celebratory mood in the venue, where 64 of our members and guests had gathered. We were delighted to welcome our Association Chair, Col (Retd) John Quinn, who had flown up that morning to join us, although he wasn't the only one to travel some distance to get there. Members and their guests were on the move from very early morning from all over Scotland and south of the border, however we did think it was a wee bit far for our overseas members to travel for lunch, but we did receive some lovely messages from them.

Everything about the day was magnificent. Berni LeQuelenec brought his very own personal QARANC Standard all the way from South Ayrshire. In fact, I was surprised he didn't arrive with a band of followers in tow as I'm sure he must have attracted some attention on his route through town from the station. Our own Catherine Pounder arrived in full Highland Dress and piped us in for lunch. As ever in Glaschu, the food and service were outstanding.

All those chocolates were put to good use. As well as being served with coffee, everyone present had their own box to take home and numerous special boxes were made for presentation purposes, which were either presented at the lunch or sent by post if the recipients were unable to join us on the day.

Three of our members share their birthday with the Branch and one of the birthday girls, Linda Wake, was with us and was presented with a special box of chocolates; the others each received their box of chocolates and commemorative card through the post. Another box went to Libby Martin, (nee Lavery), who had just recently got married; I wonder if William got to taste any of those?? We also sent John away with a box to share with Tracey and the HQ Team who work so hard on behalf of all our Branches.

Our Coffee Catch Ups continue and after taking place on Zoom over the winter months, it's always enjoyable to get out and about again and sample some tasty morsels in coffee shops across Scotland. In April, we ventured to Stirling for the first time, to the River House following a recommendation from Susan McGill. What a great turnout we had but we were so



Margaret Kerr at the Erskine's Annual Garden of Reflection Remembrance Service

Our very own Paralympian Mary Wilson has been selected for the Para Scotland Lawn Bowls Team 2025

busy chatting, and eating, that we completely forgot to take any photographs!

We've been back to a couple of our favourite places, Palmerston's in Dunkeld in Perthshire and Dumfries House in Ayrshire and we still have our late summer trip to Oban to come.

We were honoured to receive an invitation to Erskine's Annual Garden of Reflection Remembrance Service, which took place in June at the Erskine Home in Bishopton. The Branch was represented by Margaret Kerr and Ruth Liggat. Both enjoyed what was a very thought-provoking service in the beautiful gardens.

And news hot off the press! After several months of competitions and assessments, mostly in terrible weather, our very own Paralympian Mary Wilson has been selected for the Para Scotland Lawn Bowls Team 2025. What fantastic news and our congratulations go to Mary who now heads to the Home Nations International followed by the Test Match against Hong Kong and Australia later in the year.

Having had our 75th celebrations in May we decided against a summer event as such. However, we are looking forward to December and planning for our festive lunch is underway. We have always held our festive lunch in either Glasgow or Edinburgh but this year we are trying somewhere different and will be heading to Stirling to the Golden Lion Hotel.

The Branch has had much to enjoy during the first half of the year and we have much more to look forward to.

Karen J Irvine RRC, Chair

NEWCASTLE BRANCH

Helping RAMC Association to celebrate their centenary

On 5 July, we joined our Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) Association colleagues to mark the 100th anniversary of their Corps.

The Newcastle Branch celebrated this auspicious occasion at the Gosforth Park Hotel with a very enjoyable Lunch. The event was put together by Alan Fitzgerald and Bill Toy (Bill's wife Jenny is a member of the QARANC Association).

We are so lucky to have Col (Rtd) Ann Clouston in our Branch as she conducted another guided tour around Newcastle for our Chair, Col (Rtd) Sharon McDowell, Maj (Rtd) Jean Charlton and Alison O'Brien with her Dad and other branch members. As usual Ann manages to show us areas of our city which often go unnoticed. We were also lucky to have lovely weather for a walk.

At our June meeting we were delighted to see our friend and member Mary Cowen who has been quite seriously ill. She was so thankful to the charity Daft As A Brush, which supports patients with lifts to the hospital, that she asked if we could thank them for their kindness by donating. Her idea was to auction a



Ann Clouston with Jean Charlton, Alison O'Brien and her Dad on the Newcastle City Walk



Jean Charlton bid £100 for the brooch which she proudly wore immediately

“As usual Ann manages to show us areas of our city which often go unnoticed”



Mary Cowen auctioned her QARANC Brooch



Annie Clark, Shirley Laverick-Stovin and Jacqui Hall with Ginge at the RAMC Association 100th anniversary lunch

marquisette QARANC brooch. This raised £100 which was gratefully received by Daft as a Brush.

Jean Charlton who made the final bid for the brooch was pictured proudly wearing it.

Jacqui Hall, Media Officer for Newcastle Branch

CHESTER BRANCH

Exhibition gave insight into life for soldiers returning from Western Front

The Branch has welcomed six new members and goes from strength to strength. We also said goodbye to Hannah Jones, Joan Keogan, Broyna Webster and Samantha Webster.

The committee has been busy organising events for the remaining months of 2025 starting with a visit to The University of Chester Riverside Museum. This museum contains a permanent collection of curiosities from the world of medicine, nursing midwifery and social work.

The First World War exhibition gave an insight to what soldiers invalided back from the Western Front would have found on their return to Cheshire. It featured aspects such as volunteer nurses, a doctor's country practice, home life, food, rural life, and social work. It was a trip down memory lane with items including Trained Army Nursing Badge more commonly known as the dustbin. I pointed out to our Guides how priceless that was.

The four remaining stained-glass windows from Chester Royal Infirmary are available to view. I cannot end without thanking Dr Claire Chatterton and Dr Elizabeth Whitehead our Tour Guides. Their enthusiasm for the museum was a joy to behold. Thanks go to Sarah Griffiths at the museum for organising this for us.

At the time of writing, we are planning our AGM on 26 September at the Prince Rupert Hotel Shrewsbury where we held our 2015 Reunion, and where many of you thought we might hold a barbeque on board the Sabrina on the Friday night!

In November we will hold our Remembrance Parade at St Andrew's Church, Tarvin where our Standard is kept, followed by lunch at The George and Dragon.

