

SASC COMRADES' ASSOCIATION - APPOINTMENT OF LT COL (RETD) GRAHAM LACEY AS SECRETARY SASC COMRADES' ASSOCIATION

This text has been extracted from an email that will be sent to the retired members of the SASC Comrades' Association from the newly appointed Secretary

I am sure that a good many of you will be unaware of the ongoing situation regarding the post of Regimental Secretary SASC or some may be aware of the problems facing the Corps in this area but are not aware of the outcome. So I'll start with the outcome and then go back and explain the background and what the future holds.

On 17th May I was appointed Secretary of SASC Comrades Association; this is not the appointment of Regimental Secretary previously held by Norman Benson. My appointment is not a Retired Officer's post, I am not being paid and I will work from home in York, not from Warminster although I will be liaising with HQ SASC on a frequent and regular basis. I'll have no connection with the Weapons Collection nor will I deal with welfare issues for serving soldiers and their families nor will I be dealing directly with any welfare organisations. In essence I am now the focal point for all matters concerning retired members of the SASC Comrades' Association. I hope to bring a fresh focus to the appointment and my initial aim is to re-establish contact with all retired members of the SASC, then to ensure that they are kept abreast of developments within the Corps and to put in place a forum whereby retired members can easily communicate with their peer group and friends.

I have unearthed several different databases listing retired members and their contact details; however, none are the same and it is immediately clear that many names are missing. For some of these I will be able to fill in their information fairly quickly, whilst others will take some research. By the beginning of next week I will send out a list giving the contact details for those who are already on the databases, it would be appreciated if you would check your own details and let me know if they are correct or not. If you notice that I am showing incorrect information for other retired members who you are in contact with would you please let me know.

As soon as I have been through 39 editions of the Corps Journal I will send out a second list showing the names of those for whom I do not have any contact details in the hope that some of you will be able to send their contact details direct to me or at least forward my contact details to those you might be in contact with.

I am aware that some retired members do not wish to maintain contact with the Corps, I will of course respect those wishes; however, no document exists stating who they are so I do need to make contact with as many retired members as possible and then I will be able make sure that those who do not wish to be involved with the Corps are not contacted again. My starting point will be the 1972 Corps Journal through until 2010.

I want to set up an "all informed network" with as many retired members of the SASC Comrades' Association as possible. I hope to establish a SASC page on Face Book, one already exists so I may be able to "hijack" it or whatever is appropriate, and if I am unsuccessful then will set up a new page. Face Book is a tremendous tool that allows unequalled access to news and photographs etc that are easily uploaded. Whatever happens I hope to put a hyperlink from Face Book back to the Corps website, which remains in the safe hands of David Cuthbertson. I also intend to publish a minimum of 2 newsletters each year aimed specifically at retired members, I would welcome any information you might like to be included, especially things that relate to what you are doing and where you live etc. As the Comrades' Association Secretary I will also be invited to attend the various Corps' study days/periods arranged by HQ SASC, this will give me

the opportunity to report back to the retired members and also to make sure that those who are approaching the end of their regular service do not just disappear into the wild blue yonder as so many seem to have done in the past. I am also acutely aware that not everyone has access to email and the internet, for those who don't I will post out hard copy of my emails etc. This may be a little slow to start with but once I know who doesn't have access to the internet etc I am sure I'll be able to streamline the system.

Before I deal with the background and the future, I first need to pass on some sad news. I was informed yesterday of the death of Sid Taylor who passed away on Friday 9 May in Salisbury following an illness. His funeral will be held this Friday, 20th May but unfortunately I don't have any more details. This information was passed via John Barnard by Janet Taylor. If I get any more news I will ask David Cuthbertson to put it on the Corps website, so please check at www.sasc-comrades.org/

