

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE RIFLES AND ROYAL GLOUCESTERSHIRE,
BERKSHIRE AND WILTSHIRE REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION HELD ON SATURDAY 8th
OCTOBER 2016 AT NEW NORMANDY BARRACKS, ALDERSHOT**

Present:

Brigadier (Retd) P E O'R-B Davidson-Houston CBE	President of the Association
Colonel (Retd) S J Oxlade MBE	Chairman of the Association
Lieutenant Colonel M J R Motum DL	Acting Secretary
Members of the Executive Committee	

A total of 35 members of the Association and two Associate Members.

Apologies:

Twenty seven 'apologies' were received in advance of the meeting. Names of 'attendees' and 'apologies' appear in the Minute Book.

ITEM ONE – OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting before summarising Association activity since the last meeting. He mentioned the difficulties facing branches but highlighted county reunion activity that continues to gain encouraging levels of support. In addition he covered:

- The Gloucestershire reunion in March at The Gables following on from the Back Badge Church Service; the Wiltshire Reunion at Devizes in May in which numbers are inevitably dropping; and, the Maiwand weekend at Reading which continues to gain good levels of support.
- The Salisbury reunion in July enjoyed another good year. Meanwhile Ferozeshah, at Devizes in December, under the leadership of Norman Minty continues to go well.
- The National Service of Commemoration marking the centenary of the Somme was held at Manchester Cathedral. Lt Col Motum represented the Association.
- The President of the Association has recently returned from three days at Arnhem/Oosterbeek for the burial of two 4th Battalion, The Wiltshire Regiment. The soldiers were killed 72 years ago while advancing with the 4 WILTS and 43 Wx Div as a part of 30 Corps attempted link up with 1st Airborne Division (Op Market Garden). Support from 5 RIFLES and the Dutch Army Band was much in evidence.
- The Garden of Remembrance ceremony at Westminster Abbey and marching at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday.
- The need for change not least as a consequence of reductions to RHQ Rifles staff in outstations and the requirement to support the serving regiment.
- The further improvements to health of Capt Len Keeling.

He concluded by thanking both Salisbury and Gloucester offices for their support.

ITEM TWO – MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2. Copies of the previous Minutes, held at 1 RIFLES, Beachley Barracks, Chepstow were handed out. All were asked for feedback on points of accuracy and content. A

question was raised as to whom 'chaired' the meeting on Sat 20 Feb 16? Col Oxlade responded that he had been in the chair. There being no other points or matters arising that were not due to be covered within the agenda the meeting moved on.

ITEM THREE – REPORT ON ACCOUNTS

3. Copies of the Accounts, summarising the position of the Association as at 31 Mar 16, were passed to the members. Thereafter Lt Col Motum highlighted:

- The high expenditure in respect of reunions is mainly down to Windsor but also due to increasing expenses with other events. In sum the £2K grants to County reunions are not always covering the gap between costs and income from personal contributions. The matter will be raised with Trustees.
- The significant drop in wreath expenditure is welcomed.
- The overall costs of the Loos Battlefield tour was about £700 below budget and not over budget as reported to members in Feb 16. .
- The Miscellaneous Expenses entry includes the Association's portion of audit fees. It was explained to members that some 18 months ago Trustees agreed to spend an additional £2,400 per annum, with the Accountants Pitt Godden & Taylor, to mitigate the loss of the 'regimental accountant'.
- The background to the inter-charity adjustment was explained.
- A sum of £14,920 reflects income from dividends, a return of about 3%.
- In concluding he summarised the overall worth of the Association as at 31 March 2016 as being £496,092. This reflects: investments of £493,618; Creditors (due within one year) of £1,832; and cash at bank of £4,306.

3.1 A question was raised on the loss of £6,320 as a consequence of the sale of investments. It was explained the start of the year 2016 had been particularly bad for trading and this was partly behind the disappointing figure. Members were then informed that at the last Trustees meeting (held at the end of July) the overall position had improved significantly. Meanwhile he highlighted that the return on dividends, mentioned earlier, represented a modest increase on the previous year.

3.2 An observation on the increased cost of producing the Annual Newsletter was also raised. The Chairman explained that the quality of the newsletter had been enhanced largely because of the requirement to do justice to photographs of Windsor and other activities. The consensus was that the latest edition is a very good publication but maximum use of E-mail is desirable and leads to reduction in cost.

ITEM FOUR - 2017 REGIMENTAL REUNIONS AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

4. The Chairman informed members of dates and activities for the coming year:

- Sat 18 Mar 17 – Gloucester Reunion
- Sun 28 May or Sun 4 Jun 17 - Devizes Reunion (TBC on 19 Oct 16)

- Sat 1 Jul – Officers Club Lunch, Salisbury and Reunion Dinner at Salisbury & South Wilts Golf Club
- Sun 2 Jul 17 - Drumhead Service Salisbury
- Sat 22 Jul – Maiwand Reunion & Memorial Service (Forbury Gardens) Reading
- Sun 23 Jul 17 – Cenotaph Service and Lunch at Brock Barracks, Reading
- Oct 17 – AGM in centre of regimental area
- Thu 9 Nov 17 – Garden of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey and local churches
- Sat 11 Nov 17 – Armistice Day
- Sun 12 Nov 17 – Remembrance Sunday
- Sat 2 Dec 17 - Ferozeshah Reunion

4.1 On concluding this agenda item, the Chairman left the room to call in Maj Gen N Welch. The consultation period that followed did not form a part of the AGM. A summary of the consultation and the 4 RIFLES brief appears at Enclosure 1.