Our Christmas Lunch on Tuesday 2 December at the Queens Hotel Chester. We are ending the year



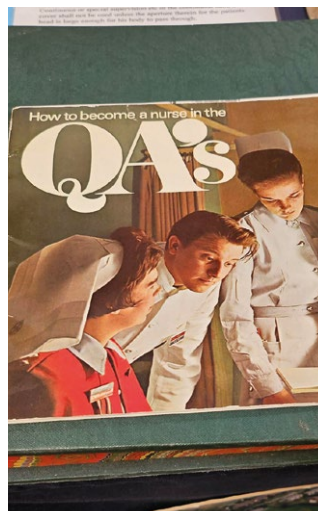
and first time for the branch by staying at the Imperial Hotel Llandudno for New Year.

Any members wanting to join us in any of our events please contact the Secretary.

We now look forward to the events listed and start looking to plan our programme for 2026. So, if it is not too early Merry Christmas from Chester Branch.

Jill Mackeen, Chair

Lynn Orfanelli, Secretary



WELSH BRANCH

From Corps Day to a castle and a 'naughty but nice' chocolate trifle

Welsh Branch celebrated Corps Day on 6 April by attending a service at Llantrisant Parish Church, Rhondda Cynon Taff, presided over by the Reverent Vincent Gardiner. It included readings by branch members and prayers for those on active service. The congregation also sang the QARANC Hymn.

Following the uplifting service, which also touched on lent and Passion Sunday, we had the opportunity to look around the church and saw its oldest artefact 'The Resurrection stone' thought to date back to the seventh century.

We joined the congregation for coffee, cake and custard cream biscuits. We answered many questions about the Corps, our roles and service. Some shared that they have relatives who had served in the Corps.

All too soon it was time to leave and travel to Rosy Hubbard's for lunch. This was a chance to catch-up with fellow members of the association before sitting down for lunch, which included a delicious chocolate trifle - definitely "naughty but nice."

In May, we visited the National Trust Grade 1 listed Duffryn Gardens, on the outskirts of Cardiff. We met at the outdoor café and were joined by Julie Coxell a branch member and tour guide. Her wealth of knowledge regarding the various areas of the gardens and flora and fauna enhanced our visit.

The tour began by walking through the large arboretum, where we saw a mixture of trees and many acers of different colours, sizes and leaves. It was fascinating to hear about the age of some of the trees especially the Lucknow Oak which is 279 years old. Moving onto landscaped formal gardens and lawns, together with various gardens and styles representing the influences of the various owners. Also, how the grounds had been designed and planted in the past.

In the grounds was a special National Trust sculpture called Helios, which is a seven-metre spherical sculpture with solar imagery, sunspots and sounds of the sun recoded by NASA. Thank you, Julie, for giving us such an interesting and informative tour.

On 28 June, members arrived at Caldicot Castle ruins to set up our gazebo. We were aided by



“
As usual Ann manages to show us areas of our city which often go unnoticed”

personnel from 203 Multi-Role Medical Regiment whose help was invaluable.

Caroline Whittaker and I were ably supported by Sally Fowler and Terri Levett in manning the stand during the day; it was an ideal opportunity to engage with force personnel and the public explaining the relevance and work of the Association. We encouraged a few QARANC veterans to join the association. It was also lovely meeting up with branch members who attended the event and came to say hello.

On what was a very hot day, the gazebo was a haven of shelter from the sun.

One of the highlights of the event was a solo Spitfire flying over to open the event but sadly the parachute display was cancelled due to low cloud cover.

Music was provided by several regiment bands it was lovely listening to the military music being performed. Following a successful and worthwhile day we now look forward to next Armed Forces Day being held in Carmarthen in 2026.

Lt Col (Retd) Valmai Davies TD





Going for gold at the Island Games!

In a first for Orkney, the Scottish islands hosted the International Island Games during July, with Captain Pippa Inderwick competing on two wheels

With the generous support of the Association, I had the incredible honour of representing Guernsey in road cycling at the 20th International Island Games held in Orkney from the 12-18 July 2025.

The International Island Games are a biennial multi-sport event bringing together teams from 24 island communities across the world. For the first time, Orkney welcomed around 2,500 athletes and officials, a landmark occasion as the smallest island group ever to do so.

During a beautiful Scottish heatwave, HRH The Princess Royal declared the official start to the games during the opening ceremony in Orkney's capital Kirkwall, before athletes dispersed across the island for their respective competitions. Competing as part of a team of four, I took part in the 35km time trial, town centre criterium and 60km road race where I achieved individual gold.

The Orcadian hospitality and the immense sense of pride, enjoyment and camaraderie among competitors from far-flung islands was a unique experience I will never forget. Being able to bring home a gold medal for Guernsey was the perfect culmination of the experience.

*Captain Pippa Inderwick
Birmingham*





Cpl Jagger, WO2 Mayhew MBE, Maj McGrath – Somerford Park

'The relationship between horse and rider is built on trust, patience and discipline'

Members of the Royal Army Medical Service (RAMS) Equestrian Team show their mastery as they are crowned 'Sport Team of the Year 2024-25'

Unlike any other sport in the Army, equestrianism demands an unparalleled investment of time and effort. It is about mastering the technical skill required to compete but also the daily care, welfare, and management of horses.

The relationship between horse and rider is one built on trust, patience, and discipline, with riders taking full responsibility for the upkeep and well-being of their mount. This is a commitment that extends far beyond training sessions or competition days, requiring a level of devotion that few other sports can match.

At the time of writing in July 2025, military equestrian season is well underway with regular and reserve members of the former QARANC, RAMC, RADC and RAVC participating in the sport at varying levels. The RAMS Equestrian Team strives to be an inclusive team from supporting individuals who have never sat on a horse before to get involved in beginner and novice courses right through to more experienced riders representing at Army level events



WO2 Mayhew MBE – new RAMS saddle pad

such as Royal Windsor Horse Show.

Most riders do, however, compete on the main circuit at inter-corps events such as, Royal Air Force Championship, Royal Tournament, Royal Navy Championship and UK Armed Forces Championship and demonstrate consistently pleasing results. This ethos really embodies the meaning of teamwork, camaraderie, and true esprit de corps!

