

RNAS Yeovilton remembers

The Fleet Air Arm (FAA) is proud of its unique status within Britain's Armed Forces and that heritage is reflected at RNAS Yeovilton, the home of Naval aviation. RSR has a long association with the Air Station, where Pastoral Workers Alison Handcock and David Mayor are based in the Sanctuary Lounge at the Chaplaincy.

David writes: *When I began my time at Yeovilton three years ago the work of my predecessor David Garbett meant that people here had a clear concept of the Pastoral Worker. I soon discovered that memory went back even further and that 'Aggies' was immediately recognised, with a large bank of goodwill upon which I have drawn shamelessly. I'm always reminded of the importance of this heritage when I pass what must have been the most picturesque Sailors' Rest: the thatched cottage Old Vicarage in Ilchester. This former 'Aggies' is fondly remembered as a home from home by many Fleet Air Arm personnel, as I hope the current Sanctuary will be in years to come.*

In a life which involves regular periods away from home on deployment, particularly in current times, it is not surprising that places, or buildings, become the focus for memories. A unique aspect of Air Station life is St Bartholomew's, the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church in Yeovilton village alongside the airfield.

Following the commissioning of the airfield as HMS HERON in 1940, fifteen victims of air accidents were buried in the churchyard and a Naval cemetery was subsequently opened alongside. The church was made redundant in 1988 but a successful appeal saw it saved as a lasting memorial and home for the FAA roll of honour. There are other memorials and mementoes in the church including a plaque dedicated to FAA Victoria Crosses, memorials relocated from long closed former bases, and there is even an Aggies embroidered kneeler.



Photos Crown copyright 2009

As the Anglican Church for the Air Station, St Bart's is a very active place of worship but it also welcomes many visitors paying respects to family members and old comrades who are commemorated or interred there. Dedicated as the FAA Memorial Church on 11 November 1993 it is the natural place for an annual corporate act of remembrance.



Each year on Armistice Day HMS HERON's ship's company, RNAS Yeovilton's FAA Squadrons, Royal Marines, and other units march across the airfield to St Bart's.

During this annual service of remembrance a roll is called of those who have died in Naval Service in the past year. Many members of the FAA are currently deployed. Other Yeovilton based units also regularly deploy, so the names called include comrades of those on parade some of whom were serving alongside them when they died. Some may have been familiar faces in the Sanctuary. The reality and immediacy of the memories adds something indefinable to the silence as we stand in the cemetery amongst the ranks of those remembered.

This year's Armistice Day Service will follow the well worn pattern of past years but it is always a special occasion. This one will have an even higher profile than usual as The Most Reverend Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, will be present for the Act of Remembrance followed by a visit to the Air Station. We hope he will call in for coffee at the Sanctuary where, if not quite Lambeth Palace, he will be sure to find a *home from home*.



Aggies Ashore & afloat Magazine

54

...for the Naval Service

Autumn 2011



We will remember them

Photo Crown Copyright 2009



Castaway House
311 Twyford Avenue Portsmouth Hampshire PO2 8RN
Tel: 023 9265 0505 Fax: 023 9265 2929
E-mail: admin@rsr.org.uk Website: www.rsr.org.uk

Patrons
Her Majesty the Queen
Ministry of Defence

Chairman of Trustees
Commander Craig Fulton Royal Navy

Executive Director
Brian Deverson
Editorial Team
Janette Alpin
David Mayor



Dear Supporter

Remembering . . . to look forward



*To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose, under Heaven*

These lyrics from a popular song are of course inspired by the bible (book of Ecclesiastes). In this season of Remembrance, our front cover picture deliberately sets a thoughtful tone. The Quiet Moments piece on page 7 writes about the importance of Remembrance; but it is also essential for us to embrace that autumn and winter give way to spring. In the words of the timeless epitaph *when you go home, tell them of us and say, for their tomorrow, we gave our today*, the prevailing spirit is one of looking forward, not back.

The Tough Talk article opposite talks about 'strength of moral character to make the right choices'. It is self-evident that everything we do in the present has a consequence for the future. Remembrance of those whose sacrifice has given us the opportunity to look forward with vision and confidence should strengthen our moral courage to make those right choices, for their sake and for the good of all people, now and in the future.

Thank you for choosing to support us and I ask God to bless you in all that lies ahead.

Kind regards,

Brian W. Daverson

Executive Director

Chris makes the link across the miles

Ashore & Afloat began life as a newsletter written by RSR's founder Dame Agnes Weston as a means of keeping sailors in touch with home. Today, our Pastoral Workers are involved in projects that maintain that tradition in contemporary ways. In several establishments this includes giving those deploying the opportunity to record a bedtime story on CD for their family left behind.

