



QARANC ASSOCIATION
WELSH BRANCH
NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER 2025



CHAIRS MESSAGE November 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends

As I look out of my window at the lovely Autumn colours and a carpet of brown and gold leaves adorning the bridle path, I feel it is a far cry from the picture of the dancing white snowdrops on our last newsletter. This year, as becomes more evident the older I get, time has once again passed very quickly.



The Branch has had a busy, fun-filled Spring and Summer with visits to National Trust gardens, Castles, walks around lakes and carefree lunches. The weather has also been kind to us and we have even managed to enjoy a picnic in Raglan Castle grounds.

The Halloween festivities are almost upon us with children excited about the imminent half term holiday when they will be fashioning elaborate pumpkin faces and "trick or treating" around the neighborhood.

As Remembrance Day approaches, a highlight of the year for me will be attending the Festival of Remembrance Service at the Royal Albert Hall, followed the next day by an emotional march to the Cenotaph with Armed Forces personnel, both serving and veterans.

I am also proud to be singing with the Military Wives Choir in a London station and at the RCT Festival of Remembrance in Pontypridd.

Christmas decorations are appearing in the shops, a busy time for everyone, but a time of year that I love with numerous ornaments and decorations coming out from the archives for their annual display. I have recently joined the handbell ringing group, and although very much a novice, I am ringing with the team at three carol services so far; this could be interesting!

I hope that all of you will be enjoying these festive times with family and friends and wish you all health and happiness for the future.

My heartfelt thanks to the Branch Committee who have worked so hard to make it such an enjoyable season.

In Friendship

ROS Y
Chair

Editor's piece

What a glorious autumn we have had, the amazing colours of the leaves a mixture of green, yellow, orange red and pink a veritable feast for the eyes. I still have red poppies blooming in the garden.

I have finally sorted out my email account so if you would like to write an article for the newsletter don't hesitate vald Davies23@btinternet.com account.

Valmai Davies

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Welfare

'Friendship is our strength'.

Friendship is more than just a motto in the QARANC, it's the way we are.

Throughout the year the committee has continued with its welfare ethos being in telephone contact, and sending flowers, cards to Branch members.

Welcome

The branch extends a warm welcome to our new members, and we look forward to finding out about you and meeting you at an event in the future.

The Last Post

Col (R) Tina Donnelly passed away August 2025

Sylvia Davies passed away Thursday 25th September 2025 she hadn't been well and had recently moved to live with her daughter. Previously she lived in Llandrindod where Rosy and Marilyn visited her.

John Nicholl Joyce Hillsdon's Partner passed away July / August 2025

John was an unofficial Honorary Member attending many of our events. We will miss seeing him at our future events.

Congratulations

Caroline Whittaker on her retirement from Public Health Wales.

Welcome to the Welsh Branch

Mal Lewis
Gill Jones

Frankee Jones
Judith Bowler

Sally-Ann Sweet
Sue Moos

Sue Moos pen picture.

After training in general nursing at Westminster Hospital in London followed by midwifery training at Gloucester Maternity Hospital, I joined the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) in 1985. Over the next three years, I was posted to BMH Rinteln then BMH Munster, and then finally to the Princess Margaret Hospital at RAF Wroughton.

Following my QARANC service, I continued my career as a midwife before training in Public Health and qualifying as a Health Visitor. My career then led me to work for SSAFA in Germany, before returning to the UK. Back in the NHS, I took up a specialist post in Postnatal Depression, subsequently transitioning to service improvement in an NHS Cancer Network.

Thank you Sue for sharing your military and civilian work experiences.

BRANCH EVENTS FOR 2025

- NOV 9th Remembrance Day Services – own venues
- DEC 05th Christmas Lunch Radyr Golf Club

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held via Zoom on 1st September 2025

Committee Members

Rosy Hubbard	Chair
Terrie Levett	Secretary
Caroline Whittaker	Treasurer
Sally Fowler	Events Co-Ordinator
Valmai Davies	PR
Janet Scott-Samuel	Social Media
Julie Coxall	General Member
Joyce Hillsdon	General Member

We welcome Terri Levett to her new role as secretary and wish her well in the post.

Thank you to all the committee members for their work and support in moving the Branch forward over the last year.

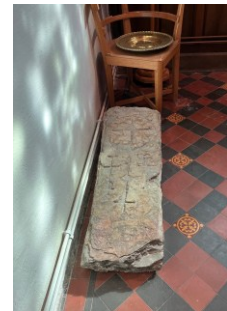
Sue Bush Chair of the QARANC Association attended the Zoom and prior to the meeting gave us an overview of where the Association stands now, awaiting developments. Time was allowed for questions.

