



# Despatches

Newsletter of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment Re-enactment Society

No. 1

10<sup>th</sup> January 2012

## Editorial

This is the first issue of what I hope will become a regular newsletter for our society. Within these pages I hope to include information, reviews of shows, advice on kit and equipment, as well as dates for our shows and training. If anyone would like to help or contribute, you can email me with your article and it will be added to the next issue.

Let me start by thanking you all for an excellent season in 2011. Having started the year few in number, even after the merger of the volunteer and regular groups, we have ended the season with a strong group and some very keen members. I must particularly thank Mat and Adam, but more on that later.

We are definitely heading in the right direction, and we have already had some enquiries for potential new members for this year. Recruitment will be one of our main objectives in 2012, as we desperately need more soldiers to swell our ranks, and I fear Leanne is in desperate need of female company!

Please see the attached sheet for a list of our training dates and shows. Some of these have yet to be confirmed, but I have tried my best to get dates as accurate as possible so that you can plan in advance.



*Training at Clandon House in October 2011*

## Looking Back

Early last year, I remember turning up at Clendon and pitching the tent, getting kitted up and then watching the heavens open. Leanne, Ben and I sat in the tent, staring out at an empty garden. Not a great start to the season! However, things did improve from there. We were invited along to Eastbourne Redoubt as part of their Armed Forces weekend. None of us had ever been inside the redoubt before, and it was our first camping show of the year so we packed up the cars and headed down. After pitching the tent on a slope - the flattest bit of ground we could find - we got some sleep, awaking the next day to wander, bleary-eyed into the redoubt. We met several other groups & individuals there, including the 79<sup>th</sup> Highlanders, and Andy, the exceptionally cheerful chap with the Sten gun. Although the event was somewhat disorganised, we had an enjoyable day walking about and chatting to the public, and we also discovered Mat Hicks, hiding amongst his Daleks. We must have made a good impression, because he decided to join our ranks, despite being awoken by Sergeant Ben's face looming over him at 7am the next day asking where breakfast was!

Following Eastbourne, we made our way to Haven Street, in the Isle of Wight, where we joined Steve Leggett and the Victorian Strollers for a weekend on the period steam railway. This was Mat and Adam's first event, a bit of a gamble with no training and not really knowing what to expect, but it paid off very well. We provided an escort to the glorious Rita (dressed as Queen Victoria) and did a fair amount of on the spot drill and marching throughout the day. Mat and Adam got right into the swing of things, picking up the drill very quickly and providing a very good show all round. I'm pleased to say that the impression we left at Haven Street has led to our invitation back this year as one of the main features, and to several other events as well with the Strollers.

From Haven Street to Henley Fort, where the volunteer group began about 8 years ago. I invited along the Strollers in reciprocation to their various invites in the summer, and several of their members made the journey to join us. Unfortunately, again due to horrific organisation skills, we found out on Saturday lunchtime that the fort was only advertised as being open on the Sunday. Nevertheless, we took the opportunity to do some training, chat to new friends, and take tea in the marquee. Returning on the Sunday, everyone returned for a much better day with lots of members of the public arriving to watch us.

Portsmouth Victorian Festival provided a fine end to the season. With all of our current members together in public for the first time, we seem to have made a great impression at the historic dockyard. Our marching was great, although I realised my shouting voice needs a little work when I halted us and watched Captain Porter and Pat carry on into the crowd!

Thanks must also be given to Angela, who has provided us with some excellent photos of our training event in October. No news yet on the Portsmouth ones, as I believe she has been quite busy with photography work over Christmas, but I am hoping she will also join us again at some point this year if she needs anything else from us for her project.



## Kit and Equipment

This year we are mostly going to be wearing our scarlet, regular uniforms. This should aid us greatly with recruitment, as most people recognise the traditional Victorian soldier look instantly. We are also going to revert to regular infantry drill instead of the current rifle drill, and use this for both uniforms. Whilst not historically accurate, this should enable us to fit in with other groups, and it means we only have to learn one set of drill instead of two.

I would suggest that you each start to think about purchasing your own Martini Henry rifle (MH), as I would like to see at least a couple of us being able to fire by the summer. This will vastly improve our display, and it means we can start participating in field events with other groups. A short lever mark 2 or 3 would be best, as a lot of the mark 4 long lever rifles won't fit the socket bayonet, like my one, which means it cannot be used with the scarlet uniform for anything where the bayonet is needed. Cost wise, you are probably looking at about £500 including shipping. I should hopefully be able to get some form of discount on this, if we order more than one, or if

ordered with other items in one package. Remember that we have the wooden dummy rifles, and can hopefully borrow original rifles occasionally from Henley Fort, so this is not urgent but is highly recommended.