The idea of making bedtime story CDs for children separated from parents originated at Dartmoor prison where it is known as *Storybook Dads*. The team at the prison has been very supportive of similar schemes for service personnel and several Pastoral Workers have been trained in recording and editing by them.

RSR Pastoral Worker Chris Phillips works with volunteers from the Royal Marines Association (RMA) to record and edit CDs for men deploying from RM Stonehouse. Before the deployment of 3 Commando Brigade earlier this year, over 50 disks were recorded and edited. The value of the stories to families was illustrated when a volunteer editor met a child who proudly told him about daddy, a marine serving in Afghanistan. Asked



about missing daddy the child replied, with a big smile, "Sometimes, but he reads me a story every night!"

After a successful start to their project, Chris and the volunteers from Stonehouse RMA wanted to show their appreciation for the support they have received from Storybook at Dartmoor. They linked up with other supporters of the charity, including its patron former Archbishop's envoy Terry Waite CBE, and joined a 'Chain Gang' walk to raise funds for Storybook Dads. Chris, a former Police Officer, got into the spirit of the occasion by donning convict stripes for the walk across Dartmoor back to the prison at Princetown. The group of around twenty 'inmates', were escorted by a Prison Officer on horseback. The Chain Gang was blessed with good weather and achieved sponsorship of approximately £1500.

Chris is pictured with fellow Chain Gang members (L-R) Jean Keating of the Royal Marine Association, Terry Waite CBE, and their escort, Dartmoor Prison Officer George Blake.

Quiet Moments

Lest we forget . . .

It's November, the clocks have changed and the season of Remembrance is here. *Remember, remember the 5th of November . . .* I wonder why we do - Guy Fawkes wasn't the only person in history to have a pop at the establishment. Maybe the festival has survived owing to a human instinct to 'burn up' the old - cuttings and dead wood alike.

Remember, remember the 11th of November . . . Why? Of that there is no doubt in my mind - it is 'lest we forget' the past and ongoing sacrifice of our men and women in conflict, and give them the honour due their name. In a world so often characterised by shifting sands of ethics, morality and purpose, I am cheered that Remembrance Day retains a solid place in the nation's psyche. Without

this, there is little chance of new generations learning the lessons of history, thereby being destined to repeat them.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Why? Again, I am sure why - God knows that for us mere mortals to keep on track, we need regular remembrance of what Christ has done for us on the cross . . . 'lest we forget'.

So if you want the mighty bonfire of Christ to burn up your dross - cuttings and dead wood alike - come to Him in repentance and humility, and give him the honour due His name. (PS do this daily - don't wait until next November!)

If you go down to the woods today . . .



You're sure to get a big surprise - because at Royal Marines Poole, St Andrew's crèche and Rascals mums and tots joined forces and enjoyed a morning together, finishing off with a specially themed picnic.

special toys to show off and many of the conversations centred around childhood memories taking a sidestep away from the everyday worries these ladies have such as deployments, housing issues, financial worries and being away from families. RSR's Pastoral Worker Nicola Goudie is a well-loved presence



The rugs were laid on the floor, the teddies, the bears (children) and the bigger bears (adults) sat down and all enjoyed a picnic lunch with a special guest . . . 'Teddy', a 50 year old teddy bear owned by Padre Simon Beveridge!

The morning had a happy feel to it, the children loved bringing in their own



at RM Poole. Her work amongst the families and children continues to be highly valued by the local command.

Nicola is also an essential part of the Chaplaincy's continuity. Padre Simon Beveridge is due to leave RM Poole soon to take up his duties at HMNB Clyde. He will be replaced by The Revd Mike Hills - with or without his teddy!

Developing a truly listening ear

The last issue of *Ashore and Afloat* emphasised that the overriding feature of all our work at RSR is to be there *in person* for those whom we serve – to give a listening ear, encouragement, friendship, guidance and to promote family and community life. The *listening ear* part is essential as all too often people listen but do not *hear* what someone is really trying to tell us. A key part of a Pastoral Worker's training therefore is to attend courses in Listening Skills and Bereavement and Loss at Ampert House, the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre.



Crown copyright 2010

Ampert House, near Andover in Hampshire, was built in 1857 by the Marquis of Winchester. During World War II it was taken over by the RAF and since 1961 has been used as a forces chaplaincy centre. Besides supporting the Service Chaplains, Ampert House offers many courses to those who are interested in developing their ability to work with people in the Service community. Moreover the peaceful surroundings lend themselves to quiet contemplation and help create an ideal course location.

In the Listening Skills course, basic listening skills are practised along with considering issues that are often involved in personal problems. The second day is given over to role plays with professional actors playing the part of clients as theory is put into practice in a relaxed and supportive environment.