WELSH BRANCH CORPS DAY 6TH APRIL 2025

QARANC Corps Day Celebration

Driving along the A470 on a beautiful spring morning, Pen-y-Fan and the Bannau Brycheiniog looked absolutely stunning in the early sunshine. We made our way to Llanharry to meet up with fellow members at Rosy's before continuing on to Llantrisant Parish Church for our QARANC Corps Day celebration, thoughtfully organised by our Chair.

Llantrisant Parish Church, is an ancient and atmospheric building, dedicated to three saints St Illtyd, St Gwynno and St Dfodwg provided the perfect setting. The Reverend Vincent Gardiner warmly welcomed us, and the service focused on our Corps Day. It included a heartfelt mix of hymns, the QARANC poem, the Collect and Army Nurse Prayer, a prayer for those deployed on active service, and a prayer for the Armed Forces of the Crown, as well as information on Lent and Passion Sunday. It was a lovely, joyous service. After the service, we had the opportunity to explore the church, including a visit to its oldest artefact – *The Resurrection Stone* – believed to date back as far as the 7th century. The east window features a stained-glass picture of the crucifixion depicting a *beardless* Christ .



We then enjoyed coffee, cake, and custard creams while chatting with members of the congregation. Many were interested in learning more about the QARANC, our roles, and our service, with some sharing that they had relatives who had served in the Corps.

Then it was time to return to Rosy's for lunch. There was plenty of time beforehand to catch up with other members and enjoy each other's company. Lunch was delicious – the chocolate trifle, in particular, was definitely "naughty but very nice!" All too soon, it was time to say our goodbyes and head home.



What a lovely day it had been - a joyous church service with the QARANC proudly at the heart of it, followed by a wonderful lunch full of chatter, laughter, and new connections. A heartfelt thank you once again to Rosy and Phil for organising such a special day.

We're now looking forward to our next event — a visit to Dyffryn Gardens on 30th May!

QARANC WELSH BRANCH VISIT TO DUFFRYN GARDENS

On a lovely sunny day in May, branch and family members made their way to National Trust Duffryn Gardens which are Grade1 listed, site described as a peaceful oasis just outside of Cardiff.

As most of us had travelled some distance, our first stop was the café for coffee, where we gradually congregated. It was lovely that Jenny Jones, although unable to undertake the tour came and met us for coffee. A perfect chance to catch up before we started our tour. Julie Coxell, a branch member and tour guide at the gardens, not only organised the event but also served as our own special guide for the morning. Her wealth of knowledge about the gardens their history, and the flora and fauna enhanced our experience.

Julie also introduced many of us to Goggle Lens, to identify plants and trees. Such a useful tool to have whilst walking around the grounds.



Following coffee, we began our tour with an introduction to the Gardens' history and the various areas we would see. The first stop was a wilding area that led into the extensive arboretum, where we admired many different acers of stunning colours, shapes and sizes alongside many other species of trees.

Julie pointed out the 297 year old Lucknow Oak, a particular highlight. Most of the trees here are non-native species, having been brought to the gardens by past owners who returned from travels around the world, such as the Ginko tree planted in 1890.

As we continued through the grounds, Duffryn House suddenly came into view, a majestic Grade 2 listed building overlooking sweeping lawns. Although currently closed for renovation, it was still an impressive sight.



The gardens themselves are designed in a variety of styles inspired by various countries around the world. We saw a dazzling mix of plants in bright rich colours. Peaceful corners perfect for relaxing. Ponds dotted with a variety of water lilies in bloom, where damsel flies hovered gracefully above. The borders full of mixed planting, were stunning, and the rose garden offered an array of different colours and scents.

After a picnic lunch, we had the afternoon free to explore further. Many enjoyed the kitchen gardens and the tropical glass house, home to an amazing cacti collection.

There was also the chance to visit a special exhibit 'Helios' named after the ancient Greek God of the sun. This spherical piece of artwork provided a detailed view of our solar system's greatest star, accompanied by a soundscape that revealed its hidden beauty and power. A fascinating and memorable experience.



All too soon, it was time to leave Duffryn Gardens. The day had been full of beautiful landscapes, fascinating history, and wonderful company. It was also an ideal opportunity to see *Helios* and catch up with fellow members. A good time was had by all, and we now look forward to our next event, our annual walk in August around Llangorse Lake Powys.