A particular highlight in the 2025 calendar so far, was the RAMS Equestrian Team four-day intensive training camp held in May at Somerford Park, Cheshire. This was a first for the team, which saw 10 members take advantage of the world-class equestrian facilities, including the all-weather farm ride, extensive cross country schooling fields, and Andrews Bowen surfaced arenas. Members were under the meticulous instruction of 5* Finnish event rider and RAMS Equestrian Team Coach, Pauliina Swindells who is a key figure in supporting riders to progress.

RAMS Equestrian Team Manager, WO2 Isobel Mayhew MBE praised the event, saying, "four fantastic days with the team, I'm proud to be your manager – lots learnt, and memories made".

Finally, congratulations to members of the RAMS Equestrian Team who were presented with their RAMS meritorious colours, full colours, and half colours in June at the RAMS Sports Union awards dinner at The Barnsdale Hotel, Rutland. Those in attendance also proudly accepted the Sport Team of the Year award for 2024-25 on behalf of the RAMS Equestrian Team.



Cpl Fox, Maj McGrath, SSgt Bennett, SSgt Higgins – RAMS Sports Union awards dinner

These amazing opportunities would simply not be made possible without the support of Army Sport, Army Sport Lottery, Corps' Charities, Army Equestrian Association and RAMS Equestrian Team Committee.

To learn more about how to get involved and to keep up to date with the RAMS Equestrian Team's achievements, you can follow them on Instagram @ramsequestrianteam

*SSgt Ruth Higgins
RAMS Equestrian Team, Media*



Pauliina Swindells, SSgt Bennett – Somerford Park

Ian's lasting legacy will be the wonderful memorials he created

Ian Henderson Stewart, who died on 7 February 2025, was a friend to the Association and designed the QARANC/QAIMNS memorial at the National Arboretum as well as a memorial to the D Day Landings. He is remembered here by his friend and colleague, Diana Wilson.

Ian Henderson Stewart was a friend, mentor and colleague after I left the QARANC in 1996 and went on to become the Regimental Secretary of the Association. It was soon apparent that I was going to be involved in some momentous Corps occasions, including the 50th anniversary of the founding of the QARANC and the centenary of the QAIMNS in 2002.

At this time, plans were afoot for a National Arboretum at an old quarry site in Alrewas, Staffordshire, and the Corps agreed that this could be a good place for a memorial to our proud history. However, commissioning memorials was not something that had occurred in my nursing career so posed something of a problem. Fortunately, help was forthcoming. Lt Col Maureen Gara RRC was a Normandy veteran with a ward named for her at Northallerton. She invited me to the Aldershot Normandy Veterans supper where I met Ian Stewart and his wife Mary.

Ian was such an interesting character. He completed National Service in the Navy before leaving for South Africa and starting a career designing cardboard packaging for various commercial products, from Tweed perfume to whisky for the American market. His hobby was mountaineering, and he eventually became a mountain and rescue climber in the Scottish Highlands.

He was headhunted to be designer in residence at the Memorial University in St John's Newfoundland, in Canada. He stayed in this post for 25 years, becoming a much-admired wood carver. Ian designed and carved furniture for the Newfoundland Parliament and in consequence was awarded the Order of Canada.

He continued to climb mountains and became part of a Canadian Mountain team. He also coached the Canadian Olympic Rifle shooting team, even designing bespoke rifle stock for them.

I was confident that Ian could project manage and design a suitable memorial for the QARANC, for which he had such high regard. His drawings were approved by the director and funds were agreed by the Association. Ian embraced the project wholeheartedly, and apart from the cost of materials, his work and time for the Corps was pro bono. He had already earned an international reputation as a multi-discipline designer, and I appreciated how lucky we were.

The Royal British Legion, who took over care of the Arboretum, proposed a site at the entrance to the Arboretum, where it was dedicated in time for the centenary. When the new visitors centre was built, the Memorial was moved to its present site and is a fitting place for Remembrance.

Ian's talents were recognised when he was asked to



“
He had already earned an international reputation as a multi-discipline designer, and I appreciated how lucky we were



help with the refurbishment of the catholic chapel in Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He produced some beautiful glass lasered crystal pew ends with the badges of famous Regiments. He also designed a medal for the RC Bishopric of the Forces to be awarded for services rendered to the church.

He had an immense love for the Normandy veterans and became an early member of the Spirit of Normandy Trust, a charitable organisation dedicated to the welfare of veterans of the Normandy campaign and to perpetuating the memory of D Day. Ian served as a trustee and Mary undertook secretarial duties.

I was very honoured to be invited to become a trustee and later, for five stimulating years, I was the Chairman with Ian as a valued Vice Chairman. During that time, he designed a Memorial to the D Day Landings. He designed the National Service Memorial, and the Peace Garden in Caen, a beautiful area of roses surrounding memorial plaques to the Regiments and Corps of those who were at D Day and beyond. Of course, I made sure that the QAIMNS were represented.

Every year in June, Ian and Mary would accompany a party of veterans to Bayeux in Normandy. Vera Hay, who died only recently, was invariably present, as Col Maureen Gara had been. Sadly, Ian would not make the 80th commemorations in June 2025.

His funeral was on 12 March 2025, and the crematorium was full of friends, colleagues and representatives of the organisations to whom he had contributed so much. He was a multi-faceted man with every facet shining through his life and work. A life well lived.

Diana Wilson

Lilian Monica Roycroft

Lilian Monica Roycroft (nee Jones) was born on the 7 March 1940 and passed away on the 19 May 2025 aged 85.

Lilian was a student nurse at Bath Royal United Hospital from 1958-1961 obtaining her first post in Wallasey which was her hometown. In 1962 she commissioned into the QARANC as a Nursing Officer and her first posting was London, before moving onto Berlin. Lilian was also a staff nurse at the Duchess of Kent Military Hospital in Catterick in 1988.

Lilian was known as Monica. She had three children – Edward, Joan and the late Olwen along with four grandchildren. Her funeral Service was held at the Garrison Memorial Church, Catterick Garrison on Friday 27 June at 13:30.



