

THE CAVALRY AND GUARDS CLUB

127 Newsletter

December 2008



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The highlight of an extremely busy run up to Christmas was undoubtedly the farewell reception for Geoffrey, followed by the Members' lunch. With over 200 Members attending the reception, most of whom subsequently lunched at the Club, it is thought that this was probably one of the largest gatherings of Members, at any one time, for many years.

On a more sombre note, it is clear that the results for 2008 have been affected by the ubiquitous "credit crunch" – bedroom occupancy was down, as was function income. As a result, this year we intend to concentrate more than ever on providing value for money for Members – for example, bedroom rates will not be increased – and on the revenue side, the Committee has decided to focus on increasing the membership and also on increasing revenue from functions. I therefore encourage Members both to introduce new Members to the Club, and to use the Club for family parties or dinners where the Club has established a reputation both for excellence and value for money.

After a busy refurbishment programme last year, which was funded out of cash flow and which included the much-admired reinstatement of the Balaclava Library, we intend to tighten our belts this year. However, as discussed previously, from the funds arising from the sale of the Annex, we will be undertaking the complete refurbishment of the 3rd floor during the first four months of the year. Comfort cooling will be installed and all the bedrooms will have en suite facilities.

Finally, I know that Members will applaud the decision to grant a 'credit' on the Annual Subscription of those Members on active service overseas.

I very much look forward to seeing you in the Club during 2009, and wish all Members a happy and, if possible, prosperous New Year.

David Rosier
Chairman

2008 - A REVIEW OF THE YEAR

This past year has, once again been a busy one for the Club and here are some of the highlights -

January

Throughout the year, the Club arranges a variety of theatre visits and these have proved to be popular with a growing number of Members. On each occasion the evening starts with champagne and canapés at the Club, followed by a comfortable coach ride to and from the theatre, a 'top' seat for the performance and a delicious two-course supper back at the Club. In January the venue was the Royal Albert Hall for a stunning performance by the 'Cirque de Soleil'.

February

Members will probably have read recently of the success of the British Museum in presenting new and exciting exhibitions, and one of the highlights of 2008 was the 'Terracotta Army Exhibition', which was visited by a group of some fifty Members following a luncheon in the Club.

Also in February a group of Members

visited St Petersburg and enjoyed a varied and informative programme of excursions organised in conjunction with Missenden Tours.

March

Back at Sandown Park - after an absence in 2007 due to the poor weather-over 130 Members and guests attended an excellent days racing with the Grand Military Cup as the highlight of the afternoon. The sun shone, the rain stayed away and we trust an even greater number of Members will put this very social occasion in their diaries for 2009.

The Club is also fortunate during the year to welcome a number of 'kindred' organisations and one such is the Coaching Club whose association with the Club goes back to the earliest days when the Vice President of the Cavalry Club – Viscount Valentia – was himself a member and drove a four-in-hand to Meets of the Coaching Club in Hyde Park. During March the Coaching Club held their AGM and Annual Dinner in the Club.

April

Most months provide the Club with a varied programme of events, but perhaps none more so than April this year.

Of note was the splendid attendance of Members and friends at the Reception following the Memorial Service held in the Guards Chapel for former Vice President of the Club - Field Marshal Sir John Stanier – whose portrait stood at the top of the stairs to 'welcome' those attending – a fitting tribute to his long association with '127'.

Also in the month, a splendid supporter of the Club, Edward Nelson, held the launch of his book – 'I Want to Count the Bottles' which includes some amusing anecdotes of Club life and his wife, Sandra Nelson, in her capacity as Chairman of the Ladies Committee welcomed over 100 Lady Members and their guests to the Annual Ladies Luncheon held on St Georges Day. A good number of Members were also present at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea to wish our current Vice President

–Colonel Tom Hall – congratulations on his 80th birthday, which was celebrated this month.