Wales National Armed forces Day Caldicot Castle 2025

On a drizzly early morning on June 28th Caroline Whittacker and I arrived at Caldicot Castle ruins, to set up our gazebo. We were in a unique spot on the upper field close to the castle itself and co-located with 203 Multi-Role Medical Regiment. The support we received from their personnel in helping us to set up was invaluable and are so deserving of a big thank you from the branch. This was a unique example showing great collaboration with a reserve unit.

Sally Fowler and Terri Levett ably supported Caroline and me in manning the stand throughout the day. The event was an ideal opportunity to engage with both service, veterans and members of the public, explaining the work of the Association. Our stand attracted a steady stream of visitors, including several retired veterans of the Corps.

One visitor was the husband of a QA, and we are hopeful that these interactions may lead to some new members joining our branch.



On what turned out to be a very hot day the gazebo provided a welcome respite from the heat. One of the highlights of the event was a solo Spitfire flypast to open the event. Sadly, the planned parachute display had to be cancelled due to low cloud cover.

Caldicot Castle itself made a stunning backdrop for the events taking place on the central stage. Music was provided by Military Wives Choir and several regiment bands. It was lovely sitting in our gazebo listening to the military music being performed.

It was a successful and rewarding day, and we now look forward to next Armed Forces Day scheduled for Carmarthen in 2026.

We are also grateful to Association Headquarters for providing a grant that allowed us to offer tea, coffee and biscuits to our visitors – a small but very welcome addition.

Overall, it was an excellent day that fully achieved our objectives .

Visit to the National Memorial Arboretum

Ann Thomas, Chrissie Owens-Galbraith and I spent a few days exploring the Arboretum. Of course, the highlight was visiting the QARANC Memorial. The memorial plot continues to be well cared for and is as stunning as ever.

More about our trip in March's newsletter. Below are a couple of photos taken during the visit.



If you look closely at the photo of the memorial, you can see the reflection in the marble. The red of our QARANC polo shirts coloured the badge with a red hue.

Due to the hot sunny weather, it was amazing how some of the photos turned out . The reflections everywhere were amazing.

For the knitters, crocheter's and crafter's in the Branch
This touring exhibition might interest you. Returning to Wales in 2026

THE LONGEST YARN

In 2024 to mark the 80th Anniversary of D Day The initial **Longest Yarn** was commenced Inspired by the idea of knitted post box toppers. It is a three -dimensional wool tapestry knitted , crocheted by hundreds of volunteers worldwide.

It comprises of different knitted / crocheted dioramas enclosed in clear plastic cases. The initial one is now located in France having travelled around the world on display.

This was followed by a second exhibition, '*Britain at War*' described as a study on social history that explored how Britain coped during the dark days between 3rd September 1939 to VE Day, 8th May 1945. It captures every aspect of life, beginning with the day war was declared, through rationing, evacuees, the Blitz, Churchill's speech, and the grim headlines of Britain's darkest hours , before ending in the joy of peace with the scene at Buckingham Palace. Each scene is a unique, three -dimensional wool tapestry lovingly knitted or crocheted by hundreds of volunteers.

Jacqueline Wilding and I, representing the Powys Branch of SSAFA, had the privilege of helping staff the *Longest Yarn: Britain at War* exhibition at St Marys Church Brecon. The exhibition featured 37 dioramas, each one depicting a different aspect of life wartime Britain. It began with *The Day War Was Declared* and concluded with '*The Kiss*' the iconic VJ celebrations in Time Square, New York. Every diorama was filled with remarkable detail both delightful and moving. It was an absolute pleasure to be involved in such a special project.

Later this year the *Britain at War* exhibition will be completed with a total of 80 dioramas. It is due to go back on tour again in 2026 and will be visiting various places in Wales.



The day war was declared



V.E Day Celebrations Buckingham Palace

At the same time The **Royal Welsh Regimental Museum Brecon**, had a display of Post Box Toppers. One of particular interest to me was the 203 Welsh Field Hospital (V). if you look closely can you see the ECG, blood transfusion and the new MMR regimental sign.



I know many of you will have celebrated VE Day 80 in your own town, village or city. As such it would be wonderful to hear your memories for our next newsletter. Here are mine from Talgarth, Powys

Commemorating VE Day 80 – My Personal Memories

Memories of V.E. DAY 80 in Talgarth Powys

V.E. Day 80 preparations commenced in February and during the next few months we made felt poppies, to be attached to scrim and form part of a poppy cascade training down the corner of Talgarth Town Hall, like a rivers of red and purple poppies a beautiful and moving tribute

Wednesday 7th May – Evening Commemoration Service

A Service of Commemoration Organised by the Welsh Guards Pilgrims. Held in remembrance of the fallen soldiers of the Second World War laid to rest in the Commonwealth War Graves at Hay-on-Wye.

