GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRANCH

GRENADIER GUARDS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER – July 2009

To all members of the Branch. ***Issue No.* (54)**

BRANCH MEETINGS – AT THE VICTORY CLUB CHELTENHAM

Thursday 30th July. Thursday 24th September. Thursday 26th November

Please note start times of meetings 19:30 hours to which all members are welcomed

Branch Garden Party – Sunday 16th August. Once more Colonel Peel has kindly invited members to join him at his home for a Garden Party. The format will be as previous years with guests invited to attend from 12:00 hours for a full quality Bar b Q lunch at 13:00 hours. During the afternoon the Chedworth Silver Band will play for us. A complimentary bar will run throughout the day. Bowls will be played on the lawn.

Ladies, and those gents who are handy in the kitchen. Please, as you have done on so many previous occasions, if you have a little spare time to make a cake or cakes, scones, pies etc to bring with you on the day this will be most appreciated. As always we will use a selection to cut and distribute to guests during the afternoon. Those items not used will be auctioned at the end of the day. This is always a bit of fun also it helps to defray expenses.

To assist. If you have a portable chair then can you bring this with you, as it will be greatly appreciated. Of course there will be plenty of chairs on site for those who are unable to bring their own.

The cost is just sixteen pounds per person which considering the feast of food, complimentary bar, wonderful location and a band to play for us it is excellent value which I am sure you will all agree.

Beating Retreat. A full compliment attended the trip to London with an overnight stay at the Union Jack Club. The parade was held in fine weather and was quite spectacular. The following morning we visited, by private arrangement, Vintners Hall in the city by kind permission of Major Steve Marcham MBE. Steve gave us a most interesting, and entertaining, tour. Thank you Steve for your arrangements, time and personal effort it was really most appreciated.

Branch Canoeing. Thursday 18th June. All went well except for a member who thought that he had been transferred to the Royal Navy as a Sub Mariner.

Branch Cycling. Thursday -13th August. Why not join us for a leisurely ride through the Royal Forest of Dean. Cycles of an excellent quality may be hired. The route will be totally off public roads and therefore suitable for all the family of all ages. A Picnic lunch will be taken at Mallards Pike some halfway round the circuit. David Leighton is the person to contact to register your interest or for any query.

Branch Formal Lunch – Sunday 27th September. For your early warning and to append the date in your diary Sunday 27th September is the date to record. Venue will be the Gupshill

Manor, Tewkesbury. Please do your very best to join us. I am pleased to inform you that the Gloucestershire Cadets Corps of Drums will be performing for us. Lets make this a lunch and day to remember so please note the date. Full details together with reservation details are attached. All members are invited together with family and friends.

Sunday 27th September - 12:00 Hours for 13:00 Hours

Our Guest of Honour is the Lord Lieutenant of the County Henry W G Elwes Esq.. Representing the Regiment was to have been Colonel Russell Parsons. Unfortunately the Colonel is to be posted to Afghanistan and as I write we are awaiting a replacement.

This is our one formal event of the year and I ask you all to please consider attending. A good turn out ensures a good atmosphere, which is essential, if you want a successful occasion. Once you have finished reading this letter, check your diary and if free, ask the good lady for the chequebook in order that you may send in your payment to secure your place. For those of you who have never joined us before, then make this the year to "Break your duck", I am sure that you will not be disappointed.

On arrival you will be greeted with a welcome drink

There will be a raffle, however the good news is that no one will pester you to buy tickets as envelopes containing tickets will be on the tables in multiples of one pound. As usual, if you have an item that you would like to bring and donate for the draw, then this will be appreciated.

Full details of the menu were given in the last Newsletter. Please contact Hon Sec if you would like a copy.

Meetings. The May Meeting was very well attended, thank you gentlemen for taking the interest in your branch

Visit your branch site – www.gloucestershiregrenadiers.co.uk Your views and or comments are most welcome. Also any stories news items or interesting accounts would be appreciated. **Past editions of the newsletter can be retrieved by looking in the Newsletter Section**

Please try and make the next meeting on Thursday 30th July. Your Branch. Your meeting, to which **all members are most welcome.**

Colin Knight **Honorary Secretary.**

If you require further information on any of the items in this Newsletter, then please telephone **Alan Holford 01452 534175** or **Colin Knight 01594 530154** Alternatively e-mail **grenadiersglos@tiscali.co.uk** For any event. On the day the mobile telephone number to use is:- **07980 019017**

PROFORMA

Branch Garden Party Sunday 16th August.

Please reserve me…….places at £16.00 Per person.

To assist please can you indicate if you are able to bring your chairs

I am able to bring a chair YES/NO

If you do not prefer to have a steak with your meal please can you indicate your alternative meat.
I would prefer not to have steak and would like …….……..as an alternative

Note. In addition to a steak (Or alternative choice) All meals will come with sausages, burgers, hot potatoes and side salads. A dessert will also be served.

