



QARANC ASSOCIATION
WELSH BRANCH
NEWSLETTER
Summer 2021



Chair's Welcome

Welcome to our summer newsletter of 2021, I know I have mentioned it before, but the vaccine rollout is a superb logistic success and I am proud to play a small part in it. In Wales, we are now vaccinating young people born in 2001 (making me feel very old), but due to the increase of fainting amongst this group, we now have teams dedicated to observe them for 15 min after they have been vaccinated.

As the County moves slowly out of lockdown, we can once again enjoy the company of family and friends to share face-to-face conversation, a meal and a drink. For many of you this is what you have been longing for.

We welcome a new member from South Africa and look forward to meeting you soon, albeit over zoom. We have a programme of events, which I know many of you will be able to attend once more. If any of you have any ideas for zoom and can lead on an event then please let Rosy know

Yours

Caroline



Caroline Whittaker RRC OStJ

Vice Chair's piece

The past year has been a strange one to say the least! I do hope that the extra newsletters have been of interest and kept you in touch.

For many of us, I think, our skills with the use of modern technology have improved over the lockdown periods. This is something we have to embrace as more and more places like QARANC Association are using technology, not only to communicate but to enable us to join in national events. Corps Day Service was available on the internet as, was Dame Margot Turner's Eulogy read by QARANC members past and present on International Nurses Day. The Eulogy is available on U tube. The Branch also hold events via Zoom and will continue to so as it enables those from afar to join in be it a Dinner night or a Committee Meeting! Don't worry we will still have "proper events" as well!

Now that the pandemic is apparently on the decline and vaccination numbers increasing by the day we can start to look forward to our summer events. Don't forget that our first opportunity to meet up as a branch will be 26th June, Armed Forces Day, in Penarth at the Garden party being hosted by our Chair Caroline. You can find more information on some events Page 9

I hope you enjoy this edition and don't forget if you have a story to tell please let me know at: mccreacrossli@btinternet.com

Diana McCrea

Vice Chair & Editor

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Cinio cangen Gymraeg I ddathlu Gwyl Dewi Sant

Welsh Branch dinner to celebrate St David's day

Dinner was held on the 27th February 2021 via zoom. We were joined by Colonel Commandant Col Kevin Davies and Association General Secretary Sue McAteer together with friends from the Millbank Branch. Celebrations took part in various locations around the UK including Scotland, London and various parts of Wales.

The dinner was held to celebrate St David the Patron Saint of Wales.

St David was born around about 520 AD on the Pembrokeshire cliffs near Capel Non during a fierce storm. He is the only British saint to be born in the country that he is patron of.

As a young man he became a monk educated in a monastery, life was very strict the brothers worked hard at cultivating the land, ploughing the fields by hand, beekeeping and providing food and lodgings for travellers, whilst following a simple austere life. He was a teetotal, vegetarian who lived on a modest diet of bread, vegetables, herbs and water.

St David was a renowned preacher and according to legend he was also a miracle maker.

Legend has it that St David suggested that Welsh soldiers during a battle against the Saxon soldiers wear a leek on their helmets to distinguish them from the invaders who wore similar uniforms. The leek features on the uniforms of the Welsh regiments to this day.

In the 16th century Richard Johnson wrote a poem about St David being a champion of Wales a knight in armour and how St David inspired the welsh saying:

“To arms! I say brave followers; I will be the first to give death the onset; and for my colours or ensign do I wear upon my burgonet, you see a green leek beset with gold, which shall, if we win victory, hereafter be an honour unto wales; and on this day, being the first of March, be it for ever worn by Welshmen in remembrance hereof”.

This story of champions was extremely popular and kept alive the name of St David and the symbolism of the leek.

Suggested table decorations for the occasion included Dragons who were not to be fed during dinner. Various suggestions for food and drink were sent out to all attendees.

Pre-dinner drinks were late due to the Welsh Rugby match, well what would you expect this is Wales after all!



Attendees St David's Day Dinner

This was followed by leek eating and beer drinking. Being part of a dinner experience via zoom was a new experience for most of us, however, it was really enjoyable with lots of laughter at the leek eating. There was chatting about the different courses that people had chosen.

Music by a Welsh choir was played during the breaks.