May

A new addition to the events calendar for 2008 was a Tattoo which took place at Windsor (in conjunction with the Horse Show), and Committee Member, Colonel Simon Brooks-Ward, who was responsible for organising the event, also kindly undertook to ensure that two parties of Club Members were well looked after during the evening performances and the dinner that preceded them.

May also provides traditionally the busiest day of the Club's year and Cavalry Memorial Sunday was no exception this year, when the QDG welcomed their Colonel-in-Chief HRH The Prince of Wales (who had taken the Salute) to a Reception prior to their Luncheon in the Club.

During the month, the Club also provided a venue for Jeremy Houghton's very appropriately named exhibition – 'All the Queen's Horses' – and Members visiting during the week long event included the Club's President and HRH The Princess Alexandra.

Completely different in character was the amazing lecture by Rob Caskie on 'Isandlwana' which held a packed Coffee Room spellbound for over an hour – and it is hoped to invite him back in 2010 for the follow-up lecture on Rorke's Drift.

On a domestic note the Secretary's Office was also painted in the month completing a long overdue refurbishment.

June

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly the 'Waterloo Ball' held in June and organised by the Ball Committee in support of the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation. Blessed with a dry evening, the entire Club was taken over for the event and over 300

Members and their guests enjoyed dinner, dancing- to a 'big band' and a disco, a casino and a silent auction. And we are told that there were Members still partying on the Terrace at 3am!

Royal Ascot was also a very successful event for the Club this year and the Royal Enclosure garden, which provides the venue for the Club's Marquee becomes more popular year on year, with the addition of the Garrick Club in 2008.

July

On the anniversary of the smoking ban (1st July), the Club took advantage of the covered Terrace and held the first Cigar and Port Dinner in this elegant venue. Such was the success of the occasion that a Member held a similar event just months later – and we trust others Members will make use of this popular addition to the Club's facilities.

As well as the Garden Parties held at Buckingham Palace, the month proves to be a busy one for members of HM Gentlemen at Arms and the Club is always pleased to welcome Members and their guests to dinner following the annual Cocktail Party.

During this 'quieter' month we also completed the photography for the Club Book (examples of which can be seen on the website) and the Secretary found time to take the Staff on a Bowling evening – which was hugely enjoyed.

August

As a final flourish to completing the Terrace, the trellis was installed at the east end and for both his suggestion and kind donation to costs, the Chairman is extremely grateful to Club Member – Bill Birch Reynardson

September

The 'Grouse Dinner' returned as a Club function in September and the Vice Chairman welcomed over fifty Members and guests to this 'gastronomic' highlight of the Club's calendar.

Significantly this month also saw the

completion of works to refurbish the Balaclava Library (which is mentioned later), as well as the 'opening' of the refurbished Gentlemen's WC on the Ground Floor.

October

Although the Club was busy in October, the Secretary found the opportunity to visit the New Club in Edinburgh where he was kindly hosted by Major James Scott, who resides there and spent a splendid afternoon looking around this reciprocal Club.

Many Members enjoy the benefits of the Clubs with which we reciprocate – a list of which can be found on the website – and the Secretary is always pleased to ensure that a letter of introduction is provided for Members travelling overseas – or indeed, just up to Scotland!

November

Traditionally the busiest month for the Club with a good number of Regimental Dinners, this year we welcomed a record number (160) for the Royal Dragoon Guards dinner and also welcomed back HRH The Princess Alexandra (Honorary Member) who graciously attended the reception prior to the Royal Yeomanry Dinner.

December

Undoubtedly one of the more popular events in the years calendar is the 'Sons and Daughters' Dinner, and this year was no exception with Committee Member, Major 'Willy' Peto regaling the assembled throng with tales of Club life, happily encouraging the younger attendees of the benefits of Club membership.

This was followed in the last week by the Members' Christmas Lunch and Geoffrey's Reception – a full report for which can be found later.

May 2009 be an even busier one.