Sam Young

It is with deep sadness and a heavy heart that we share the tragic news of the death of one of our own — Maj Sam Young. Sam was tragically killed in an accident on 19 June 2025.

Sam had recently joined the 256 MMR as their Infection Prevention Control (IPC) lead after being at 202 MMR for many years and was already making a positive impression. Her loss will be deeply felt across the unit and beyond.

This is an immeasurable loss of a truly wonderful woman, and her absence will be deeply felt by all who knew her. Sam was one of those rare people who brought light, laughter, kindness and strength wherever she went with a touch of her grace.

She made a genuine and lasting difference to everyone who had the privilege of serving alongside her, our thoughts go out to her family and to all who knew her.

The Last Post

Shirley Anne ROUKE, 01 December 2024
 Thomas FRANCES, HQ, 29 January 2025
 Mavis BORDENKIRCHER, Scottish Branch, 03 February
 Joan KEOGHAN, Chester Branch, 06 February
 Bronya WEBSTER, Chester Branch, 11 February
 Lt Col Kerry McFADDEN-NEWMAN ARRC, Serving reservist, NI Branch, 24 February
 Catherine BROWN (nee Coutts), 17 March
 Sandra BERRY, Chester Branch, 16 April
 Scott McNEICE, 22 April
 Marie PRICE, HQ, 27 April
 Janet GILLIES RRC, OSTJ, Millbank Branch, 06 May
 Monica ROYCROFT, Catterick, 19 May
 Samantha YOUNG, Chester Branch, 19 June
 Rosalind FRASER, Scottish Branch, July
 Maj Nicola KEMP, serving, 21 July



Our sympathy and condolences to families and friends

'John was a shoulder to lean on whenever a need presented'

John Francis McCann, 9 May 1957 – 27 April 2024

John Francis McCann (known as BJ) was born in Lanarkshire, the youngest of four children. John would often call himself 'the Wean' (pronounced wain) which is Scottish for baby and often a term adopted by a Scottish family from birth until death. Growing up in Wishaw, John described his life as just a normal childhood, completing both primary and secondary education in the town. He always said he was an average scholar, but this was far from the truth.

John excelled at skiing taking part in several competitions, gaining a reputation for being fearless. Black runs held no fear for him. He won several ski competitions and participated in the Scottish Junior Championships coming very close to winning each event. His competing days came to an end due to injury, but he continued to ski socially until further health issues put a stop to it.

John joined the local Air Cadets so he would have the opportunity to fly. He thoroughly enjoyed his time with the cadets, eventually serving as an instructor, before retiring, again due to ill health.

John gained qualifications to embark on an apprenticeship as an engineer in the steel mills around Lanarkshire, qualifying at 20 years of age. However, he felt there was more to life than crawling around heavy grease covered machinery and coming home at the end of each day dirty from the smelting processes. He heard stories about nursing and thought this was a career he could get his teeth into.

John attended Lanarkshire College of Nursing, qualifying as a Registered General Nurse (RGN). His real interest at that time was in Accident and Emergency (A&E) Nursing, and he felt the hustle and bustle of a busy A&E unit allowed him the opportunity to prove himself.

After several years in A&E, John felt he needed a new challenge and looked to Occupational Health Nursing (OHN). After completing the course at the University of Aberdeen, he returned to the steel industry as an OHN hoping to keep himself dirt and grease free. However, some of the incidents he was involved in meant crawling around the very grease covered machines he came to dislike during his engineering days. As he gained experience, he was promoted to more senior OHN roles within the company.

When the steel foundry closed, John secured a Senior OHN appointment with the Royal Navy Armaments Depot (RNAD) Coulport. He completed numerous qualifications during this time which allowed him to be part of the Major Response Team within the base where his previous A&E experience was put to good use. He often spoke about crawling around the workings of submarines during casualty clearing exercises, pointing out with a wry smile, that he was back crawling over grease covered machines.

John left RNAD Coulport to take up a Senior OHN role within NHS Scotland, leading a team supporting GP and Dental practices around Lothian region in how best to support their staff. John put his heart and soul into the job, which he loved but due to ill health, he was forced to retire.

On 6 December 1991 was commissioned as a Lieutenant into the RAMC (V) as a Nursing Officer in 205 (Sc) General Hospital



(V). His A&E and OHN experience made him well-suited for his role in Treatments. He was also responsible for assisting in training Combat Medical Technicians (Cbt Med Tech) in the unit. The soldiers enjoyed John's style of training and achieved high grades when tested academically by the Army Medical Services, both on exercise and operational deployment.

After rebadging to QARANC(V) John was promoted to Captain on 18 June 1994. He was tasked to support medical covers at Cadet Camps. He regularly served as a Nursing Officer in this role and was frequently sought by the Commandant of the Cadet Forces Association. Additionally, John put together male and female teams from 205 for the Annual Reserve Forces NATO Shoot, successfully competing against teams across NATO.

Unfortunately, John developed a heart condition which meant he had to leave military service, something which had a profound effect on him. He felt he still had a lot to give to his military career but could not continue because of his condition. He did, however, continue as a civilian instructor with the Cadet Forces, providing lectures on a weekly basis. Additionally, John took on the role as Chairman and a Welfare Officer of the Scottish Veterans Association, supporting many veterans throughout Scotland and its Islands.

John is missed by the many friends and colleagues he made over the years, both in his civilian and military lives. He leaves behind his wife Liz, his daughter Fiona, stepson David and a large family group. At his funeral a guard of honour made up of many past members of 205 and members of the Scottish branch of the QA Association, and his closest friends escorted his coffin into the crematorium which had standing room only, a show of respect and the love and a true friend.

*Charlie Ormiston
QARANC (V) Retired*

Marie Isabella Price

'Athletic and determined, she raced barefoot after losing shoe in the mud'

Marie Isabella Price (nee Watson) who was born on 28 May 1953, joined the QARANC in 1971, having wished to be a nurse from childhood. After initial training at Depot, her first posting was to Cyprus, where she was introduced to HRH Princess Margaret. Due to the then protocol that Royal handshakes must be performed wearing gloves, a shipment of white gloves had to be sent out for the occasion.

