

MINUTES OF THE AGM OF THE LANCASTER MILITARY HERITAGE GROUP
HELD ON 14 MAY 2019 AT 19 00 AT WESTFIELD WAR MEMORIAL VILLAGE

Present: Vice President, Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, a further seven members of the Executive Committee and eighteen other members.

Apologies: President, Rory Legge, Tim Ripley.

Minutes. The minutes of the AGM held on 8th May 2018 were accepted unanimously.

Chairman's Annual Report. The Chairman noted that much of the Group's activities over the past 12 months had been focused on the commemorating the Final Centenary Year of the Great War. This had included an excellent programme of lectures, in association with Lancaster University. Armed Forces Day had been a great success, the Chairman recorded his gratitude to all those who contributed to the event, in particular to Tim Roberts as lead organiser and to Brian Jefferson, who had called in many favours to arrange an aerobatic display. The Cadet Forces and Army Reserve units together with RAF Spadeadam had been out in full force. He regretted the lack of interest shown by Army HQ NW. The Carol Service was well attended.

The Martin Edmonds Memorial Lecture will be given by Sir Hew Strachan on 25 June and will cover the continuing conflicts in Europe after the Armistice. This will be swiftly followed by AFD on Saturday 29 June. The Chairman invited Tim Roberts to report on arrangements for AFD. Tim advised that the event would be held in the Arena area of Morecambe's promenade and also extend to the Winter Gardens. The Kite Festival is scheduled on the same day which will enhance the number of visitors and offer an opportunity for ticket sales. The service charities being supported this year are the Royal British Legion and Combat Stress. Amongst the activities planned are a summer AFD Trail for youngsters, paid for by Kendal and Morecambe businesses, a flypast by an RAF Dakota and a display by three veteran aircraft. Static displays will include those from Solway Aircraft Museum and the Royal Intelligence Corps amongst others. Music will be provided by the Lancaster Town Band, High Society Jazz Band and Morecambe Brass Band. Thanks to Adrian Legge arrangements are in hand to have a contingent from HMS Lancaster lead the parade. The drumhead service will be conducted by Father Michael Childs.

The Annual Dinner will be held on 7 November 2019 at which the speaker will be Ben Wallace MP, the current Security Minister.

The Chairman stated that he was not seeking re-election and concluded by setting out the challenges faced by the Group. He referred to a review of the constitution and the aims of the group carried out in 2017 which concluded that while these had been written in the 1990s they remained valid. The Group engaged in a range of activities from presenting a programme of lectures, providing a lead element in organising AFD to hosting a Carol

Service. We were examining the potential for further involvement with the City on the Military Covenant. He thanked Liz Scott for her efforts as Armed Forces Champion.

He felt that we had set ourselves a significant number of tasks with scant resources. He then listed the challenges the Group faced. These were as follows:

1. Recruitment. Against a background of massive reductions in the Regular Forces over the years he considered that AFD had been devised to draw a veil over this development. Like many serving soldiers he saw AFD as a cynical ploy to divert attention from failed foreign adventures. He considered that faced with minimal support from MOD we should no longer participate in AFD.
2. Lectures. Our main effort should be focused on a programme of high quality lectures in collaboration with the University.
3. Cadet Competition, He had no direct experience of what would be involved in promoting a Cadet Competition.
4. Cadet Organisations, He questioned the basis and authority for our interaction with the Cadet Forces.
5. Carol Service. He questioned the relevance of the Carol Service to military matters.
6. Military Covenant. The question which arises is whether the Group has the expertise and resources to engage in this field.

These were the challenges the Chairman considered the Group faced. He believed we had much to be proud of and punched well above our weight.

Election of Chairman. Mike Diss was elected unanimously.

The new Chairman thanked Robin for his comments and recognised his reservations. The topics he raised needed serious thought and he and the Executive would need the assistance of the whole membership to reach a positive conclusion.

Election of Executive. The executive was re-elected unanimously; with Adrian Legge becoming Deputy Chairman, Pauline Elliott would replace Larry O'Hara as Secretary in September. There was an urgent need to recruit a Membership Member as Brian Jefferson had relinquished this position. Brian had been the mainstay of the Group but had given notice that he would serve but one further year as Treasurer.

New Chairman's Address. Mike recognised that the Group was under resourced and would follow up on the points raised by Robin and the President. He said that Brian had been the stalwart who had stepped in to fill any gaps in the work of the Group, this was neither fair nor healthy. He intended to put recruitment in the forefront of his efforts. He wished to appoint a Membership Secretary supported by a team. We needed younger members and a wider base, not just retired military. He would initiate a discussion on our chosen target audience at the next Executive Meeting and relate this to the earlier work on aims and objectives. That would be followed by a general survey on the membership. He

made the point that members were always welcome to attend meetings of the Executive. Brian had indicated that he was willing to take over the role of Chairman from next year provided that a recruit could be found to understudy and take over the role of Treasurer.

President's Address. He then read an address from the President who apologised for his absence on business and offered his congratulations to the new President and Executive. He thanked Robin for his contribution as Chairman and suspected he had been delighted and frustrated in equal measure as he led the Group forward while the world around us continued to evolve. The long term future of the Group was the main thrust of his address. He believed the Group needed to spend time this coming year undertaking a realistic and honest review of itself; the most pressing issue being to determine the primary audience for which the group exists. The world around us has changed since the Group was formed. There was a need to identify the expectations of the membership and to consider if these were realizable. Do we have a role to play in the delivery of the Military Covenant? and, if so, how do we dovetail with NW Army HQ, RHQ LANCS and other military formations. Do we have a mandate to do this? Is our involvement required, desired or rejected by these regular units? Do we have a mandate to act as a bridge to the Cadet Movement? if so from whom? Are we an historical interest group or a veteran's group? His judgement was that the time was ripe to understand what we had become; what we want to be and thus what we need to do. There was a need to reassess the aim such that it sustains the expectations of the membership and is attractive to new members. This will require hard choices. He looked forward to seeing what opinion there was as to what that could, should and must be done.

Treasurers Report. Brian stated that our cash reserves were healthy with £2761.72 in the bank account. Ideally he would wish this to be about £300 higher but over the past year our income from the raffle had been lower than normal. The Executive had taken the view that we should continue our usual level of support to service charities. All our applications for grants had been successful.

Membership. Brian reported that our membership currently stood at 117. There had been 3 resignations during the year and 3 members deceased. One new member had joined, He recognised the urgent need to recruit new members.

Any Other Business. The Chairman of the Westfield War Memorial Village advised that Princess Alexandria would unveil a memorial at the Village on Wednesday 29 May at 15 00. The availability of our website was queried and it was stated that it had not been updated for at least 30 months.

Next Meeting: The next AGM would be held at 19 00 on 12 May 2020.