The Bereavement and Loss course builds on skills acquired on the Listening Skills Workshop. The 3-day course explores more deeply the realities which surround death. Issues in dealing with bereavement and loss within the Services and regarding children are explored, together with the grief process. Visits are made to an undertaker and the Crematorium in Salisbury in order to dispel myths and reveal the care given to a person following death. The course is suitable for those who, in the course of their work, have a potential responsibility for those who have been bereaved or have suffered some other form of loss.

Recently RSR Pastoral Workers David Mayor and Alison Handcock attended the course.

David says:

Prior to joining RSR, I worked as part of a team assessing and treating psychological injuries following traumatic incidents. During my training and practice I attended numerous similar courses but the training at Ampert House is by far the best of its kind I have experienced. The use of highly skilled actors in role play is realistic and challenging. The involvement of course members, who are mainly serving personnel, really helps put the skills learned, or developed, into a military context.

Alison commented:

The Listening Skills course was very helpful in terms of the content of the course but it was also good to be able to listen in the informal moments to service personnel of all three services speaking about the joys and sorrows of their work and family life. I was particularly struck by the stories of some of the women whose husbands have given up their careers in order to maintain stability for the family whilst the women deploy. The case studies created by the actors during the listening exercises obviously touched raw nerves in some present so it was good to be able to follow up some of those conversations later and to ponder further on the healing work God can do through prayer and listening.

"He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us."

(2 Corinthians 1:4)

Gospel Cards



Once again this year RSR shall benefit from the sale of Christmas cards and calendars produced by *Gospel Cards etc.* Please see the enclosed flyer for details and please remember to tick the box by our name if you place an order - thank you.

Full details of the cards, calendars and other products are on their website or you can call to ask for a catalogue. Tel. 01656 647551

www.GospelCardsEtc.com

Tough talk at HMS NELSON

An October evening saw a crowd of young naval men and women gather at HMS NELSON's Victory Club for the Portsmouth area special event *Tough Talk*. The charity *Tough Talk* comprises a team of weight lifting champions whose lives have been transformed by Jesus. They tour the country, sharing their personal experiences. The evening was arranged by Naval Chaplaincy, the Naval Christian Fellowship and RSR, who were represented en masse by Chaplains and RSR Pastoral Workers from HMS NELSON, SULTAN and COLLINGWOOD, NCF's Steve Martin and RSR Director Brian Deverson. Brian comments: *This event has been eagerly awaited. It demonstrates the integrated way that NCF, Chaplaincy and RSR work together to keep alive the Christian message in the Naval Service.*

The Tough Talk team gave their lively presentation with weight-lifting demonstrations interspersed by life stories. Each of the three team members had enjoyed considerable success in the power lifting sport, winning championships, records and medals world-wide. Each also had thrived in their careers – business, police force and city finance – before allowing greed, excess, drink & drugs and criminality to bring their lives into an ever-downward spiral.



The Tough Talk team ensured the lively atmosphere was maintained by inviting the audience to participate in a weight-lifting 'competition' with prizes given out at the end. Egged on by their friends, several men and one woman sailor joined in, together with RSR's John Gueran. John was well beaten by his son Daniel – but not surprising as Daniel is joining the Royal Marines in January! Everyone

appreciated their guts in having a go – it was a lot easier to stay sitting comfortably in the audience!

Brian Deverson sums up Tough Talk's powerful message: *each one was passionate to explain that despite their physical strength, there was a coldness of heart and a hole inside that the world could not fill. By giving their lives to Jesus they had been made whole and were here to share this message of hope with others. It is not physical strength that defines a person, but strength of moral character to make the right choices and not to follow the herd.*

After his encouraging words, the team leader expressed his privilege to be talking to the fine young Royal Navy men and women present, and his gratitude for all they do in the service of our country. The evening concluded in the Haven facility, where refreshments were served by RSR Pastoral Workers. The lively conversations in the Haven suggested that Tough Talk had certainly made a welcome impact!

Photos from top right: The Tough Talk team on stage and demonstrating the bench press. Pastoral Worker John Gueran sizes up the task ahead.



All three previously had no interest in God, indicating He was 'not on their radar'. Miraculously, and in quite different ways, at their lowest point each had encountered the reality of God in Jesus Christ, experiencing His peace, love and forgiveness in such an authentic way that their lives were turned around. The team explained that as for all Christians, this transformation is a continuing life-long process that requires a daily walk with the living Jesus.

Kayak marathon - far from Cosy!

RSR continues to be active in Scotland, as it seeks to promote Christian fellowship amongst serving men, women and their families. This October saw Braeholm's Gary & Jan Alpin and Pastoral Worker Jan McKerrow involved in the Glasgow to Edinburgh Canoe Marathon as part of the Cosy Kayak Team.