Jacqui Wilding and I attended a deeply moving sunset ceremony at the cemetery in Hay-on-Wye, held to honour the German and Italian prisoners of war buried in Commonwealth War Graves. The service began at 21:00.

It was a poignant reminder that those buried there were someone's father, son, brother, or uncle — lying far from home. Some German relatives were also present, adding a personal and emotional element to the evening. As darkness fell, the atmosphere became quietly reflective. The service included a welcome, prayers, the Exhortation, and the Last Post played by a bugler, followed by a minute's silence. A piper then played a lament while we laid candles on the individual headstones. The service concluded with Reveille, the Kohima Epitaph, a closing prayer, and the piper playing us out. It was an emotional service in part due to the atmospheric setting as darkness fell the headstones glowed gently in the candlelight - a touching and unforgettable tribute.



Thursday 8th May – V.E. Day 80 Service of Commemoration

In the early evening, a commemorative service was held at St Gwendoline's Church Talgarth, as the congregation sang *"I Vow to Thee, My Country"* while the bells rang out above us. Afterwards, a beacon was lit on top of the church tower to the joyful pealing bells. Many waved flags, creating a nostalgic and emotional moment that must have stirred vivid memories for those who remembered the original celebrations in 1945. The final act of remembrance took place at the town war memorial, where a wreath was laid on behalf of the Town Council. Afterwards, we warmed ourselves up with a hot chocolate.



Saturday 10th May – V.E. Day 80 Street Party

Jacqui and I arrived at Talgarth's town square at 9:30 a.m. to help set up for the street party. The sun shone all day, 1940s music filled the air. Around midday residents from the local care home arrived, it was lovely to see them enjoying themselves - many had personal memories of the original V.E. Day in 1945. Chrissie and Brian joined in the picnic too.

Children played traditional games such as Splatt the Rat, Hopscotch, Pin the-Tail-on-the-Donkey (complete with magnets!). George the miniature pony made a guest appearance and was an instant favourite. The joy on the children's faces perfectly captured the spirit of celebration.

It had been a busy two weeks, beginning with the privilege of tending to war graves - a task I hold dear, especially knowing that many belonged to World War II veterans. Contributing to the commemorations, even in a small way, was truly an honour.

Victory in Japan Memorial Service Talgarth on 15th August 2025

The memorial service was held at the War Memorial Talgarth. Canon Edwards led the service a Town Councillor read the Exhortation and Kohima Response. Kelvin Jenkins played the last post followed by laying of a wreath in remembrance of those who died far from home. As well as those that returned "the Forgotten Army." We will remember them.

Writing this piece encouraged me to learn more about the Kohima Epitaph and the Exhortation. The epitaph is engraved on the Memorial to the 2nd British Division in the cemetery of Kohima (Northeast India).

Of special interest to me is a Kohima Memorial Earth Casket in Bedwelty House Tredegar. The casket of earth brought home from Tredegar Hill in Burma (WW2). A lasting link to those who served.

I have since found out more information via a pamphlet donated to The Royal Welsh Museum Brecon where I volunteer. Together with this letter located in the archives and found it so evocative of what the battles must have been like during the war in Burma. The heat, jungle all adds to the difficulties that our troops endured.

Excerpt from a Letter from Lieut-General Sir A.F. Philip Christiason, Bt, KBE, CB, DSO, MC 4th March 1944 (late Commander – 15 Indian Corps) from The Royal Welsh Museum Collection with Permission.

I have heard with great interest of the tribute proposed to pay the men of Tredegar who fell on Tredegar Hill on the 26th March 1944.

On behalf of myself and the officers and men of the 15 Indian Corps associated with the 6th battalion South Wales Borderers in this battle, I pay our tribute to their gallantry, and we remember those who made the supreme sacrifice. The capture of the famous Maungdaw Tunnels were commanded by Tredegar Hill was one of the decisive battles in the Arakan Campaign and this strongly defended area had been in Japanese possession for nearly two years.

I was privileged to watch the assault on the 26th March by the 6th battalion South Wales Borderers, and it was with great pride that I saw with my glasses British Troops swarming over the Hill and knew that the position had been won.

