

The Mercian Family

Issue 17: January 2016

Newsletter



The Heart of England's Infantry

REGIMENTAL NEWS

REGULAR SOLDIERS COMPETE IN INFANTRY SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS – Soldiers and officers from 1 and 2 MERCIAN spent the Christmas period and early January competing in the Infantry Ski Championships in Val D'Isere.



Training began late in November, with the soldiers focusing on the basics before progressing onto the more technical aspects of competition skiing. The race week began on New Year's Day, as the soldiers pushed themselves to their psychological limits in the Slalom, Giant Slalom and Super G events.

1 MERCIAN finished a highly respectable 3rd place in the overall team competition out of 30 infantry units, with 2 MERCIAN an impressive 5th. Four soldiers also qualified for the Army semi-finals. A full update for each battalion will follow on Facebook in the next week.

1 MERCIAN NEWS

[SOLDIERS PRACTICE RIOT TRAINING](#) - 1 MERCIAN spent last week riot training, preparing them to deal with high risk

situations such as hostile crowds and petrol bombs. During the training, they were visited by the UK Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Fallon. Speaking to the soldiers, he placed a high importance for continued and varied training as history has made it clear that UK deployments have in the past been rapid and often to unexpected locations and situations.



2 MERCIAN NEWS

[SOLDIERS COMPLETE MACHINE GUN AND MORTARS CADRE](#) – Soldiers from 2 MERCIAN recently conducted their annual mortar man's cadre. Deploying to Salisbury Plain and joined by elements of 4 MERCIAN, all members of the platoon were tested under arduous conditions to demonstrate that they are trained to a high standard. All worked hard to demonstrate that they are able to conduct themselves in the highest manner when under intense pressure.

The platoon provides a large part of the battalion's indirect fire, and continued to demonstrate its commitment to being ready to deploy operationally anywhere in the world and achieve mission success in all they are tasked in.

Elsewhere, personnel from A (Grenadier) Company embarked on a machine guns' platoon cadre in Brecon during January. The training is part of preparations ahead of deployment to Poland on exercise later this year.

[SOLDIERS RETURN FROM KENYA](#) - Troops from 2 MERCIAN have returned safely from deployment to Kenya, following the

successful completion of Exercise Askari Storm; a fictitious mission to fight and defeat an enemy force. Soldiers conducted a variety of live firing exercises during six weeks in the country, honing their skills for whenever they may be needed on operations around the world.



Some of the troops were then given the opportunity to enjoy scuba diving. Adventure training is a key part of life in the infantry, designed to put soldiers out of their comfort zones. It exposes them to challenges that they would not normally face, and helps build courage, teamwork, fitness and self-discipline.

4 MERCIAN NEWS

[RESERVISTS TRAIN IN WIDNES](#) - Soldiers from the Army Reserve in Widnes spent last weekend completing their first training weekend of 2016, ahead of upcoming deployments to North-East Africa. Covering low level tactics and finishing with a stretcher run, the training for B Company, 4 MERCIAN is all part of preparations for a busy year ahead.

[RESERVES OPEN NEW LOCATION IN ELLESMERE PORT](#) - 4 MERCIAN also opened a new platoon location in Ellesmere

Port during January. They are recruiting now for a variety of part time roles, and further information can be found by calling 01512 572470 / 077956 17498.

MORTARS RETURN FROM KENYA - 4 MERCIAN reservist personnel provided support to the 2 MERCIAN mortar platoon during a recent deployment to Kenya. The reservists helped enhance the 2 MERCIAN Mortar Platoon, allowing them greater combat power throughout the six-week exercise.

SOLDIERS COMMEMORATE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF WW1

BATTLE - Soldiers from 4 MERCIAN also visited France to remember the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Hohenzollern Redoubt.

The Hohenzollern Redoubt was a German position in World War One, near the French village of Auchy-les-Mines. The 46th (North Midland) Division – which contained North Staffords, South Staffords and The Sherwood Foresters – took part in attacking this during the Battle of Loos, on the 13th of October 1915. The attack failed, with hundreds of Staffordshire soldiers killed during the first ten minutes.

Personnel from 4 MERCIAN and RHQ visited the site of the battle in October to pay their respects. They were given a historical tour of the battle site, before taking part in a parade and laying wreaths at a memorial to remember those who lost their lives during the battle.



BAND OF THE MERCIAN REGIMENT NEWS

PREPERATIONS FOR 2016 BEGIN – Upon return from the Christmas break, the Band of The Mercian Regiment began preparations for 2016, working on its programme for the year ahead which includes joint concerts, military tattoos, marching band engagements, dinner nights, annual camp and much, much more.



The Band also participated in some non-musical training, by refreshing their skills. First Aid, Morales and Ethics, Personal Fitness Assessments and The Laws of Armed Conflict were a few of the topics covered.

CADETS

STAFFORDSHIRE CADETS TRAIN ON CANNOCK CHASE - MERCIAN cadets from Staffordshire spent last weekend training in Cannock Chase.

Tested in fieldcraft, navigation and teaching, it was all part of preparation for the 'Three Star' cadets, ahead of an intense nine day training package during February. Staffordshire & West Midlands (North Sector) Army Cadet Force is actively recruiting for both cadets and instructors now.

OTHER NEWS

WORCESTER WWII VETERAN AWARDED FRANCE'S HIGHEST HONOUR - 90-year-old veteran Corporal Eric Tipping was awarded the National Order of the Legion of Honour in January; France's highest decoration. It was awarded in recognition of his service to France during the Second World War, when he was serving with The Worcestershire Regiment.