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The Royal Hospital Chelsea – The home of the Chelsea Pensioners.

Several times in the newsletter I have appealed for articles or stories, sadly it appears that most of you are to shy to come forward, but not so Norman Mitchell our branch member resident at Chelsea. Norman has sent me a few facts about his new home.

Norman informs me that to write a full description of the establishment would require a superior intellect to his. I somewhat doubt that Norman.

Norman writes. The first thing is that a "Hospital" it is not. Nevertheless the medical care available is first class and is always available without any delay. The magnificent new Infirmary is now there with 125 en-suite bedrooms for the care of the long term sick and disabled. The hospital has a good rapport with the large hospitals in London, if required.

There are approximately 300 In Pensioners here divided roughly as, 100 in the Infirmary, with the remainder in two blocks each of 8 large wards comprising of 18 rooms each. The daily routine is loosely in military style, e.g. apart from Founders Day. Although a few "Extra Drills" and some "Blanket Shaking" would do some of the residents good.

To make administration efficient the men are divided into four companies each company has a Captain of Invalids acting as Company Commander. At present these gentlemen are all former Officers comprising of three Colonels' and one Major (Scots Guards). In addition there is the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Adjutant

The grounds are of course where the world famous Chelsea Flower Show is held. The grounds are well maintained and are a delight to wander through at any time of the year.

Amenities abound in the form of a wonderful club with a long bar and frequent entertainment. A billiard room a "Cyber Room" where a delightful young lady IT expert is ever ready to teach computer skills. Yes we are in the 21st century. No queues in the Post Office for us as we have our own, combined with a Souvenir Shop. A Gymnasium, in which Norman is seldom seen, is on site and would be the envy of many a Sporting Club.

About half of the pensioner carry out jobs around the hospital such as guides for the visitors, working in the Gift Shop, coffee shop etc. Apart from giving the men an interest it assists in maintaining a lively atmosphere. Camaraderie prevails but if one at any time wishes to be alone with his thoughts then ample space is available.

All meals are taken in the Great Hall, served by a team of delightful ladies from the Philippines, West Indies, Central Europe, Italy and Ethiopia. It is a wonderful room and has to be seen to be believed.

Three meals a day, Breakfast is Full English, plus Grapefruit and Prunes plus cereals. The main meal is at midday with five choices of main course and a sweet selection. High Tea is late afternoon with, a cooked item daily plus cake and fresh fruit. Our main difficulty is to stop the girls over feeding us. It is a wonder that we are not all Billy Bunters!"

Chelsea has its own famous Chapel with weekly worship. Lady Thatcher attends as a regular worshiper. The Chapel and Great Hall are wonderful in their design and construction. I have been told that Wimpy had something to do with it but I do not believe that story. They couldn't get the oak.

Contrary to popular opinion we do not wear the famous Scarlet Coat except for official purposes or going out on one of the military trips to which we are invited, boy are there many of these! A dress code is observed inside the hospital where we dress informally, but when going out we are regarded as representing the Hospital and our smart appearance is essential. Of course we can "Walk out" in civilian dress if we prefer. However it must be said that wearing uniform out has

its advantages as it is hard to buy a drink in a pub and taxi drivers will often not take any fare. It can at times be a little embarrassing but it is reassuring to know how much kindness there is out there in the big world.

The man who wishes to become a Chelsea Pensioner must at first write to the Adjutant. After certain paperwork is completed he is invited to spend a four-day period to be interviewed and to see if he likes the place. If approved, his entry date is then fixed. There are three main criteria

- Be at least 65 years of age.
- Be in receipt of an Army Pension and/or disability military pension
- Have no dependants.

No's one and three are strictly adhered to however number two may be negotiable.

On joining the hospital your Army Service Pension and any Service Disability Pension is surrendered but not to The Royal Hospital. It simple ceases to be paid.

Of course many of you must be aware that we are now taking ladies as Chelsea Pensioners. Three are on board at present and it had to be Colin Knight who made the suggestion that we now might have to consider fund raising for a Maternity Wing. In Chelsea and Westminster Hospitals there is an "Assisted Conception Ward" – "Memories"!!

Am I happy here? It would take dynamite to shift me. No worries, no loneliness well-fed and comfortable in lovely surroundings. What a marvellous way to spend our twilight years.

To my many friends in the branch, I still think of you all. I have considered buying a bicycle in order that I may attend meetings, but on second thoughts I thought better of it.

If any branch members are in the big city and would like to stop by for a visit then please get in touch with me or the Hon Sec who will act as my personal secretary as owing to a busy social life, pre booking is essential

Norman Mitchell 2620362

6th, 5th, 3rd and 1st Battalions Grenadier Guards.

From the Hon Sec. When I enquired of Norman about early morning PT or Cross-Country runs he answered with a word ending in off. For the life of me I cannot recall what the first word was. Was it Foxtrot Oscar?