Regarding firearms licenses, I am going to be applying for mine in the next few weeks, and will likely need a gun cabinet. The license itself only costs £50, and if you wish I would be happy for you to keep rifles in my cabinet for you if needed.

Remember, the kit list is available through the website ([www.q2vb.co.uk](http://www.q2vb.co.uk)) in the member's area. Just use the password 2batt to access it.

I am also going to try to make a basic awning tent for us to use as a mess tent/general cover. If we expand any further this year, we may also need to look at purchasing a second bell tent. These cost just under £300, so if you don't want to buy one as an individual we could perhaps club together to buy a group one and split the cost between us. If we camp at Kelmarsh or Detling, we will currently have difficulty fitting everything & everyone into one tent!

I'm looking forward to participating in more camping events this year, as we can get an excellent looking display with tables, ammunition boxes and various field equipment if we all chip in.

## Training & Events

This year we will be holding regular training sessions at Clandon House, which is a great benefit. We will normally be training on the last Sunday of the month, so that we do not clash with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Foot who usually train on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday. As mentioned above, we will be reverting to the regular infantry drill for both regulars and volunteers. This decision has been made after careful thought, and whilst the drill is not correct for the rifle volunteers, as we are likely one of the only groups in the country who actually portray them it will only be the very knowledgeable who will know this. It saves us from having to learn 2 separate sets of commands and manoeuvres, and will prevent the inevitable confusion that could lead to during a display.

Once firearms licences and rifles have been sorted by members, we will need to concentrate on this aspect to make sure we are portraying ourselves correctly and safely. I will look into arranging for us to join another group such as the Diehards for some extra training, or invite some of their key members along to some of our training sessions at Clandon.

Events for this year should be rather fun. We made a lot of new contacts last year with the new events we attended, and I for one am especially looking forward to returning to Haven Street Railway for their Victorian weekend. There are two large events which I hope for us to attend, and these are the Festival of History at Kelmarsh in July, and Detling Military Odyssey in August. Both of these events are huge and very well attended by both the public and other groups, and I will look into us attending alongside one or more other groups to help us through the first show. This could be a good opportunity to take part in some drill sessions alongside other groups, and/or battlefield manoeuvres (possibly as rifle volunteers).

We are likely to be invited to a number of Victorian Stroller events this year as well, these are usually more relaxed than specific re-enactment events but are a great opportunity to socialise and enjoy yourselves in a different location/situation to normal.

Please see the attached sheet for more details on events.

## New Members

This year we need to increase our membership. If you know anyone who may be interested, please chat to them and give them more information about us. If you are willing, add our details to forums, blogs, and so forth to try to bring attention to us. We have leaflets available to the public at Clandon House, and of course you can also direct people to the website [www.q2vb.co.uk](http://www.q2vb.co.uk) or to our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/Queens2VB](https://www.facebook.com/Queens2VB)

Don't forget to keep an eye on our member's group page as well!

Regards,

Lieutenant James Dix

Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment Re-enactment Society



# Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment Re-enactment Society

## 2012 Calendar

Dates may be added or amended

Date	Location	Event
26 <sup>th</sup> February	Clandon House (Guildford)	Regimental Training
25 <sup>th</sup> March	To be confirmed	Charity March
29 <sup>th</sup> April	Clandon House	Regimental Training
27 <sup>th</sup> May	Clandon House	Regimental Training
24 <sup>th</sup> June	Clandon House	Regimental Training & Museum Open Day
30 <sup>th</sup> June – 1 <sup>st</sup> July	Eastbourne Redoubt	Armed Forces Weekend (Camping Event)
14 <sup>th</sup> & 15 <sup>th</sup> July	Kelmarsh Hall (Northamptonshire)	Festival of History (Large Camping event)
29 <sup>th</sup> July	Clandon House	Regimental Training
5 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> August	Haven Street Railway (Isle of Wight)	Victorian Weekend (Camping Event)
25 <sup>th</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> August	Detling (Kent)	Military Odyssey (Large Camping Event)
8 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> September	Henley Fort (Guildford)	Heritage Open Weekend
30 <sup>th</sup> September	Clandon House	Regimental Training
25 <sup>th</sup> November	Clandon House	Regimental Training
30 <sup>th</sup> November – 2 <sup>nd</sup> December	Portsmouth Historic Dockyard	Victorian Festival of Christmas