HEADLINES

Welcome to the Branch Newsletter No.11 of which I hope there is content that proves interesting for all. Since the last newsletter your committee have been very busy. Over the period 15 – 17 September 2023 around 35 members ventured through the Channel Tunnel to visit War Graves in Belgium, masterminded by Mark O'Mahony. On 30 September 2023 we held the AGM and around 60 members attended the annual Bow Shackle Ball, held in Dumfries, masterminded by Chris Zeil, and on 1 October 2023 around 45 members attended a REME Birthday Breakfast, organised and provided by Dumfries Veterans Garden, all three functions were very much a success and enjoyed by all who attended. Later in this Newsletter you can read articles about the events. We also had a presence at the REME Memorial Day at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire and around 10 Veteran Recovery Mechanics were fortunate to have gained a ticket to march at the Cenotaph during the Remembrance Parade on 12 November 2023.

The Branch continues to grow with increases in all membership categories, Serving Members, Reservist Members, Veterans and Honorary Members. Overall membership currently stands at around 615. We are always looking to expand and increase these numbers, so please pass the word around to friends/mates, if they are not already members they should contact the Branch Membership Manager (Ian McDonald) at membership.rmb@gmail.com.

I am hoping that by the time you have read this Newsletter and absorbed all the delights within the event articles that it gets you thinking about events in 2024. Although dates have not yet been firmed up for any event, we will certainly be having an Overseas Trip somewhere and of course the Bow Shackle Ball, which will be at a venue in the south which is still to be decided. These events are generally held around September/October time, therefore giving you plenty of time for planning, come join the party, meet up with people you haven't seen in years, pull up a sandbag and swing the lights.

With Christmas just around the corner again I expect you are all busy getting the Christmas Shopping in order, so all that remains for me to do is wish every member a very joyful, peaceful Merry Christmas and a very Prosperous 2024.

Stay Safe

BC

OBITUARIES – RECOVERY MECHANIC

Dave Paul

The Branch have been informed and are extremely saddened to learn of the passing of Veteran Recovery Mechanic Dave Paul. This information has been forwarded to Training Wing, Lyneham, requesting a plaque be placed on the Memorial Wall in remembrance of Dave.

Gaz Boyle

The Branch have been informed and are extremely saddened to learn of the passing of Veteran Recovery Mechanic Gaz Boyle. This information has been forwarded to Training Wing, Lyneham, requesting a plaque be placed on the Memorial Wall in remembrance of Gaz.

Steve Ellis

The Branch have been informed and are extremely saddened to learn of the passing of Veteran Recovery Mechanic Steve Ellis. This information has been forwarded to Training Wing, Lyneham, requesting a plaque be placed on the Memorial Wall in remembrance of Gaz.

COMMITTEE NEWS

Over the period since Newsletter 10 was issued the committee has been restructured and a few changes been made, it is hope that the restructure will better serve all members. We have introduced and added to the committee a Treasurer and Events Coordinator, we also seen some individuals being shuffled up and entering new roles. The format and structure are shown below along with the names of the individuals holding the posts:

President – John Sibley – johndsibley61@gmail.com.
Chairman – Bryan Cronie – chair.recymechbranch@gmail.com.
Treasurer – Chris Zeil – treasurer.recymechbranch@gmail.com
Membership Manager – Ian McDonald – membership.rmb@gmail.com.
Merchandise Manager – Steve Robertshaw – merch.rmb@gmail.com
Welfare Coordinator – Billy Simpson – currently under – membership.rmb@gmail.com
Serving Coordinator – Joe Williams – serv.rmb@gmail.com (not yet confirmed)
Reservist Coordinator – Vacant, requiring a volunteer.
Veteran Coordinator – Stu Martin – vets.rmb@gmail.com
Events Coordinator – Mark Omahony – events.rmb@gmail.com (not yet confirmed)

It is now possible to go directly to the individual you require to contact rather than use the central email address of recymechbranch@gmail.com, although the email address is still available if you wish to use it. In the event you wish to contact a committee member please use the email addresses beside each name above.

FORTH COMING EVENTS

Overseas Trip – We hope to be releasing dates very soon, we will keep you informed.
Bow Shackle Ball – As above.

OTHER DATES FOR THE DIARY

We will keep you informed of any other significant dates as they are known.

HAS ANYBODY SEEN…

This section of the Newsletter shall be included in each Edition. The idea being that membership who wish to attempt to contact Recovery Mechanics of yesteryear can appeal through the Newsletter for assistance. Just let us know through the pages of our Facebook Account or email the branch email address, recymechbranch@gmail.com who you are trying to trace, and we will include it in the Newsletter and hopefully someone can help you in your search.

Surprisingly this facility has yet to be used, whilst there have been a couple of requests for contacts on the Branch Facebook page, nothing yet through the Newsletter. The Branch has details of all members, and should you be looking for someone, we can possibly help, for obvious reasons we cannot hand out details without prior permission of any individual you may be seeking to reunite with.