The team take their name from Aggie's Cosy coffee shop, which is on the Churchill Naval Estate in the heart of the naval community and managed by Jan McKerrow. The idea for the race started in the coffee shop in May after a discussion between Jan and Michael Yeomans from the RN youth project, Backchat. When Jan put the suggestion to her regulars, everyone gave a resounding YES! The idea was to promote spiritual and physical wellbeing between RM and RN wives and when their husbands got onboard with the idea, the plan was launched. The team would kayak the 55 miles between Glasgow and Edinburgh in a race to be held on 8-9 October, some 4 months away. Some of the ladies couldn't swim, one was terrified of water, others felt unfit but all were united in their determination to succeed!



The Glasgow to Edinburgh Canoe Marathon is a serious marathon race run by the Scottish Canoe Association. As such, crews entering come from all over the UK and include international racing paddlers. At 55 miles it is a challenge. Most of the Cosy Kayak Team had no

experience of canoeing, and little exposure to fitness routines, hence as an experienced canoeist Michael Yeomans took charge of the training.

Michael's priorities were firstly to introduce the group to a physical fitness programme and the team spent many hours in the RSR Braeholm gym building up the necessary physical strength and endurance required to take part in the race. Next, he introduced the group to the basic boat handling and paddling skills that would enable them to safely navigate their boats from Glasgow to Edinburgh. Finally, Michael worked with the group to develop the mental mindset required to work as a team and deal with the challenges that are encountered in this type of race - angry swans, other larger boats, anglers, obstacles and the Scottish weather!

Once these skills were acquired it was simply a case of getting on the water and building up distance. The team are using boats which require a crew of two people. They started off on Loch Lomond and paddling sessions quickly developed from short outings covering little distance to regular early morning outings lasting one and a half hours, during which crews covered 6-7 miles.

Both Michael and Jan say that they are very proud of the group and how hard they have worked to achieve their aim. Jan (pictured left, front kayaker) explains: *The training has brought together people who didn't know each other - all from different walks of life. Some have built friendships through the group and everyone enriches the team with their different strengths. It has given us all a more healthy perspective on life. Some members of the group have suffered injury through training but they continue to perform a vital part in the team playing a support role.*

Saturday 8 October dawned cold and very wet but the Cosy Kayak Team was in high spirits as they made their way to Speirs Wharf in Glasgow to start the race. Twenty-five teams took part in the race including some of Team GB practising for the London 2012 Olympics. Cosy Kayak had decided on a relay system and the



eight kayakers would take it in turn changing every 4-5 miles. There was a fantastic support team cycling alongside providing safety support and a team of drivers to transport the team and the kayaks.

RSR's Jan McKerrow and RN wife Beth Calvert-Cooper were first into the water and set off at a good pace (pictured right). After just over 5 miles they were replaced by Michael Yeomans and Dawn Sanderson for a further 4 miles, and the race continued in this way until they reached the Falkirk Wheel 24 miles away. Submariner Chris Stewart and his wife Christine started the race the next day followed by Rita Hodgson and Sheena Thorne.

The race ended 31 miles away at Lochrin Basin in Edinburgh. After a total of 55 miles Cosy Kayak's finishing time was 12 hours 7 minutes - a very respectable time for novices.



When asked what this means to them, one of the kayakers, Christine (pictured left with husband Chris) said: *I joined the Cosy Kayak Team thinking the Glasgow to Edinburgh race would be a three hour jolly; with the wind pushing us along so that all we had to do was steer - how wrong could I have been!! I must admit I panicked a bit when I heard that it was going to be a six-hour paddle on both the Saturday and Sunday!*

At the time I was recovering from health issues and I found the training and focusing on the race a welcome distraction. Through the team I have made some new friends and enjoyed the fellowship before some of the training sessions. Before joining the team I think I had an allergy to gyms as whenever I thought about joining one I have to sit down and rethink... but through training with friends three times a week I have finally dropped a dress size which is an added bonus. My husband, who is a submariner, and also part of the team, isn't so sure as it is going to cost him a new wardrobe! Through Cosy Kayaking my husband and I have found something in common that we both really enjoy - so much so that we have bought two inflatable kayaks so that we can take our girls out on the water.

Without the coaching from Michael, and the pastoral support from Jan McKerrow, I doubt I would have made it this far and I am so proud of myself, and the rest of the team, for paddling so far in weather described as 'typically Scottish'!

RSR staff in Scotland were greatly encouraged by joining in the event, owing to the community spirit generated and friendships made. Having cosy fellowship with those we already know is great, but to reach out to others and draw them in, we've actually got to get our feet wet!