



The Carrier Pigeon

42 (North West) Brigade

News brought to you from the front line!

Welcome to the Spring edition!

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Carrier Pigeon, the Army Chaplaincy bulletin for the whole of the North West from Cheshire to Cumbria - God's Country!.

Welcome to the all-new edition of the Royal Army Chaplains Departments (RACHD) news and information magazine. At a time when the Armed Forces is often in the news, clergy and churches are constantly asking me for information about the army and how best to pray and serve the needs of the military in their area. This magazine is intended to put you in touch with what's going on around the country and your local Regional Brigade Senior Chaplain who

is there as a liaison between the military and the church.

You might not know it but there are only three regular 'serving' chaplains in the North West area and the rest of my 27-person clergy team are part-time and mainly serving in local parishes. Nine are serving with the Territorial Army (TA), 13 are commissioned into the Army Cadet Force (ACF), which incidentally is the biggest youth organisation in the country, and three are Officiating Chaplains to the Military (OCM's).

These people are all part of the team serving the spiritual needs of the army in the North West of England, from Cheshire in the South to Cumbria in the North. At the time of writing both my regular chaplains from this area are serving with their regiments in Afghanistan, while I have a TA chaplain deploying to Afghanistan later on in the year and another TA chaplain about to deploy to Cyprus for three months, both volunteers!

Over the next few pages you

will discover articles written by all four types of chaplain, which I hope you will find interesting. If you would like to have me, or one of my team, come and speak to your church, or clergy meeting, etc, about chaplaincy and how you can pray and support those military people within your local community, then please give me a call.

I wish you every blessing as you serve God in the North West.

Cole Maynard

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Mending Broken Wings!

The Revds Joe Moesel & Maggie Reynolds

“Even youths grow tired and weary, young men stumble and fall,
but those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:30-31)

Army Training Regiment (ATR), Winchester, provides initial training, known as Phase One, for Junior Soldiers who are between the ages of 16 and 18 years of age. For these younger soldiers under training it is an exciting time in their lives. As they make the transition from civilian to soldier they undergo challenging and robust training. Every effort is made to provide effective instruction in a safe environment to get the best out of all the Junior Soldiers.

Invariably, with the physical nature of military training, the odd injury does happen. The Army takes its duty of care to injured personnel very seriously. At ATR (Winchester) injured soldiers under training are placed in *Fox Platoon*, a rehabilitation unit, where they receive appropriate medical treatment be it physiotherapy or rest. They also continue with their training, tailored to their individual needs and situation. While in Fox Platoon Soldiers are given educational tutoring, as well as projects such as researching their future cap badges (Regiments or Corps) and they continue with the non-physical elements of basic training

In spite of this, morale can still take quite a bump. Sometimes these injured soldiers feel as if they have somehow failed,



A member of Fox Platoon

especially when they know they are going to be back-squadded and see their friends preparing to pass off and move on to Phase Two training.

The two chaplains at ATR (Winchester) have weekly sessions with Fox Platoon during which we work on building up the confidence of the injured Junior Soldiers and reminding them how valued they are. One of the ways we

try to encourage them is by taking the platoon to visit the Hawk Conservancy.

The Hawk Conservancy, located on the outskirts of the chocolate box village of Amport, is a rehabilitation centre for birds of prey. Most of the birds end up here after being found injured or distressed by members of the public. There is a veterinary hospital which provides medical care for the injured birds. Follow on care rehabilitates and re-trains the birds in order that they may be released into the wild. In addition there is a conservation programme to build up certain species for release.

Flying displays are given to show off strength and habits of these amazing creatures, a testament to the patient care and encouragement of the keepers. Eagles, vultures, kites and owls are flown to show the variety of skills and abilities of the birds including their hunting, feeding and survival skills. Basic field craft skills at their best.

During the visit Isaiah 40 provided an excellent starting point for theological reflection. Reminding the injured Junior Soldiers that with God there is

Learning to fly again at the Hawk Conservatory.