MEMBERSHIP SUBMISSIONS

A Tale of Two Weekends

On the 15th of September the Recovery Mechanic Branch set off for Belgium for a World War 1 Battlefield tour. The tour was the brainchild of Mark O'Mahony who organised the whole trip from start to finish and all who attended take our hats off to him for a job expertly done. As individuals we moved from across the country and RV'd in Folkstone on the evening of the 14th where overnight accommodation had been booked. The following morning, we boarded the coach and set off for Ypres.

Over the 3 days of the tour, we visited Essex Farm Cemetery, Hooge Crater, Langemark German Cemetery, Tyne Cott Cemetery, Ploegsteert and Vimy Ridge. Throughout the tours our tour guide Mr Barry Kitchener gave us an enormous amount of information about every site, his in-depth knowledge was remarkable. Most of us thought we knew quite a bit about the Great War, it turns out we knew nothing, the man is a walking encyclopaedia and was only to pleased to share that knowledge.

The highlight for us all was parading our branch standard at the Menin Gate, taking part in the Last Post Ceremony on the Saturday evening. We laid three wreaths, one for the Corps, one for the REME Association and one for the Branch. To say that this was an honour is understating it somewhat, without doubt the most moving act of remembrance I have taken part in and all those attending did the Branch and Corps proud, we all scrubbed well for a bunch of Recy Mechs. The photograph above shows the members who travelled and Steve Robertshaw doing a grand job with the Branch Standard and below the wreaths that were laid during the service.

The above photograph shows all who travelled, everyone agreed that this, our first overseas trip since the Branch was formed, was an absolute success, and when asked if they would do it again, a resounding “yes” was heard from all. A future trip is already in the planning, so look out for details and for those who did not make the Ypres trip, consider the Branch next adventure when the details are released.

On the 29th of September the branch held its annual Bow Shackle Ball, this year in Dumfries. The ball was organised by Chris Zeil ably assisted by other members of the committee. We all gathered on the Friday night and as always, much banter ensued. On Saturday afternoon we held out AGM before putting the final touches to the venue, I have to say Easterbrook Hall was stunning and the staff looked after us extremely well.

So, to the night, the food was some of the best I have eaten at a function in a long time, the staff were exceptional, their service and attention to detail really made the function. We had our traditional raffle and followed that by an auction both helping to raise funds for charity.

The night drew to a close with some pretty awful renditions of what I used to think were classic songs until in the hands of Recy Mechs with a Karaoke machine. However, our chairman, who is a Scottish gentleman, had organised a special surprise for us all, a piper who walked through the dining hall playing Lilliburlero, stirring stuff I can tell you and that from an Englishman. During the evening a presentation took place to mark and celebrate the newly formed Honorary Membership section of the Branch. The photographs show our president John Sibley presenting Heidi McDonald and daughter Bettina with Honorary Pin badges. Heidi, wife of the late Jim McDonald, who for those who do not know was the first ever WO Class 1 Recovery Mechanic.

We finished the weekend by having a Corps and Branch Birthday Breakfast at the Dumfries Veterans hub, who were amazing people and do an extraordinary job for veterans in the community, a massive thanks you to them all and to Bryan Cronie for sorting it out.

What a couple of weekends we had. For all those who attended either (or both) I thank you and I'm sure you had a tremendous time, making new memories with old friends. For our members who didn't, you missed out this year. We intend to do it all again next year so don't miss out again.

Scribe – John Sibley

Birthday Breakfast – continued

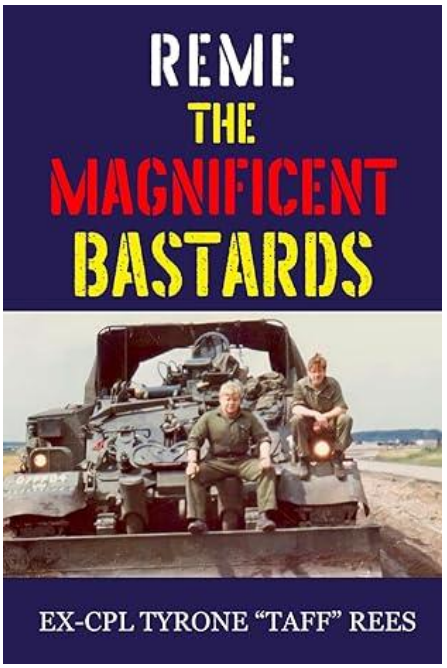
The breakfast provided was in the form of a field breakfast, bacon butties, egg banjo, sausage butties, tea and coffee, the cost, a donation to the Veterans Garden. To all who attended a big "thank you" from the Veterans Garden, you donated a total of £195 on the day. Further to this, the Branch Committee also voted over a further £200 to be presented to the Veterans Garden for all their efforts and fantasic hospitality shown during our time on their premises. Photos below show the check being handed over.

Cheque presentation
Dumfries Veterans Garden

Scribe – BC

Who said Recy Mechs can't write?