ITEM FIVE – CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

5. The Chairman drew the attention of members to the proposed Constitution, copies of which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Further copies were distributed to the membership attending the AGM. Thereafter he invited Col Lee-Browne, a Trustee of the Association, to introduce the paper. Col Lee-Browne explained:

- The Constitution originated on formation of the RGBW.
- The Charity Commission has been involved in its evolution and are content.
- The Constitution explains what can be done and not how things should be done.
- The task of Benevolence is the responsibility of The Rifles.
- Trustees are empowered on matters such as The Golden Thread¹.
- The role of the executive committee will cease and county committees will be established.
- He emphasised that the document has been simplified.

5.1 The President of the Association, Brig Davidson-Houston, explained:

- The new Constitution is an important step on the journey towards becoming a part of The Rifles Association.
- He emphasised the increasing difficulties associated with running an Association, the ongoing need for volunteers and the differences of approach between generations.
- The new Constitution brings evolutionary change. Change is manifest at the middle tier of the Association with the establishment of county committees.
- The appointment of Association Chairman is being retained. Meanwhile someone is needed to replace Col Oxlade who is due to stand down.
- Routine administration will be overseen by a volunteer secretary who co-ordinates issues with county committees.
- County committees are expected to be volunteer organisations.

¹ This had been discussed at length, earlier, by members and Gen Welch.

5.2 The Chairman informed members that in order to adopt the Constitution a two thirds majority was required. Before voting he invited comment:

- Several of those making initial comment chose to refer to the accompanying note rather than the Constitution itself.
- Ray Povey noted the change of emphasis to the Golden Thread.
- Col Daly stated there was a “need for answers” in response to letters written.
- Maj Walker spoke of the need for “accountability”.
- Simon Cook and Maj Marsh spoke of a need for budgets, the requirement for a new document and what was perceived as a divisive nature underpinning the approach of the Trust.
- Capt Sherman urged for caution in comment and considered implications for the Association should the voluntary organisation be undermined.

5.3 Concerns raised within the discussion on the Constitution are summarised as:

- Sustainability – with reduced capital will the Association be able to sustain activity over the years ahead?
- Ceilings – a limit on expenditure, before referral to the members, is desirable.
- Business Case – with regard to significant grants it remains important to incentivise those, such as SOGM, while protecting the position of the Trust. There appeared to be no objection to an initial grant or subsequent grants to SOGM. However, it was highlighted that evolving plans should be supported by a business case, available for scrutiny by the Trust, before approval of any ongoing annual grant.

5.4 Support for the Constitution was evidenced from:

- There being no disagreement on the need to: minimise administration; modernise the Association; establish county committees; and, the placing of funds at Winchester under creditor arrangements².
- There was no disagreement on the importance of the ‘golden thread’ and the need for significant funding to support it.
- A will to get on with things.

5.5 The Chairman sensed that any vote on the Constitution was unlikely to lead to a two thirds majority. Following discussion with the President, he accepted a proposal by Maj Marsh to vote on deferring any acceptance of the Constitution until Trustees have considered it further in the light of recent written and verbal comment. The proposal was seconded by Mr Ray Povey. A vote was taken. Members voted to defer any acceptance of the Constitution until it had received further consideration by Trustees.

² This is akin to a Restricted Fund.

ITEM SIX – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6. Before closing the meeting the Chairman asked members for points under 'Any other Business'. Mr Toby North raised his disappointment about the forthcoming closure of the Rifles office at the Wardrobe. He asked whether the Association had been given an opportunity to rent a room or rooms in advance of other arrangements being made. Col Daly stepped forward volunteering to answer the question:

- The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust did not offer a room or rooms to the Association for rent.
- Since 1980 no rent had been received from the MOD.
- MOD funding for the whole site has reduced over the years "as one would expect".
- The Rifles office is likely to close within three years.
- The requirement for museums to raise money is always there. Future arrangements at the Wardrobe will assure a commercial rent.

6.1 **Afternote.** Col Daly has since sent an e-mail on Mon 10 Oct to the President and Chairman of the Association explaining the background to the decision by RWMT Trustees and an extract from the Wardrobe Standing Instructions in respect of the use of the site by the Association (and similar 'regimental' users). He has asked that "you ensure the Association Membership is informed of it using the annual newsletter".

6.2 There being no other points, the Chairman closed the meeting and invited all to make their way to the Battalion dining room for lunch.

S J OXLADE
Chairman

M J R MOTUM
Secretary

Enclosure:

1. Notes on 4 RIFLES and Consultation by Chairman of RGBW Regimental Charities.