The Loyal Toast –was taken sitting down. It is interesting to understand that St David's Day is the only time the Royal Welch Fusiliers toast, as in 1797 King George declared that loyal toasts be dispensed with, as the loyalty of the Royal Welch is never in doubt. Hence, they do not stand.

A short speech on the history of St David, Patron Saint of Wales was read out followed by the Welsh National Anthem.

During the evening there were lots of anecdotes and memories shared, together with much laughter. Topics were varied and ranged far and wide. It was lovely to see people enjoying themselves via technology. The dinner was followed by lots of talking which carried on until late in the night.

All in all, it was a successful event, and I for one look forward to the next one.

A big thank you to everyone involved in organising the event.

Lt Col (Retd) Valmai Davies TD

Medical Care WW2

A Zoom Talk

One of our members Lyndon Edwards a branch member gave a fantastic talk via Zoom earlier this year. Lyndon has been an Occupational Health (OH) Practitioner, for many years, with experience in the public sector and fire & rescue service. Currently a Major in 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital he also manages to find time to be a special constable. Using his OH experience he informed us of how things had changed and improved during WW2. Lyndon spoke at length about Ernest Bulmer, a gastroenterologist from Birmingham, who joined Territorial Army and 14th Birmingham Field Hospital in 1939 with rank of Major. He served with the British Expeditionary force in France later serving in the Western Desert Campaign in charge of No2 General Hospital 1940-43. It was here that his knowledge was well used particularly in the treatment and more importantly prevention of Dysentery, Sand fly fever and malaria. Sickness absence rates were brought down from 53.9% in 1914-18 to 23.6% in 1939-45. This was a result of four main changes, General management, infestation

control, Changed conditions, that is not the wet, soggy trenches of '14-18 and good fortune. Infected patients were isolated & hygiene controls implemented. Things like "Fitness to work medicals" were carried out in UK prior to deployment. Following a spell in the UK and a promotion to Brig. He became consulting physician to 21st Army Group. At this time there were different problems from different phases of the campaign. Normandy June-Aug 44- Malaria & Weils disease. Low Countries Sept 44-March 45 it was wet & cold with diphtheria & VD. Germany April 45-July 45 sore throats and VD. By the end of the war Brig Bulmer had been made a CBE, Mentioned in Dispatches with a citation from General Montgomery and the American Legion of Merit presented by General Dwight Eisenhower.

Amongst the changes which occurred, Lyndon spoke about how surgical units were moved closer to the front. The improvement of transport facilities for medivacing patients meant it was much faster. There were developments in anaesthesia, Dog tags with an individual's blood group on them were introduced. Blood collections and transfusions improved with Bristol becoming a national centre for collecting and distributing blood and plasma for military and civilian use. There were the well documented developments in plastic surgery and treatment of burns along with the introduction of antibiotics for infections. There was also improvement in treatment of tropical diseases particularly with the use of DDT being sprayed over large areas.

Lyndon finished his talk by telling us of the dreadful atrocities of the Alexander Massacre in 1942 where Japanese soldiers massacred over 200 staff and patients at the Alexandra Hospital. This occurred despite the white flag being presented and the fact it was a hospital.

Thanks Lyndon for a very informative talk.

Diana McCrea

Committee Member Pen Picture

Valmai Davies TD

I was born and brought up in the South Wales valleys, leaving home at 17 to commence my Orthopaedic training at Rhyd Lafar Hospital. Whilst working in theatres I discovered an interest in anaesthetics. Following my general training in the Royal Gwent, in 1975 I went to Radcliffe Infirmary Oxford to undertake a 6 month



Anaesthetic course. Whilst on the course I developed an interest in chronic pain management

In 1976 I went to work in a hospital in the Hague, Holland for 2 years as a Nurse Anaesthetist. This role extended my anaesthetic skills hugely, whilst encompassing all aspects of anaesthesia. It was a far cry from my experience as an anaesthetic nurse and an opportunity to work with people of various nationalities. Whilst in Holland I had the opportunity to travel around the country and parts of Belgium. I visited wonderful places, saw plenty of windmills even in the snow with the canal frozen over, magical! I developed an interest in art through visiting many museums and art galleries.

Upon my return to the UK, I worked once more in Oxford attaining my first Sisters post at John Radcliffe Hospital where I spent time helping to commission the anaesthetic rooms. I later moved to Swansea as a sister in anaesthetics.