22 years of service later, during which time she saw postings to Rinteln, Belfast, Hong Kong, and the Falklands, as well as Aldershot and Catterick, Marie completed her Army career at DKMH Catterick in June 1993 at the rank of WO2. She was an accomplished athlete and competed in many races in both road and cross-country categories. One memorable moment was during a very muddy race, when she lost a shoe. Kicking off the remaining footwear, and continuing barefoot, imagine her delight at the return of both shoes, by none other than the great Kris Akabusi!

Marie played netball and was involved in a serious collision near Catterick while travelling to a match. Injuries sustained in the incident were severe, and she was lucky to have survived. Marie was the first female from the Corps to pass the Drill Course at Pirbright, and she also qualified in NBC instruction at the time of the first Gulf War.

While posted to Musgrave Park Hospital in Belfast, she experienced the aftermath of both the assassination of Lord Louis Mountbatten, and the attack on the Para's at Warren Point.

On leaving the Army, she settled in Whitehaven, Cumbria, where she continued in various nursing roles. In 1996, whilst working for the local hospice-at-home service, she was introduced to her husband to be, Chris, whom she married in June 1997.

On moving from Cumbria to the Oldham area in 2006, Marie took up employment in a care home, specialising in dementia care, and she remained in that post until her retirement.

Sadly, in July 2024 she was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, with metastases to the brain and bones. After a long struggle with advancing illness, she passed away peacefully on 27 April. Her funeral, with full military honours, took place at Trinity Methodist Church Royton, Oldham on 30 May 2025.

One of a family originally of seven siblings, she is survived by her husband and three brothers.



Chris Price

A 'feisty Shetlander' and WWII nurse: Catherine Brown (1917-2025)

Catherine Brown saw service with the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service in World War Two before emigrating to New Zealand in later life.

She was known as 'Granny'. Such was the warmth, positivity and sheer energy that radiated from Catherine Brown that the name 'Granny' had resonance to those who were not her literal grandchildren or great-grandchildren, extending to many outside her family. With a generous, giving nature, a genuine interest in others and a capacity to talk to most, Catherine had a mastery of grandmotherly things: cooking, baking, knitting and speed walking. She also enjoyed an extraordinarily long life. 'Granny' was the fourth oldest person in New Zealand.

Catherine's optimism was hard won. She grew up in a remote, rocky, treeless part of the world, with Force 10 gales and four hours of sunlight in winter. In her professional life she faced and overcame the horrors of World War II, assisting in operations on the wounded and dying. Challenged again by conditions in post-war Australia, she later prospered as a Southland hostel matron and psychiatric nurse whom nothing fazed. Diminutive in size but indomitable in spirit, with a work ethic second to none, long before she was 'Granny' colleagues dubbed her 'The Mighty Atom'.

Catherine Coutts was born 31 March, 1917 on Fetlar, Shetland, the first of seven children of Frank Bevis Coutts and Margaret Ann (Meta) Coutts (née Kelman). It was an eventful entry into the world, in the middle of the fiercest storm to hit Shetland in half a century. Frank and a handful of other men rowed five miles in an open boat to secure the services of a physician; when the doctor expressed reservations, they insisted.

A childhood on Fetlar was character building in more ways than one. Catherine was profoundly influenced by the man whose farm her father managed, Rear Admiral Sir William Watson Cheyne. A Scottish surgeon, bacteriologist and pioneer in the use of antiseptic surgical methods in the United Kingdom, Sir Watson, as he was known locally, encouraged her to pursue a medical career.

At the age of 12 Catherine left Fetlar to attend the Anderson Educational Institute, a boarding school in Lerwick, the main town and port of the Shetland archipelago.

Following her childhood aspirations, secondary schooling gave way to medical training at the Lincoln County Hospital in Lincolnshire, England. Training was formally free but necessarily involved a lot of hard, arduous work.

Having graduated as a nurse, Catherine moved to Manchester to complete further instruction in midwifery, finishing the course at the onset of World War II.

Volunteering for the Queen Alexandra's Imperial



“Diminutive in size but indomitable in spirit, with a work ethic second to none”

Nursing Service (QA), Catherine's first posting was to Greece. Getting there was via a convoy, leaving from Glasgow. The sound of ship building echoing across the river Clyde, a reflection of the desperation of that time, was a memory long retained.

With Greece's capitulation, Egypt became the new destination, though due to the U-boat danger in the Mediterranean they had to go the long way, entirely around Africa. The convoy's progress was fraught, as it came under attack from German aircraft, dropping bombs overhead. Aged 23, Catherine and her friends still had the fearlessness of youth, watching proceedings without too much thought given to the consequences if one hit its target.

The convoy eventually landed at a port on the Red Sea. A trek overland took them to a temporary tent hospital not far from Cairo.

The long, grey and red uniforms of the QA, with starched collars, were less than ideal for the desert. Medical staff were initially rationed to one pint of water a day. Accommodation was under canvas.

The hospital had capacity for 600 patients. Catherine became a sister in the operating theatre,

attending to gruesome combat wounds and amputations under conditions where nurses were required to do much more than they would in civilian life. A solitary nurse assisted each surgeon. On one occasion the roles were reversed with Catherine performing an eye removal operation with a doctor's assistance, "in case he wasn't around" next time.

Catherine's inner strength came to the fore. In later life she worked hard to blot out the memories, or rather focus on periods of leave and the exoticism of Middle Eastern locations. She feasted on melon at the Dead Sea, danced in the streets of Damascus, dined at the Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo and of course visited the pyramids, riding a camel.

Following her two years in the desert Catherine was sent to Sicily, working at the army hospital at Catania.

The island of Malta, serving in the British Military Hospital at Mtarfa, afforded more solid accommodation than the tents of Egypt but Catherine found the climate of her third overseas posting oppressive, saying once that "the heat was very wet, so you were dripping all the time".

Returning to Britain after four and a half years away, she saw the balance of the war out in a military hospital in Oxford.

Catherine had known Peter Brown, a fellow Fetlar resident, since childhood. Having lost contact during the war, they became reacquainted at a family wedding. With Peter away at sea, plying his trade, the subsequent courtship was stop-start.



