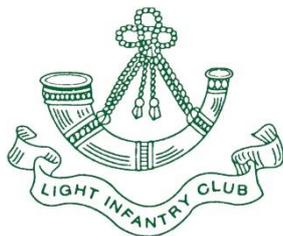


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Light Infantry Club Members

1st February 2022

NEWSLETTER 2022

Last year, Brigadier Mark Elcomb opened the newsletter by asking “*What does a chairman write after a year such as that just passed?*” He mused on the difficulty of writing anything meaningful when The Club’s activities and those of its members had been severely limited by the first year of the Covid pandemic. Luckily there is more to report this year, despite a second year of restrictions.

Sadly, The Club has become a little smaller with the passing of several of our members. As I write we have just heard of the death of Barry Lane, an officer who had an extraordinarily broad and impressive career which concluded as Colonel of the Regiment. Despite a demanding and wide-ranging second career, he remained an active supporter of the Regiment through the Association and by passionately leading Battlefield tours of Sedgemoor. At the grand old age of 93, Bob Waight has also died after a life to inspiring countless generations of young people within and around the Regiment to fulfil their potential. Sadly, Rupert Nicholas, a man of notable character and a huge influence on many from his time in RHQ has also died as has David Lawrence who had served the Regiment and Club not only as a Regular Officer but also from Regimental Headquarters. So too Pat Lewis, an officer with a varied career spanning the Staff College in Quetta to BMATT Zimbabwe and command of a UDR battalion, and his fellow West Countryman Ronnie Potts who died on Remembrance Day. After the war Ronnie was ADC to Chula, a Prince of Siam, before a career as a Reservist and Colonel of Cornwall’s cadets skilfully dovetailed with 60 years at the helm of Cornish cricket from Pencarrow Club to County. Each of these officers served in the Light Infantry and one of its antecedents. Not so Nobby Noble who died in November following a protracted illness. A Light Infantryman then latterly a Rifleman, he inspired, charmed, and entertained all he met during a career from Private to Major, passing through Sandhurst as an instructor along the way and finishing in Devon supporting the Royal Marines. Each of these men lived long and extraordinary lives but none more so than Michael Elcomb who has died aged 102, 81 years after receiving his emergency commission in 1941. He served throughout the war with 1 KOYLI before gaining a regular commission in 1945 and undertaking a varied career which included commanding The Depot where Bob Waight was one of his company commanders.

Despite these sad deaths, there has been much for The Club and its members to celebrate. The Salisbury lunch which was due to be held at The Wardrobe on 18th July sadly due to COVID had to be cancelled. This was a great pity as Chris Topham has done a splendid job organising this event for several years, making it a well-attended and happy event in normal times. It remains an informal gathering where mingling is easy and the focus is on connecting with friends. It would be great if more of The Club’s members and their partners could make this a feature of their diaries. Following a miserable Ashes series, English test cricket may not

be the pull this summer that it once was. So why not enjoy a summer afternoon with friends at The Wardrobe instead? This year it will be held on 17th July and, having taken over from Chris, Nick Thornton will shortly be urging you to sign up. Chris' retirement is justly deserved and on behalf of The Club I thank him for all he has done to make it a convivial and enduring success.

Having been cancelled in 2020, the dinner was once again held in October. Despite Covid restrictions it ran to broadly its normal format. Unlike the preceding Club AGM, which attracted only 9 participants, it was attended by 83 officers. We dined-out Mark Goldsack, Richard Smith, Dick Hudson and, after 40 years of regular service, Andy Wood. However, to the consternation of some we broke recent tradition by not having a cheese soufflé!

Despite a clash with The Rifles London dinner, which has moved due to the unavailability of The Guild Hall on Salamanca Day, we will hold this year's dinner on our normal day - the second Thursday in October - which this year is the 13th. As with the lunch, the success of the dinner is largely determined by members arranging tables of friends and those of shared experience; so please take the initiative and arrange one!

More broadly, 2021 saw the return of a comprehensive programme of former Regimental and Rifles events in the counties. In 2022 we anticipate a resumption of normal levels of activity. The dates of them all are on The Light Infantry Website (www.lightinfantry.co.uk) and the digital home of The Rifles network, Swift (<https://theriflesnetwork.co.uk>). As always, you will have competing priorities, but where possible I urge you to find the time and energy to reconnect with The Club and each other after the restrictions of the pandemic.

The Club remains solvent and able to subsidise both the lunch and dinner. The AGM in October is your opportunity to influence where else we could consider spending funds; so please could I urge you to consider attending that too.

Beyond The Club, The Light Infantry Committee has been active over the last year. The Reunion is planned for 18 June in Shrewsbury, and Mark Goldsack has taken over from Tim Gregson as Chairman. Tim's stint has been a long one during which he adroitly protected Light Infantry interests in the aftermath of the creation of The Rifles. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude for this, as well as for his years organising the dinner. Thank you.

The eagle-eyed will have noted that the author of this newsletter is not Mark Elcomb. After a herculean effort as Chairman of your club he has handed on the baton. In Light Infantry fashion, we met at the end of November in a pub in the Wylve Valley for a convivial supper and handover chat. Mark had a long, impressive, and inspiring career culminating with command of not one but two manoeuvre brigades the first of which had a Light Infantry battalion within it. He has continued to be a leading light in Light Infantry circles since retiring from the Army and an active Chairman of The Club. I am most grateful for an excellent handover and on your behalf sincerely thank him for all he has done for us all over many years and most recently as Club Chairman. If you can carve out the time from all else you are doing, enjoy your retirement Mark!

As I conclude it would be remiss if I didn't mention the consistent and steadfast anchor for all Light Infantry activity, Ian Foster. He has once again managed our accounts, offered sage advice, done the heavy lifting to enable the lunch and dinner, and a host of other unseen yet vital tasks. Ian, we remain most grateful.

I wish you all a happy and Covid-free 2022 and look forward to seeing you at The Club's events.

Edward Chamberlain