David J Cowdery
Secretary

THIRD FLOOR REFURBISHMENT

As the Chairman mentions in his introduction, the Committee agreed in December the appointment of Killby and Gayford as the main contractors for the planned works on the Third Floor and they have started work in these first weeks of January.

As Members will already be aware, the intention is to refurbish all of the third floor accommodations and, at the same time, provide the three additional bedrooms on this floor, which were "promised" at the time of the sale of the Annex in 2007. Perhaps of greater significance to those using the bedrooms will be that each will now contain "en-suite" facilities of a shower, washbasin and WC, and will

also have a television and WiFi facilities.

Sensitive both to the requests from Members and the requirements of English Heritage - the wonderful Edwardian baths are being retained on this floor - and will also be upgraded and refurbished to provide some beautiful bathing facilities.

Along with the baths, several items of furniture have also been retained for restoration so that the Committee hopes the finished result will be a good mix of both the traditional and the new a theme, which we trust, is exemplified by all the recent work to the Club and provides a Club "fit-for-purpose" in this 21st Century.

SERVING OFFICERS NEW SUBSCRIPTION SCHEME

Historically, the Club has always been sensitive to the needs of its Members serving in an "active" capacity overseas, and in both of the great conflicts of the last century, it made compensatory adjustments to the membership dues to reflect these engagements.

In the recent past, it has not always been financially possible for the Club to continue this tradition, but the Committee now feels that introducing such an initiative would underline the tradition of the Club as a Military Club, first and foremost.

Therefore, the Committee have agreed that Officers serving on operations overseas, for a period of 6 months or more, should have a further "discount" to their subscription and that this should take the form of a "subscription credit" to be used in the Club in the year following.

As with all other membership initiatives, the responsibility will be on the individual Member to notify the Club of the relevant period and for this to be validated by their Commanding Officer (a form will be available from the Membership Secretary for this purpose). The scheme takes effect immediately (although the "credits" will not be allocated for use until 2010).

CLUB BOOK

Following months of work, the Book is now almost ready for the printers, and we trust that Members have taken the opportunity to purchase a copy thorough the subscription process; thereby ensuring their name is recorded for posterity.

Thanks are due to the many Members who took the opportunity to provide anecdotes and remembrances of the Club, and particular thanks goes to Lord Montegale who, as the sole surviving member of the last Guards Club Committee, not only provided his own reminiscences, but was also kind enough to read through the chapter on the Guards Club to ensure its accuracy.

The book will be launched in the Club, following the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 3rd June, and it is hoped that many Members will join us on that evening to celebrate both the publication and the centenary of "127" Piccadilly which reopened to members following the extensive development works on 24th May 1909.

(Books can still be purchased in advance from the publishers at www.tmilt.com - although the subscription list is now closed).

BOOKS FOR THE BALACLAVA LIBRARY

We trust that many Members will have had the opportunity to view the Balaclava Library since it was completed in October and the Committee is gratified to have received many compliments about this splendid "replacement" and addition to the Club's facilities.

A few Members have been very generous with donations of books and to them the Committee is extremely grateful. The Club is at the same time undertaking a small purchasing policy to enable the Library to obtain books of appropriate "title" and content.

As explained previously, the Committee is happy to accept any hardback book currently (in a "shelf-filling" exercise), but in time will refine the content to reflect the ethos of the Club.

A Member has suggested that each Member might like to supply "A Favourite Book or Their Best Read" and in such a way we could quickly acquire 2,000 more books!

Please send any such donations to the Secretary's Office and the book will be suitable identified with the donor's name. Thank you

LIST OF MEMBERS & CLUB RULES

It was the Committee's intention to send out a new Members list with this Newsletter as the previous one was issued in 2006. However, in considering some proposed changes to the process by which applicants for membership are reviewed, the Committee has decided that some changes to the Club Rules may be required and these will be presented to the Annual General Meeting (or an EGM prior to). Consequently the new booklet will be sent out with the June Newsletter at the end of that month.