Yes, it is true, we do have some Recy Mech authors! Some of you may recall that the late Dave Paul wrote a book about his military experiences and I am sure that there may be others out there that we do not know about. One that we definitely know about is a book that has been released carrying the title of "REME THE MAGNIFICENT BASTARDS" – author – Tyrone Rees, some of the elder statesmen of our membership shall remember Tyrone, particularly if you served at 7 Armd Wksp or played rugby. The book is for sale on Amazon for anyone who might be interested. The photos show the younger version of Tyrone along with the book cover.



Scribe – Ian McDonald.

Cenotaph 12 November 2023

Whilst numbers were down this year we did manage to have our Branch reaonably represented within the REME Ranks at the Remembrance Parade, which went very well considering all the hype in the press about demonstrations and posibility of trouble.

As normal the entertainment afterwards was first class, we again joined the very packed and popular Sanctuary Public House to be entertained by the singing of all the old-time songs, and for the second year running the “Best Performance” was again won by non-other than our very own Roland Sam Oakley, what a wasted talent – Sam you were in the wrong business!

Scribe – BC

CAPTION TIME

Best caption wins a 2024 calendar.
(If there are any left)

Captions in a large brown self-addressed envelope with stamps please!
(Just in case you win)

ANYONE REQUIRING ASSISTANCE – USEFUL CONTACTS

Assistance for the Branch Membership will always be close at hand, we are all in this together, and here to help. In the event of any member experiencing difficult times, they must not hesitate to contact the branch. If we as a group cannot assist with a situation, we certainly know where help may be available.

relate the relationship people
01302347866
Relate

ssafa the Armed Forces charity
08002606767
SSAFA Forces Line

COMBAT STRESS FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH
08001381619
Combat Stress Military Helpline

shout 85258 here for you 24/7
TEXT 24/7
The Shout Text Service

NATIONAL DEBTLINE
08088084000
National Debtline

Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain
08009177650
Alcoholics Anonymous

GA
03300940322
Gamblers Anonymous

Respect Men's advice line
08088010327
Men's Advice Line
Domestic Violence

Seed EATING DISORDER SUPPORT SERVICE
01482421525
Eating Disorder Support

4-ALPHA
Alcohol Awareness
4-AlphaArmy@gmail.com

FRANK
03001236600
Talk to Frank

Cruse Bereavement Support
08088001677
Cruse Bereavement Support

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
0808 802 8080

Samaritans Compassion Integrity Justice
Samaritans 116 123

Royal Albert Hall
Service of Remembrance
(R Albert Hall)
festivalofremembrance.
seetickets.com
02070877929

ARMY BE THE BEST
01904882053
Army Welfare Service

LIFTING THE DECKS What's On Your Mind?

REME CONNECT
remeconnect.org
01249 894507

THE REME CHARITY FOR THE REME FAMILY
WOY@REMECharity.org
association@remecharity.org
07590 848766

REME ASSOCIATION RECOVERY MECHANIC'S BRANCH
REME Association Recovery Mechanic Branch
recymechbranch@gmail.com

THE REME ASSOCIATION FOR THE REME FAMILY

AND FINALLY

This year we wanted to produce a 2024 calendar for members to buy showing recovery tasks from all eras, so we asked you, the membership if it was something you'd be interested in buying. We had a fair response to this question and so, as a committee we decided to go ahead and design it and get it printed. I have to say that as a first go I was really pleased with the result; the calendar looks great (although I would say that as I designed it!!). We ordered and paid for 54 calendars, which promptly arrived on my doorstep. Since then, I have been addressing envelopes and posting them out across the country and beyond, the response has been good, and the committee would like to thank everyone who has purchased a calendar for their support. Like everything else in life, it's easier with foresight and so there are a few things we could have done better, lessons will be learnt, and improvements made for next year's calendar. The first 2 directly involve you, the members.

Firstly, next year we intend to hold a photo competition for calendar entries, we would like you to trawl through your old snaps of Recy Camps, exercises etc and send me your brightest and best photographs of recovery tasks or any other activities that will provoke memories for us all. More on this competition will be published next year but why not get started now and look through your old snaps.

Secondly, I made a mistake this year when asking the question for the poll on Facebook in that we didn't make any suggestion that by saying you would be interested in buying a calendar was the same as pre-ordering one. Unfortunately, that was exactly what I assumed. Therefore, this year we may have ordered more calendars than we will sell. That said, if you did say yes in the poll and still want a calendar or if you didn't vote or said no the good news is you can still get a 2024 calendar. Just PM either Elizabeth Sibley or Ian Macdonald on Facebook and ask for details. Next year we hope to have our website up and running from where you'll be able to buy all our merchandise including calendars, so I won't be making the same mistake again much to the committee's relief, I'm sure.

So, from the committee and myself thank you all for your continuing support shown throughout 2023, I hope to see it continue next year. Have a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful, peaceful, and prosperous New Year from us all.

Arte et Marte.

Cheers

John