Background

Having spent the last 2 days at HQ SASC I now realise that the Army, the Corps and Warminster have changed a great deal since I retired at the beginning of 2004. First of all let me deal with situation that finds me in the new post of Secretary SASC Comrades' Association. Many will be aware that Norman Benson stood down as Regimental Secretary and OIC Weapons Collection in 2010. Unfortunately this coincided with a recruitment ban being imposed across the MOD, which meant that even though the Corps had an officer who was approaching retirement and was willing to fill the post, he could not be recruited. HQ SASC/HQ Infantry put up a case for dispensation to be given to allow the post to be filled. This was refused on three separate occasions and it is now clear that the post of Regimental Secretary and OIC Weapons Collection will not be filled in the foreseeable future and beyond. Captain Mick Ronan, the Corps Adjutant ⁽¹⁾ in HQ SASC took on many of the Regimental Secretary's responsibilities; however, for obvious reasons looking after the Comrades' Association was not his main effort. Hopefully my appointment will put Association matters back on the front page. The role of OIC Weapons Collection now sits with the SO2 Training within HQ SASC, Major Paul Redding. I hope this explains the situation and makes it clear that we are unlikely to see the post of Regimental Secretary being filled for some considerable time.

The Future

By the future I mean what is going to happen with regard to Association matters, reunions, AGM etc. Some of what I say is guess work; however, some things are fact. Let me start with fact – as things stand there will not be a Comrades' Weekend in 2011. I mentioned that Warminster has changed considerably over the 7 years since I retired. The fact is that there is insufficient accommodation at Warminster to accommodate the Comrades weekend. The Barracks is a huge building site, especially in and around the Officers' Messes. The Infantry Mess is closed whilst it is being refurbished throughout and will not reopen until sometime next year at the earliest, all officers, permanent staff and students alike, are now accommodated and fed in the Hythe Mess. Half of the single storey accommodation blocks behind the Hythe Mess have been razed to the ground and new accommodation is in the early stages of being built on the site. Even if we look ahead to a time when the rebuild is complete the situation will not improve for us. They are not building extra accommodation but simply building enough to accommodate the multitude of different courses that are conducted year round in Warminster. I have to tell you that it is not just the Comrades' Weekend that can no longer be accommodated at Warminster, the Annual Regimental Dinner and Corps Study periods can no longer take place within the Barracks, the last Corps Study period was held away from Warminster. Having spent 2 days at Warminster and notwithstanding the questions that were raised last year regarding possible changes to the Corps Weekend etc, I can assure everyone that there is no hidden agenda, the facts are simple – the Army has changed and we cannot continue to do our Association business in the way we have hitherto. An important task for me is to find a solution to the problem – after one day in the job I have some ideas but that is all they are - ideas! What is clear is that there will not be a full blown Comrades' gathering anytime this year. For the same reasons the future of

the AGM is also uncertain. HQ SASC are now examining the situation, seeing what if anything is written down – is there some kind of charter, some say there is, but if so where is it, what does it say? Answers to me please; no matter how vague.

The Way Forward (for me)

My priorities are:

- To bring the Retired Members database up to date, there is no quick fix. I believe that everything else is dependent on this being done.
- I want to produce a geographical list showing the areas where retired members live.
- To become the sole focal point for all Comrades' Association matters, so please deal with me and me alone.
- To examine the options for future Association gatherings. We can almost certainly forget about being able to use military accommodation at Warminster or elsewhere for that matter. Having said that, if anyone has a contact who could help please let me know.
- To encourage retired members to keep in touch with me by whatever means suits and once set up use our Face Book page to update everyone else on where you are, what you are doing and track down those who have lost touch.
- Finally I give an undertaking that I will keep everyone informed of what is happening via emails, newsletters, Face Book, the Corps website, letters and where appropriate by phone. Therefore can I encourage everyone to keep me informed, tell me what's going on.

I will happily take any issues that you may have back to HQ [SASC](#) or elsewhere as appropriate

My contact details are:

Email/iPhone: sascassocsec@talktalk.net (preferred means of contact)

Home Telephone: 01904 766093

Mobile: 07760 225226

Details of the SASC page on Face Book will be published in due course.

Foot Note


- (1) The Corps Adjutant is not the appointment that many of us are familiar with from the past. He is now a serving officer who is in effect the Adjutant of HQ SASC and the SO3 G1 MS, so his main effort is looking after the career interests etc of our SNCOs, warrant officers and officers. Even without taking on the additional responsibilities from the Regimental Secretary the Corps Adjutant's post is exceptionally busy and one that is essential for the Corps. The Corps Adjutant and the Commanding Officer SASC are both acutely aware that Association matters are in danger of being overlooked or not given the level of attention they require.


Graham Lacey


Lt Col (Retd)

Secretary

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