The Membership Secretary would like to thank all those Members that have taken the opportunity to verify their details and asks that anyone else interested in so doing, does so at the earliest opportunity. Frances can be contacted directly on 0207 659 0906.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

Our new Club computer system makes it so much simpler to keep in touch with all Members and it is even more effective if we have an email address - please send one to secretary@cavgds.co.uk

NEW BYE LAWS

One of the great challenges Committees have faced in the past and continue to face, is in balancing the needs and expectations of over 2000 Members, whilst at the same time preserving the ethos and heritage of this splendid Club.

As a wise man once said "evolution is ultimately safer than revolution" and it is very much this maxim that the Committee continues to follow.

That said, one of the surest topics for heated debate at any meeting of Members held in the Club, is the Club's Dress Code together with the use of mobile phones and other digital/electronic devices essential (or so we are led to believe?) in this 21st century world.

Consequently the Committee have "revisited" the Bye laws pertaining to both of these matters and the new "bye laws" were posted in the Club prior to the Christmas break. You will find a note of these on the reverse of the Events Diary for your review.

Principally the changes allow for a more "casual" dress code at breakfast and identifies the only areas of the Club where business can be undertaken. The Committee's intention is that, having made such amendments, the observance of the "rules" in other parts of the Club is more strictly adhered to.

EVENTS 2009

Sent together with this Newsletter is the Events Diary for 2009 which we trust you will find useful as an "aide-memoire" for the coming year.

As well at the regular events such as the Theatre Outings, Bridge Afternoons and Marquees at Sandown Park (for the Grand Military) and at Royal Ascot, the programme includes several dinners and lunches within the Club and Members are reminded that (with the exception of the Annual Ladies Luncheon on April 23rd) all the events are "open" to Gentlemen and Lady Members and on most occasions to guests of Members as well.

The Chairman and Committee look forward to welcoming you to one of these events during the coming year.

GEOFFREY'S FAREWELL PARTY

Although the promise of a "free" lunch did much to encourage Members to attend the annual Christmas lunch in 2007, there is no doubt that the major reason for the huge attendance this year of over 200 members was the presence of one man - Geoffrey Price.

As most Members will know, Geoffrey has been Barman here at "127" since the amalgamation of the two Club's in 1976 and was employed at the Guards Club for many years prior to that - his service totalling nearly 60 years.

It was a fitting tribute, therefore, that so many Members were able to be present to say "farewell" on the 18th December, and both the Chairman and Colonel Malcolm Havergal made note of this in their speeches.

Presenting Geoffrey with a copy of the portrait the Club had specially commissioned from artist and former Club Member Alex Chamberlin, the Chairman warmly recognised

OVERSEAS TRIPS

As reported in a recent Newsletter, the Club arranged a very successful tour to St Petersburg in spring 2008 and it is hoped that there might be sufficient interest to warrant arranging further trips in the future.

Specifically the Ladies Committee are thinking of a trip to Bruges including a one or two night stay possibly to see the Christmas markets in November or early December this year, and for the more adventurous a slightly longer trip (5 days) to Romania in the Autumn.

In order to gauge the potential of both trips, it would be very useful if Members who were interested in either would get in contact with the Membership Secretary, Frances Watt at the earliest opportunity.

Geoffrey's dedication and commitment to the Club over many generations and thanked him for his loyalty and long-service.

On behalf of the Ladies Committee, Mrs Sandra Nelson presented Geoffrey's wife, Carole, with a beautiful fruit bowl, which had been specially commissioned for the occasion.

Carole has since written to the Chairman to say "*Geoffrey and myself were very touched at the lovely speeches that were given, and the portrait of Geoffrey is really something special, which we will treasure. A Big "Thank you" to all the Members who attended and who travelled from near and far, also for the lovely letters and cards they were so lovely to read and so much appreciated.*"

Geoffrey managed to put a bit more weight on, so hopefully he will in the New Year get stronger and look forward to a nice holiday at the moment he is enjoying his racing most afternoons."