Padre Joe (left) opposite Padre Maggie





Mending Broken Wings continued...

hope in adversity goes a long way in helping their recovery. The imagery of young men stumbling and mounting up as wings of eagles clearly resonated with the members of Fox Platoon. It was put most succinctly by one of the Junior Soldiers, "*...all the birds at the centre are just like us, Padre. I took this away from the experience ...that being injured isn't the end of the world, we will fly again*".



Tracey packed and ready to do church army style



The Revd. Tracy Bateson
The Perfect Picnic!

With summer at last around the corner, just what makes the best Picnic? Strawberries, pate, champagne? I guess we all have our own ideas. Equally, **What makes a Padre?** We come in all ages, sizes, denominations and for quite a while now,

both genders! A heart for God and soldiers helps too!

It's great being a female Chaplain; you never have to queue for the toilet; we get a bit more time for our Physical Fitness Assessments and if you are into dresses, there are plenty of social occasions! If you are more of a trouser girl though (like me), it's great because that's the order for every day! Being a female has helped me to get alongside many wives, whether on the Wives Committee fund raising, or a coffee with wives from the Foreign and Commonwealth. Soldiers themselves of course, aren't bothered whether we are male or female, they just see us as the 'Padre'. We do whatever

is required of us. On any given day we could be doing judo in the mud with the soldiers, teaching, visiting, in schools, talking one-to-one

with the Colonel, being on exercise, taking a wedding and anything else you can think of!

We have an ongoing opportunity to be with people at their workplace as well as living alongside them: you are with them in a tent, in the desert, in a vehicle. Every day we have access to people who may never talk to us on the street.

Padres are there for our soldiers, their souls and spiritual welfare. The crosses on our lapels represent our position as Christians in their midst. I think I have the best job in the world and Praise God for this opportunity.

Padre Tracey Bateson is currently serving in Tidworth Garrison with 1RRF



Oh the Joys of Being an O.C.M.!

Like any job there are ups and downs to being an OCM, Officiating Chaplain to the Military – but the downs are rare and do not include long dull P.C.C. meetings, church politics, freezing cold 14th century churches and long debates about where the flowers should go!

As clergy we so often end up doing so much administration and dealing with much trivia that the ideas we had of ministry when we were ordained seem a distant memory. However as an O.C.M. administration and trivia is a brief occasional moment and often is just filling in the forms to claim the monthly allowance – Yes! – not only do you get to do the job you were ordained to do but you get paid too!!

Working with the Military we are blessed to be working with the age group missing from the church; furthermore the Padre is seen as someone who is part of everyday life and accepted and welcomed. The job is to spend time with people, to be available, to develop relationships. In the sad event of a death the Padre keeps in touch with the family for a few years – maybe longer. It is wonderful to be in a job which is all about being a pastor and having time for people. It really is a joy being an O.C.M.

Revd. Ann Hitchiner O.C.M.



Father David with his cadets at summer camp

Review of ACF Annual Camp 2009

“Are you going off on another holiday Father?”, was the call in my parishes over the summer. No I was not, but attending the Annual Summer Camp with the Merseyside Army Cadet Force, and I told my parishioners, “I do not take 300 teenagers on holiday with me!”

Three hundred cadets and 300 miles away from home, we spent 12 days in Barry Budden, Scotland training on some excellent areas. And despite the hail, wind, sleet and Scottish snow (camouflaged as rain), the cadets were resilient and coped extremely well, and homesickness was something we hardly heard this year.

What was so impressive to me this year, was the way the older cadets made it their business to look after the younger ones. The cadets who have been through the doors of the “Chaplain’s Office” over the past few years, were now mentoring the younger ones, making sure they were eating plenty, sleeping when needing to, and when they could not help anymore, then they accompanied their “apprentices” to our office. It made me realise the influence the Chaplains can have in the lives of the Cadets.

This years Camp was, as usual, great fun and I look forward to 2010’s Camp in Otterburn, nearly as much as I look forward to my summer holiday!

Father David Gamble, Merseyside ACF

Cadets enjoying their summer camp



Chaplaincy Opportunities

There are a number of vacancies for Territorial Army (TA), Army Cadet Force (ACF) and OCM Chaplains in the area. If you feel that God is calling you to this special ministry then please call the DACG on **01772 260359**.