In 1982 I went to work as an anaesthetic nurse in Saudi Arabia in a Military Hospital run on American lines in Taif, the summer capital of Saudi at that time. Located 7,000 feet up the mountain and accessed by a stunning escarpment. That was an interesting experience, working with lots of different nationalities and time to visit the red sea and Jeddah.

After two years I returned once more to the UK, as a Sister in Morrision Hospital, later becoming Senior Nurse Anaesthetics. Over the years I developed an interest in pain management then in 1991 I attended a 2 year course the first multidisciplinary pain management course held in the UK. Many years later I worked as an acute pain nurse and completed my (PGCE).

Eventually in 1996 I moved to Leicestershire to work as part of a multidisciplinary team delivering an intensive rehab programme. This experience was invaluable, learning about exercises, stretches & hydrotherapy enabling the patients to learn how to self-manage increased symptoms. My role encompassed delivering sessions on stress and sleep management etc.

In 2003 I acquired my dream role in the Pain Management at Centre Bronllys, Wales' only residential centre for chronic benign pain self-management. My roles included delivering sessions to the residents on pain medications, medication reduction plans, sleep management and initially relaxation techniques and subsequently mindfulness sessions. There were also individual caseworker sessions. During this time, I qualified as a counsellor. At the age of 60 I undertook the Independent Prescribing course and passed first time. I have to say it was the hardest thing I have ever undertaken. By now not only were we running residential programmes but community programmes around Powys. These included travelling all over Powys, where it's not the distance but the time it takes especially along some of the windy narrow mountain roads. But the views are stunning. I got a lot of satisfaction delivering these sessions to the participants whether on the residential or community programmes. I learnt so much from the participants a two way street. Group work could be challenging but highly rewarding. Seeing the positive changes made and confidence improving made it so worthwhile.

I also delivered with others a positive psychological programme called Activate your life Sessions. Retiring in 2019

With regards to my Military career, I was commissioned into the TA in 1985 as a captain, in 203 (Welsh) General Hospital, (The unit changed in the 90's to that a Field Hospital) where my nursing role was in Resus. I served for 18 years, becoming 2IC nursing later becoming Lt Col. Nursing for 3 years.

Training played a major part of our service with a commitment of 8 weekends and 2 week camp. Initially we trained on a three year cycle, the second year being based on a hospital exercise in this country, frequently Chester & the third year in Germany, where it was fascinating seeing the chain of evacuation.

Training included exercising in various hospital scenarios in a variety of locations for example under canvas and old farm barns in Sennybridge. We learnt military skills with our fitness tested as we went on lots of yomps, in some amazing places. We had the opportunity to undertake lots of adventure training. During my time in the TA's, I went on an attachment to BMH Berlin in June after the wall had fallen. What a fascinating place.

Combining the two work scenarios enabled me to have the best of two worlds. The roles I loved in civilian life plus the opportunity to do different things at the weekend and camp. During my time in the TA's, I met some wonderful people, some of whom I am still friends with today. I retired from the TA's in 2003.

Now my interests include spending time with family and friends and of course my four-legged friend Bethan. I also enjoy walking, gardening, meeting friends for coffee, lunch. I'm a member of U3A (University of the First Age). I enjoy going to the opera and theatre.

For the last couple of years, I have looked after the war graves on behalf of Talgarth Town Council. I recently became a member of the 'Eyes On, Hands On' project Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This project involves photographing headstones and looking after war graves in cemeteries around South Powys.

I have been a member of the Welsh Branch for many years joining the committee in 2020. Since being in the branch I have made many friends and been on numerous trips. However the one that is foremost in my mind took place in 2016 when we went to the 100th anniversary of the battle of Mametz. What an amazing experience, one I will never forget.

I look forward to continuing my association with the Welsh Branch promoting the ethos of friendship and caring.

Valmai Davies Lt Col (Retd)

Balck-Foote and the Queen's Quilt

Alison Boydell

The memoirs of Lt Col John Albert Balck-Foote are among the most fascinating that I have come across in the RAMC archive, giving a very readable narrative of his remarkable career interspersed with interesting and often amusing anecdotes.

Balck-Foote was born in Germany in 1874 to a German father and a British mother, and named Karl Augustus Johannes Albrecht Balck. He was brought up in Germany then studied medicine at Edinburgh University, graduating in 1899. At

some point he anglicised and abbreviated his forename to John Albert. He took British nationality in 1902 but for most of his Army career he suffered from the anti-German sentiment that prevailed at the time. Just before the Second World War he changed his name by deed poll, adding his mother's maiden name to his father's family name in an attempt to prevent his wife and children from experiencing the same prejudices.