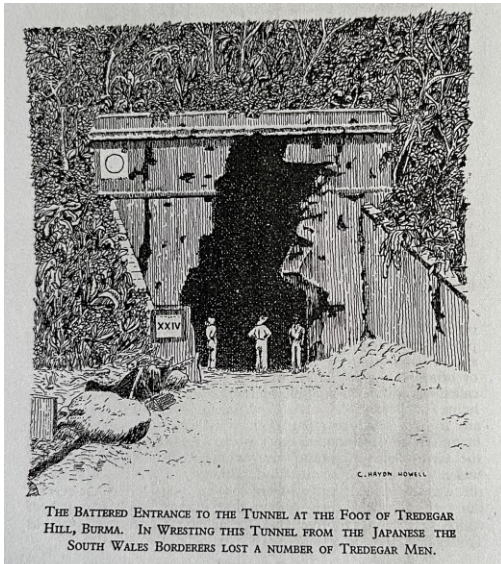
The attack was carried out after very careful planning by the Battalion and with extreme gallantry through probably the most difficult mountain jungle in Burma, some of the slopes being so steeped that it was almost impossible to get a footing, and I saw men dragging each other up. It was a great tribute to the skill and gallantry of the Battalion that the casualties were as light as they were.

The capture of this hill put us in a very strong position for our future offences, and the Japanese were never able to take it back. May this be some consolation to those who mourn for those who fell in a tedious task and I and my staff extend to all those who lost relatives in this battle our deepest sympathy.

I had the privilege of seeing the Battalion the other day in Medan in Sumatra, where they were happy and living up to the fine traditions of the Regiment.

Lieut-General Sir A.F. Philip Christiason

This letter is part of The Royal Welsh Museum Archives, and I thank them for their assistance in locating this information and the use of the letter in this article.



This Kohima casket can be found in Bedwellty House Tredegar. It contains soil from Tredegar Hill .



Welsh Branch Annual Walk Llangorse Lake

Llangorse lake was formed during the last ice age approximately in 23,000BC to 15,000 BC. Stretching over a mile long, half a mile wide and around five miles in circumference, it is the largest natural lake in South Wales. Nestled within Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, it sits between the Black mountains to the east and Bannau Brycheiniog to the southwest. The lake was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1954.

We met up in the car park on a beautiful warm August day 17 adults and 5 dogs. A wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends from '203 Welsh Field Hospital (V)'. This group of friends regularly joins us for our annual branch walk and as always, the day was filled with laughter, chatter, and good company. We were delighted to Welcome Gill, a new member joining us for the first time. It was lovely to meet you Gill, and we hope you enjoyed the day.



The walk began at Llangorse common, following the waymarked trail along the western edge of the lake, through fields dotted with sheep or cattle. In the quieter stretches, when the fields were empty, the dogs off their leads to run free, where they had a brilliant time running here and there, chasing smells thoroughly enjoying themselves, whilst we strolled along chatting and enjoying the scenery.

Soon the lake came into view, framed by an impressive reed bed swaying in the breeze, distance, leading the eye to the open water beyond. We continued onwards to the Llangasty Bird Hide, from here the view of magnificent tall reeds dancing in the breeze, and to the lake itself.

After leaving the hide we walked on to the village and church of Llangasty. Where we had the opportunity to look around the church. St Gastyn's is an ancient Celtic church, having been rebuilt between 1848-1851 by J. Loughborough Pearson. The church is said to have been initially founded in

450 AD by St Gastyn, a holy man who kept the flame of Christianity alight in the Western world in the fifth century, and the first church was built on this site over fifteen hundred years ago.

Following our visit to Llangasty church we retraced our steps back to the lake side and the view of the Crannog, a fascinating manmade island constructed in 916 AD by the King of Brycheiniog. Built on a base of rocks, peat, it remains a unique historical landmark. The site features a viewing platform and replica of a house on the crannog, information centre. Here you can find information and history relating to the myths and legends of the Crannog, flora, and fauna. Numerous archaeological digs have taken place in this area over the years.

Soon it was time to leave Llangorse lake and make our way to the Garden Café at the Walled Garden of Gwernfynydd. A charming spot featuring a historic Victorian glasshouse and walled garden. Lunch was served outdoors beneath large canvas sails, delicious vegetarian tarts and soup all made from their own grown produce. Followed by cakes and coffee.



All too soon it was time to leave and head for home, after a lovely day of friendship, fresh air and laughter. Thank you, Marian and Hester, for organising such an enjoyable day.

I hope that you have enjoyed reading about what the branch members have got up to over the last several months.

I have attached a separate word document with the words of the

QARANC Collect, Prayers, Poem and Hymn