“
The heat was
very wet,
so you were
dripping all
the time



Catherine and Peter were married on 20 March, 1947 at a Registry Office in Edinburgh. She took a job as a nurse in a factory until the birth of the couple's first child, Susan (Sue). Julia was born seven years later.

With the privations of post-war life in Britain a consideration, Catherine and Peter aspired to relocate to the Antipodes. Unfortunately, Peter's maritime profession did not fit the requirements of New Zealand's assisted immigrant programme.

It was not until 1959 that the Browns arrived in Apollo Bay, in south-western Victoria, sampling the joys of a house where grass grew through the floorboards, there was but one tap and no electricity. Warnings about snakes saw Catherine fearful for her children's safety. A relocation to Dandenong, 30km south-east of Melbourne was an improvement but with two uncles already in New Zealand, the superior Pacific island again became the preferred nation of choice.

Arriving in the country in 1961, a few months were spent on a sheep station at Ākitio, a coastal township near Dannevirke before a shift to Invercargill. Catherine took a position as the matron of Norwood Hostel, caring for country girls transitioning to urban work. It was an ideal job for someone with Catherine's people skills. She would later say that she "ran it like a big family".

In 1969, after a decade away from Europe, Catherine took Julia on a holiday home, reconnecting with family and indulging her royalist proclivities as the Queen paid a visit to Lerwick.

Upon return and the 1970 closure of Norwood Hostel, Catherine was appointed sister-in-charge of Ward 12, the psychiatric unit, at Southland Hospital. Again, she proved a warm and indomitable presence, the "feisty Shetlander" able to calm the most disturbed of patients with her non-threatening, reasonable manner.





Retiring to Nelson in 1980, Catherine and Peter enjoyed a decade living in a riverside property. With typical fearlessness, Catherine learnt to swim for the first time in her 60s. Dubbed “the original power walker” by one grandchild, she traversed the Nelson beach front at a daunting pace, often outstripping younger family members who regularly enjoyed her and Peter’s hospitality.

Catherine worked part time at a Nelson rest home, retiring several times, the last when she was herself older than some of the residents she was nursing.

Peter passed away just prior to Christmas, 1990. Catherine elected to move to the North Island to be closer to family, buying a house in Auckland’s Torbay, where daughter Julia was to keep her company for a couple of years. The pair enjoyed trips together to Bali in 1996 and Thailand in 1999.

At the age of 79 Catherine returned to Shetland to help nurse her sister Meg, who was dying of cancer.

In her 80s, health problems informed a decision to shift into a retirement village in Hamilton. New friends were made and the climate had a positive impact. Catherine showed few signs of slowing down, continuing to walk considerable distances on a daily basis. At the age of 89 she travelled to Melbourne for the express purpose of buying a new dress for a granddaughter’s wedding. The acquisition of a walking frame in her 90s was less a concession to frailty than a signal to motorists to slow down. At 91 she met the challenge of climbing a ladder on a beach property building site without batting an eyelid.

Treasuring each of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Catherine was known for her home baking, her chocolate laden letters, amazing cuddles and capacity to “remind you how loved you were”.

In her late 90s Catherine began suffering from



“
Dubbed
“the original
power
walker”
by one
grandchild,
she traversed
the Nelson
beach front
at a daunting
pace

transient ischemic attacks, which often presented as “graceful collapses”, a momentary loss of consciousness and then a rapid recovery. After one such episode at a family wedding whilst dancing, she was heard to exclaim at Waikato Hospital that “I’m not ready to go yet”. The sentiment was demonstrated again ten days before her 100th birthday, when a TIA threatened to spoil the party but ultimately Catherine’s legendary resilience prevailed.

Living at Hilda Ross Retirement Village in her last years, Catherine met blindness and a hearing impairment with stoic realism, if a regret that she could no longer knit. As physical and cognitive decline took its toll and her world narrowed, she nevertheless continued to express her love and positivity.

Catherine Brown died 17 March, 2025 in Hamilton, a fortnight before her 108th birthday. She is survived by daughters Sue and Julia, son-in-law Roger, grandchildren Tim, Juliet, Martin and Sarah and great-grandchildren Alex, Cameron, Nicholas, Jono, Franca, Jack and Ethan.

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Mavis Bordenkircher – a ‘gentle giant’ who broke the mould of matrons

Mavis Bordenkircher was born on 15 February 1938 and died on 3 February 2025.

Mavis was commissioned as a Captain in the Territorial Army in the mid-1970s, joining the Edinburgh Detachment of 205 Scottish General Hospital RAMC (Volunteers). She was initially appointed to the role of Ward Manager where her experience gained in the NHS quickly became apparent. Mavis was subsequently promoted to Major in the early 1980s and after 12 years' service she was awarded the Territorial Decoration for efficient service.

In the early 1980s Mavis joined the Interallied Confederation of Medical Reserve Officers (CIOMR), a NATO organisation which fosters close relationships with medical Reserve personnel and services within the NATO alliance. She enjoyed the travel and met many interesting people, several of whom she remained in contact with long after retirement.

Roll forward to 1990 and the first Gulf Conflict and Mavis was one of the first to volunteer to deploy with 205 to Saudi Arabia. Just two days before she was due to fly out, the sad news came that her mother had died. Mavis travelled home to be with her family, whilst the Commanding Officer arranged for her to be attached to the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital (QEMH) in Woolwich until such time that the Unit returned in entirety from the Gulf, at which point Mavis would be demobbed and re-join her unit as a TA Officer.

However, whilst Mavis may not have deployed, some of her luggage contents did. Having packed multiple tins of haggis & shortbread, her colleagues had to share the load of all the goodies between them, so that if the opportunity arose the Unit would be able to celebrate Burns night as Mavis had intended.

Whilst the rest of the Unit adapted to life in the desert, Mavis got to grips with life on the wards of the QEMH and the QARANC ward dress. She never really mastered the art of starching and folding the veil or judging the volume of dip starch required. Her veils were either so stiff that each of the three corners could be classed as an offensive weapon or so floppy the veil would flutter in the breeze like a limp butterfly.