After graduating, Balck worked in general practice for a time but he did not enjoy the experience and volunteered to serve in the Boer War as a Civil Surgeon. He explains that he was convinced of the "rightness of the British cause" but had to defend his views to his German relatives and friends who were pro-Boer. At the end of his contract he decided to join the RAMC and his memoirs discuss the changes in training including the move of the Army Medical School from the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley to London.

Concerning Netley Hospital, he tells a story that relates to an item in the Museum's collection. Queen Victoria and her ladies had knitted woollen bedcovers, then known as quilts, for the soldiers at Netley who had been wounded in the Egyptian Campaign of 1882. One of the quilts was said to have been entirely made by the Queen's own hands and was therefore highly valued and reserved as a special mark of favour for the worst cases. Consequently the number of deaths under it was very high. In Balck's words:

"An Irishman had been badly wounded and the Matron came round to ask him whether there was anything she could do for him. 'Yes, sister' was the reply, 'for the love of God don't give me the Quane's [sic] quilt.'" A slightly different view of the situation is given in an account of Queen Victoria's life written in 1897. It describes the quilts that the Queen and the ladies of the court had made for Netley Hospital, and adds:



“We fancy that there must have been some difficulty at Netley in deciding who was to have the honour of sleeping under the Queen’s quilt”



The quilt in the Museum is made up of four knitted strips, alternately pink and green, slipstitched together along their long edges. It has a cream crocheted border and the Royal Ciphers with the date 1883 is embroidered in silver thread in one corner, which means that it is likely to be the one made by Queen Victoria herself. The quilt is very faded and has been mended in several places. We recently inspected the quilt and photographed it on the bed in the

Anglo-Boer War diorama in the Museum (and yes, we are aware that it wouldn’t pass Matron’s bed inspection!).

There are in existence many photographs and paintings of Queen Victoria knitting and crocheting. Among them is a painting in the Royal Collection, said to show Queen Victoria with Princesses Helena and Beatrice knitting quilts for the soldiers at Netley who had been wounded at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt in 1882. Could one of the quilts be ours? Having looked at the quilt’s construction, it can be seen that in fact the ladies are not knitting them but are depicted posing with their completed work.

I hope to share more stories from the Balck-Foote memoirs in future.

Alyson Boydell Volunteer Museum Military Medicine

Dates for you Diary

June 26	Armed Forces Day Afternoon Tea with Music at Caroline’s
July 14	Lavender farm visit followed by food at Pilgrim’s Café
September 25	QARANC Association reunion Lunch Leeds
September 30	Canal Boat trip from Goytre Wharf
November 6	Festival of Remembrance, St David’s Hall
November 14	Remembrance Parade
November 16	Cooking & flower arranging Demo with lunch Garath’s Kitchen
December 3	Christmas Lunch Radyr Golf Club



QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S ROYAL ARMY NURSING CORPS
WELSH BRANCH

The Chair and Committee cordially invite you to join us for afternoon tea. This will be the first opportunity where we have been able to meet socially, so I do hope you can come.

WHEN

June 26th

2.30 – 5:30pm



WHERE

7 Britten Road

Penarth

CF64 3QJ

Visit to Lavender Farm July 14th 2021.

We meet in Brecon at 10 30 and then travel to Upper chapel. 11 00 we can start our visit to this remote farm adjacent to the Eppynt where lavender is grown by Nancy. The Lavender flowers when harvested are made into preparations of perfume, creams and tinctures. Due to Covid she has changed the structure of her visits and now there isn't a set fee to visit but we pay £3 at the gate. We are able to explore the fields and also her buildings and shop. A Video of



Nancy at work can be watched in the sitting area.

Comfortable shoes and a raincoat would be useful as we will be over 1000 feet in elevation.

We then make our way back to Brecon and the Pilgrims tea rooms at the Cathedral. On offer is a large selection of home made produce with the menu of the day specials, or a selection of Sandwiches, Wraps, Toasties or Soup. Cost is usually about £6 to £9.

A sitting area will be set aside for us. Following lunch, I am in the process of arranging a talk but will elaborate on the details later.