The Legion of Honour is a French order established by Napoleon Bonaparte on 19 May 1802. The Order is the highest decoration in France, and in 2014, President Hollande pledged to bestow all surviving British veterans with the award during his speech to commemorate the 70th anniversary of D-Day.

Monsieur Mille, the French Honorary Consul in Birmingham presented Eric with his award in the Mayor's Parlour in Worcester Guildhall,

surrounded by friends, family, members of the WFRA and The Mercian Regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Greg Bayliss spoke of the regiments pride in one of its antecedent soldiers being honoured with such an award.

MERCIAN REGIMENT LIMITED EDITION WATCHES – The regiment has had a specially commissioned limited edition watch commissioned. Should anyone be interested, please register with the jewellers (Andrew Michaels of Newark) using the portal details on the flyer (<https://portal.andrewmichaels.co.uk>). The project code is 550 and individuals can select serial numbers between 1-50. For any further information, please contact Major Agnew on 2MERC-BCOY-OC@mod.uk.

UPCOMING EVENTS

25th ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION GRANBY TO BE COMMEMORATED – 26 – 28 FEBRUARY - Next February marks 25 years since 1st Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment deployed to Saudi Arabia on Operation GRANBY. The Staffordshire Regimental Association intends to commemorate this anniversary and the role they played in it. Details of these events can be found below. Please place these events in your diaries and share with veterans that it would be of interest too:

- Friday 26 February 2016 - Regimental Dinner
- Saturday 27 February 2016 - Day of Commemoration and Celebration
- Sunday 28 February 2016 – Unveiling of Operation Granby memorial

Full details of each event can be found by clicking [here](#), or emailing [here](#).

ANNUAL REGIMENTAL OFFICERS' DINNER

NIGHT - FRIDAY 22 APRIL – The annual officers'

dinner night will take place on Friday 22 April. If you have not yet received an invite to this, please email communications@mercianregiment.co.uk.



HONOURS & AWARDS



MERCIAN NAMED BEST RECRUIT – Congratulations to Private Burrow, who has been awarded the 'Best Recruit' prize after completing the Combat Infantryman's Course at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick. Private Burrow was given his award at his pass out parade ceremony.

Our latest recruit was formerly a life guard, and will now join our 2nd Battalion in Chester.

OBITUARIES

It is with regret we inform you that the below have passed away. Our condolences are with their families and friends. Full obituaries will be in The 2016 Mercian Eagle:

Private Terence White died on 4th December 2015. Terence transferred to the Sherwood Foresters from the General Service Corps and then transferred to Kings Shropshire Light Infantry in August 1944. He then transferred back to the Sherwood Foresters in January 1947, where he remained until his discharge in January 1948.

Sergeant Alan William Smith BEM died on 17th December 2015. Known throughout his service as 'Pull through', he enlisted into The South Staffordshire Regiment and continued serving in 1 Staffords throughout the 1960s and 1970s. He was a renowned boxer who represented his Battalion. He ended his service in the Families' Office and for his diligent work, he was awarded the BEM. When he served in Fallingbospel, he was the final south Stafford serving and this made him quite famous.

Major Douglas Forrest MBE died on 23rd December 2015, aged 68. He enlisted into The Worcestershire Regiment and was CSM B Company during the 18 month tour of Londonderry, where he was awarded an MBE for his work on the tour. He was RSM of I STAFFORDS in Fallingbospel and handled the parade for the visit of the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl.

Captain James Henry Bridges MBE died on 31st December 2015, aged 81. Jim enlisted into The North Staffordshire Regiment as a boy soldier and became Drum Major of the 1st Battalion in Korea; at the time the youngest Drum Major in the British Army. He rose up the ranks to WO2 and served in 3rd Battalion, The Malaysian Rangers during the Borneo confrontation. He was then RSM of Depot Lichfield. He continued to serve in the Territorial Army as a PSI in the Walsall Company, and was then AO in Stockport and finally Wolverhampton, with 1 MERCIAN (V) and later 3 STAFFORDS.

Sergeant Paul Frith died on 3rd January 2016 aged 55. Paul served with the 3rd Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment.

Private Steven Newbold died on 8th January 2016. Steven enlisted in The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment in 1973 and served with B Coy. He left the Army in 1976.

Private Barry Cook died on 12th January 2016 and served with 1st Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment from 1958.

WO2 Carl Shepherd enlisted into The Staffordshire Regiment in 1987, joining the 1st Battalion in Fallingbospel. He served in the Gulf War, Hong Kong and Northern Ireland. He later became a recruiter in Birmingham Recruiting Office. When news that he had lung disease was broken, he was selected to lay a poppy at the Rededication Ceremony at the Staffordshire Regiment's Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum on 5th September 2015.

Sergeant Douglas Maybury served in The South Staffordshire Regiment. His funeral took place on Friday 15th January 2016.

Private Kenneth (Ken) Edmund Leek died on 16th January 2016. Ken enlisted into the 1st Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment in August 1958 and was a Regimental Cook. He served in the West Indies and paraded through Worcester City for the Presentation of New Colours in 1960. He was discharged in August 1960.

Corporal Stanley Leslie Stewart died on 22nd January 2016 aged 65. Les (Geordie) served with B Company, 1st Battalion, The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment, leaving the Regiment in September 1981.

Regimental Annual Calendar

- Wednesday 17 Feb 16 - Meeanee Day
- Wednesday 6 April 16 - Badajoz Day
- Friday 22 April 16 - Annual Regimental Officers' Dinner Night

For further information on any of the above, please email the [Communications Officer](#).