Promoted to Lt Col in 1992 and appointed as Matron at 205, she held this role for four years. She could always be found in the thick of it, putting up tents, pan-bashing and generally rolling her sleeves up and getting on with whatever needed to be done. On Exercise, Mavis and her team could erect a 50 bedded ward so quickly that even the umpires were impressed. No mean feat.

Mavis was a well-respected leader and a real team player, a hard worker, good listener and always gave wise counsel whenever invited. Every TA training weekend Mavis could be relied upon



On Exercise, Mavis and her team could erect a 50 bedded ward so quickly that even the umpires were impressed. No mean feat.



to bring a picnic hamper full of edible goodies and sweet treats to keep up the spirits of her room mates.

Mavis joined the Scottish Branch of the QARANC Association in April 1990 and became an active supporter for 35 years, taking on any role that was required. She did her utmost to attend events, even when it involved a convoluted journey by public transport. Without fail, she always sent a card or letter of thanks after every event, even a Coffee Catch Up.

Her height could be intimidating, but almost immediately colleagues realised she was a very gentle giant and always polite and welcoming to newcomers.

Mavis strived to do her absolute best for patients, staff and her fellow Branch members and treated everyone with kindness. For many who knew her, the world will be a less bright place without her, and we are fortunate to have shared part of the journey with her.

Karen Irvine RRC, Chair, Scottish Branch

As expected, a significant number of people attended Mavis's funeral, family, friends, former work and military colleagues.

In addition to Karen Irvine reading the eulogy, the family had invited members of the Scottish Branch to form a line up outside the crematorium as her coffin draped in the QARANC flag, was carried inside, while Catherine Pounder, our Branch piper, played one of Mavis's favourite tunes.

Finally, in true Mavis style, she had arranged for everyone to toast each other with a wee tincture of sherry before heading home (for the non-drivers, of course). A very fitting farewell.

*Sheila Jones
Secretary, Scottish Branch*

Could you be one of 14,800 with an unclaimed pension?

Alisa Lakeman-Ford is a Trustee of the QARANC Association who also works for the Forces Pension Society (FPS). Its latest and biggest campaign aims to unite veterans with unclaimed preserved pensions – could you have an unclaimed entitlement?

Approximately 2,000 preserved armed forces pensions go unclaimed every year, and there are currently in the region of 14,800 unclaimed pensions waiting to be paid to eligible veterans. The FPS wants to reduce these staggering numbers by raising awareness, which is the purpose of this article aimed at you and your friends, comrades and colleagues.

The simplest way to find out if you are due a pension is to contact Veterans UK, the Armed Forces Pension Scheme Administrator by calling 0800 085 3600. Preserved pensions are not paid automatically, they need to be claimed and this is done by completing and sending AFPS Form 8 to Veterans UK in Glasgow.

Some veterans will have signed 'gratuity earning' contracts; I know I did when I joined. Gratuity earning contracts paid a lump sum on exit, in lieu of a preserved pension income, and if you received that gratuity when you left, then you are not eligible for a preserved pension. If you changed your terms of service to pension earning, then you would not have been paid a gratuity, instead your service will have accrued you pension rights in one of the UK's most generous public service pension schemes.

If you fulfilled the minimal service criteria (and these criteria changed over the years) but left before becoming eligible for an immediate pension (22 years for other ranks and 16 years for officers), you could be eligible for a preserved pension that can be claimed, partly at age 60 and partly at age 65. The graphic explains in more detail.

For more information, please visit the Forces Pension Society Charitable Fund campaign page at <https://forcespensionsociety.org/unclaimedpensions/>

I am now going to touch on what is becoming known as the 'Milroy Case'. Maj Charles Milroy, a reservist with 37 years' service, took the MOD to an Employment Tribunal (ET) over the fact that his service prior to 2015 (when AFPS 15 was introduced) did not earn him pension rights.

The ET found in favour of Maj Milroy, ruling that he had been treated less favourably, as a part-time worker (Reservist) when compared to full-time workers (Regulars), in that he was denied access to a military pension, namely the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 1975.

The MOD submitted an appeal on 17 September 2024, against the ruling, which was rejected but



There are currently in the region of 14,800 unclaimed pensions waiting to be paid to eligible veterans



they were given leave to appeal on a point of law. That appeal is being heard in December 2025.

This case is complex on many levels, not least of all that circumstances will be different for every claimant. If anyone reading this article believes they might have a case of their own, I urge you to read the update at <https://forcespensionsociety.org/2024/10/the-milroy-case-reservists-pensions/>

The bottom line is that if you think you are, or might be affected, or want to make a claim of your own, you should seek your own independent legal advice.

What follows is a summary of FPSs understanding of the process required:

- The PTWR regulations have a 6-month time limit for lodging an Employment Tribunal (ET) claim in relation to service in the Armed Forces. In terms of pensions, the latest the 6-month time limit can start is at the point of retirement or the date when a pension would become payable. Herein lies one of the first complexities in respect of the number of different pension schemes and differing payment start dates for each.
- PTWR regulations also require a Service Complaint to be submitted prior to making a claim to an ET. It should be noted that the requirement is that a service complaint be submitted, it does not have to have been decided or ruled on.
- Following the Service complaint submission, you will have to comply with the ACAS Early Conciliation process (EC process). Once the EC process is complete, a certificate will be issued and then you can submit the ET claim.

Needless to say, it is a somewhat tortuous journey, that I have only outlined here. More detail on each step can be found on the FPS website, but I must stress, that the FPS cannot advise individuals on their cases. It is an individual choice to submit a challenge.

The Forces Pension Society is engaged with the matter and will update the information on our website as more becomes available and the case develops.

I also urge you, please do not to call the QA Association office to ask about Milroy, visit the FPS website then take your own legal advice.



Membership Application

Annual Membership

Title		Service No.	
Rank		Decorations	
First name		Surname	
Maiden name (if applicable)		Date of Birth	
Address			
Email			
Phone no.		Mobile no.	

Please state which branch you would like to join or remain on HQ Roll: ☐

- ☐ Aldershot ☐ Chester ☐ Jurassic Coast ☐ Midlands ☐ Millbank (London) ☐ Newcastle
☐ Northern (Catterick) ☐ Northern Ireland ☐ Scotland ☐ South Downs ☐ Wales ☐ West Country

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Initial subscription will be deducted from your account on processing of your membership. Your annual payment will then be collected by direct debit annually.