At about 1600hrs, and for those who still have lots of energy to burn (weather dependent), I will lead you up to THE CRUG, an Iron age fort overlooking Brecon and the Usk Valley .

Visit to Gareth's kitchen on TUESDAY NOVEMBER 16th 2021.

Gareth lives on a farm just outside LAMPETER, DYFED. He is a chef and flower arranger and a well-known personality on S4C, One of their outbuildings has been turned into a demonstration and cooking area.

Plan for the Day

10 30 Arrival and coffee.

11 00 Cookery Demonstration .

1 00 Lunch ,we are now able to eat all the goodies he has been preparing in the morning.

2 00 We return to the classroom where Gareth now creates seasonal displays of flowers and foliage .(Be sure to get a raffle ticket to enter the draw for the arrangements.)

4 00 Demonstration ends and we are served tea and cake.

4.30-5 Depart

It is a long day and journey but a really fun /entertaining day out . Everything is included at a reasonable cost of **£30** for the day.





Father Ray O'Shea OStJ, TD, KVHS, ECHOLJ
1934 – 2021

A celebration of his life

Father Ray was an Honorary Member and chaplain
of the QARANC Association Welsh Branch

He is survived by Clare one of his four sister's and 19 nephews and nieces.

Father Ray was born in Ely Cardiff where his father was a doctor. He left for Ireland in 1948 attending Jesuit College Galway, Blackrock College Dublin. Entered St Patricks College Carlow in 1956 and was ordained as a priest in 1962. He moved back to Wales in 1962 where he became assistant and later appointed priest in the Cardiff and surrounding area together with Bridgend and Aberdare. He had to retire due to health conditions. However, this didn't stop Ray he went on to serve as a cruise's chaplain for 10 years travelling the world. He fully retired in 2012 to live in Whitchurch.

Ray has been a close friend for many years a wonderful privilege.

One of the things I found out at his Requiem Mass was that Ray was a member of the Magic Circle. Making his nephews and nieces be in awe and laughter at his wonderful magic tricks.

Father Ray joined 203 (Welsh) Field Hospital as the Catholic chaplain, where he served for 15 years. During this time, he was well liked and respected by everyone. Demonstrating a pastoral warmth, enthusiasm, together with a lovely and sometime wicked sense of humour. His love of ice cream was such that he and Fr David Hathaway would explore the locality when on camp to find the best ice cream parlour and enjoy large ice cream sundaes.

In his eulogy David describes Ray as "Bouncing around the military hospital with a warmth, enthusiasm and a pastoral heart for the soldiers in our care, more of a priest than an officer, that's what they loved about him. Plus, the little boxes of smarties and sweets that we often carried in our ammo pouches to cheer up a dull moment. He bounced around the unit so much, that soldiers with a wonderful sense of humour nicknamed him Ricochet a play on his name Ricochet Ray." On his retirement he was immensely proud as the QARANC Association made him an honorary member, presenting him with a QARANC Association lapel badge. He loved the badge which he wore almost everywhere. Boasting with glee that he was an honorary QA"! .

As an honorary QA Ray attended many branch activities especially the Christmas lunches. Winning many raffle prizes much to his embarrassment and our laughter. Although typically Ray, he gave them away to other dining members.

In 2016 the branch in conjunction with the Western Front Association went on a trip to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the battle of Mametz. Ray volunteered to help with the services to be held at various war cemeteries. Little did he realise that he was to be the Chaplain for the services delivering poignant services. He was so proud and I have a lasting memory of him in his vestments standing in various cemeteries honouring the fallen.

A lasting memory of those members who attended a day on the Epynt ranges related to Ray being taught how to throw a grenade. He was always up for new things to have a go at.

I mentioned he was a member of the magic circle, his magic towards those who knew him was the warmth, compassion, humour and kindness that emanated from him. He was generous with his time and was always at the end of a message on Facebook or a telephone call. Ray loved gadgets and so it was great especially during lockdown to be able to facetime him. He was proud of his garden, often sending photos showing the plants.



There are so many wonderful memories that people have of time spent with Ray, the laughter, he had a wicked sense of humour. Over the years he became a wonderful and close friend to many of us. He leaves behind a wonderful legacy of compassion, warmth and humour.

Instructions for Grenade throwing from Range Officer

Rest in Peace in the House of the Lord.

Lt Col (Retd) Valmai Davies TD