- ☐ Annual Subscription including Gazette **UK** £15.00
☐ Annual Subscription including Gazette **OVERSEAS** £20.00
☐ Direct Debit Completed

The Association would like to notify members of events and activities that may be of interest. To enable us to contact you by email please tick the box below.

- ☐ I consent to receive information on events from the Association by email.

Signature Date

Completed forms should be returned to: **Email: admin@qarancassociation.org.uk or post to QARANC Association, Robertson House (Room 22), Slim Road, Camberley GU15 4NP**



Please fill in the whole form using a ball point pen and send to:

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

QARANC Association
Robertson House
Slim Road
Camberley
Surrey GU15 4NP

Originator's Identification Number

8	0	8	5	0	7
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Reference Number (for Association use only)

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Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay QARANC Association Direct Debits from the account detailed in this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee.

I understand that this Instruction may remain with QARANC Association and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank / Building Society.

Bank/Building Society Account Number

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Branch Sort Code

--	--	--	--	--	--

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager Bank / Building Society
Address
Postcode

Signature(s)

--

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account

This guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change QARANC Association will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by QARANC Association or your Bank or Building Society you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.



IN CONFIDENCE WHEN COMPLETED



MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT FUND REQUEST

1. Particulars of Applicant

Surname		Forenames	
Address		Date of Birth	
		Postcode	
Email		Telephone No.	

2. Summary of Request for Assistance

(Please outline details of events, date, method of transport and reason for request)
Submission must be prior to date of when assistance is needed.

3. Amount Requested (maximum £100)

4. Bank Details of Applicant

Bank & Account Name			
A/c No.		A/c Sort Code	

5. Declaration

- I agree to submit receipts immediately after the money has been spent.
- I understand I will be in receipt of financial assistance from the Membership Support Fund.
- I agree to my personal data contained in this application being retained by the QARANC Association for statistical purposes only.
- I am/am not willing to take part in the QARANC Association marketing campaign.

Applicant's Full Name in Capitals

Signed Date

Completed forms should be returned to: Email: generalsecretary@qarancassociation.org.uk or post to
QARANC Association, Robertson House (Room 22), Slim Road, Camberley GU15 4NP



QARANC Association Membership Support Fund

Membership Support Fund Guidelines and Support Giving Criteria

Overriding principle “Our Motto is FRIENDSHIP”

General

1. The Membership Support Fund is primarily to assist QARANC Association members to attend either Branch or Association social events.
2. Payment is to be made directly to the applicant, no third-party is to receive funds on their behalf.
3. The financial limit of the Membership Support fund will be reviewed annually by Trustees.

Eligibility

4. The applicant must be a current member of the QARANC Association.

Expenditure Criteria

5. **Evidence of Expenditure.** The applicant must show evidence of the funds spent by way of a receipt/invoice immediately after the event.
6. **Support to attend medical appointments.** Consideration may be given to award assistance to attend medical appointments in some circumstances. Applicants will be asked to give evidence that they have explored all other services first (i.e., Patient Transport Services, Royal Voluntary Service).
7. **Amount of support.** The amount of support must not exceed £100.00 per individual member per event, up to £200 in a 12 month period.

Decisions

8. Applications will be determined by the General Secretary Application must be submitted prior to date of when assistance is required.

Legacies and Donations

During the Financial Year 2024/25 the QARANC Association received the following legacies and donations. All were gratefully received and go a long way to supporting our Association – thank you.

Legacy

N Annan.....	£5,000
M Smith.....	£5,102.18
E Snelson	£85,000.00
M Stacey.....	£10,000.00

Donations

B Buckland.....	£140
S Davies	£460
Edinburgh Trust.....	£1,000
C King.....	£52.25
D Laux-Farnham.....	£35
S Redding	£666
B Smith.....	£50
Wayfarers Lodge.....	£767.50
Withheld.....	£200

Fundraising

JHG(N)	£240
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Your support can help us to help you

As a Registered Charity, we rely on the generosity of those who donate money to help boost the income from membership fees and to ensure that we continue to support our members and veterans. We have been amazed by the kindness shown this year through individual donations, fundraising efforts and

legacies left to us in wills. Whether it's a few pounds, or a large legacy, we commit to spending your money to support our veterans through branch activities, national events and benevolence as well as keeping in contact via The Gazette and social media. Everything we spend assists us to make sure that our veterans are recognised and supported. If you have fundraising ideas, or would like help in setting up a legacy in your will, please contact us.

Thank you for supporting us to support you

You can support the QARANC Association by making one off or regular donations by contacting generalsecretary@qarancassociation.org.uk for further information.

Or you can donate by:

Telephone donations

You're welcome to donate by calling the QARANC Association offices on 0300 365 0120. Our offices are open Monday – Thursday, between 09:00hrs and 16:00hrs.

Remember to mention Gift Aid if you are a tax payer.

Postal donations

You can donate by post. Please send a cheque made out to 'QARANC Association' to the address below. Please do remember to include a covering letter stating you wish to make a donation and remember to mention Gift Aid if you are a tax payer.

QARANC Association
Room 22, Robertson House
Camberley
Surrey
GU15 4NP

Donations through your bank account

You can choose to make a one off payment or set up a regular Standing Order.

Please contact the Association office for our bank details by calling us on 0300 365 0120 or emailing info@qarancassociation.org.uk

FORCES PENSION SOCIETY CALL TO ACTION! Veterans' Unclaimed Armed Forces Pensions

At least 14,800 unclaimed
Armed Forces pension
benefits*...



Historically, around 2,000
preserved Armed Forces pensions
go unclaimed each year...



Anyone serving after April 1975 now aged
60 or over could have an Armed Forces
pension if they served for 2 years or more...



The pension is NOT paid automatically – veterans
must apply to Veterans UK using AFPS Form 8 or
call 0800 085 3600 for further information



IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND
YOUR PENSION



SCAN FOR MORE

*Source: MoD AFPS Annual Report 24/07/24. This document is reproduced annually to incorporate any new figures.

