

# MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

## Lieutenant Colonel Tex Pemberton OBE

Colleagues,

I thought it time, in this my second message, to tell you what has been happening since I took over the Chair on the 11<sup>th</sup> May this year.

Shortly after that date I distributed a personal message to every single Member in our Association outlining the situation as I saw it at the time of coming to office. You can find that message on our website should you wish to 'refresh.' Since then the NEC have set to work with renewed vigour and every single one of them has a multitude of tasks to attend to, all for the good and benefit of Members. A summary of the stones that have been turned since I came into office can be judged in the Record of the Meeting of the NEC on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010 which also is on the website, something that is new to the Association. Leading up to that meeting much had been done in the margins in preparation and the NEC are fully tasked as can be seen in the Action details of the meeting record. One of our Branches, Swindon, has taken me up on my offer to visit and I will be with them on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Five days later I have been invited to visit and speak at a gathering of the former Tyneside Branch that had withdrawn from the national body by the time of my coming into office. I hope we can eliminate concerns when we meet on 21<sup>st</sup> September and that they will consider coming back into the fold. We shall see.

I am delighted to learn that some of our Branches distribute the information they receive or find on our Association website. Such further distribution, by *all* of our Branches, is essential, particularly to those who do not have website access. A need for frequent communication with Members has been the single common issue in feedback to me since I took over, so those who have written to me about this are not alone! We need to identify the need, or the desire, for communication and then cost the solution to meet the requirement. In this context I have asked the Association Vice Chairman to undertake a study, prior to the AGM, and cost the distribution of:

- the Keris Magazine, which has been warmly welcomed, to identify the production and distribution cost per issue which will help us to determine affordability and frequency;
- the cost of distribution of a Newsletter to each and every subscribing Member so that we can also determine affordability and frequency.

This study must also determine the options and methods (and therefore cost again) of distribution: either by hard copy to individual members or to Branches for further distribution; or by email; or a flexible mixture of each to suit the wishes of our Branches and Members. You will be interested to know that each copy of the recently distributed Keris in UK cost 81p to post. Multiply that by the number of Members and you will see what I mean about cost! From 6<sup>th</sup> April 2010 UK postage costs are determined by weight *and* size so we will explore the possible savings by use of franking. A posted Newsletter to each Member with perhaps more than one page enclosure would probably incur a first class postage to each.

Linked to this cost and distribution study, and other issues, I have asked the National Treasurer to produce, for approval at the AGM, an annual budget. I understand this is the first time this has been done and the outcome will be interesting! It is clearly only good business practice to identify annual income and then budget for expenditure. I am advised that current paid –up membership is not as good as we might hope. Reasons for this vary between oversight and Branch delay in forwarding to the National Treasurer. I do encourage you all to seek to improve in this area so that we can continue to be solvent! Whilst mentioning the National Treasurer I should add that Grahame has indicated his intention to stand down at the AGM and therefore we seek a replacement and nomination. Our Secretary has also been tasked to compile and distribute to Branch Secretaries and Chairmen periodic Information letters for further distribution to Branch members, but again there is a cost which we must consider along with the question of how to reach postal Members. We have a proposal coming to the AGM in October for a Branch Secretaries Symposium which, if agreed and affordable, would benefit modus operandi, standardisation, and communication.

I have a capacity for work and assure you that I am giving my full attention to the needs of the Association. Some change appears necessary and review and change takes time. As I said earlier, the NEC is very active indeed and the results and benefits of their activity will start to appear soon. I will be giving a detailed summary of activity at the AGM in October and the day after returning from the AGM I will post my Chairman's Report on the website for the information and benefit of those not attending.

In addition to all of this, and as asides:

- I am looking again at the issue of copyright;
- I am asking the Foreign Office under this new coalition government to take a fresh view of the decision by the previous government about wearing the PJM;
- I have given notice that I want to ask a question about wearing the PJM, from the floor at the coming Conservative Party Conference, which I am attending;
- I am raising the profile of our Association with the Veterans Agency and asking them to consider where Veterans will stand at the time of distribution of the Queens Diamond Jubilee Medal, this latter as a result of useful feedback from a Member;
- I am working with a colleague from the Lib-Dem party on the issue of a National Defence Medal, another example of coalition!
- I have made fresh contact with the World Veterans Federation and invited a representative to our AGM.

I have been on a steep Association learning curve of late and I am now aware that our very largest 'Branches' are in fact our groupings of postal Members: North (Malcolm White coordinating); South (Brian Roche coordinating); and Overseas (Ron Blain coordinating), around 900 in all. Postal Members cannot benefit from frequent disclosure of information at Branch meetings and are the 'farthest' to reach, metaphorically speaking. At this time Keris and the annual Newsletter are the only means for them. We are looking at that too as part of the study I mentioned earlier.

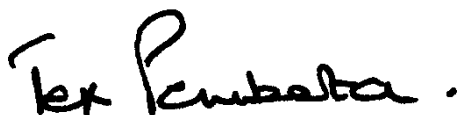
On the International scene I have made contact with the Presidents of all other National Associations across the world and suggested to them we look at a formal federation which will empower our voice in International veteran affairs and help us better to defend copy. I do regret very much that there is some apparent fragmentation of the organisation in Australia and until they have deliberated and concluded I have taken our link with NMBVAA down by mutual agreement with the national body. This is a temporary measure but at some time in the near future we will have to consider our relationship.

I close by emphasising once again that our key issue at this time is the need to identify and improve affordable communication so that all of our Members, including postal Members, are fully informed at all times. That is our primary objective in our current flurry of activity. The quickest, easiest, and cheapest way is of course by email and I encourage you all to ensure your email address is logged with your Branch and on the national website to get the very best service. Where our Members are not able to have such access, for whatever reason, may I suggest a buddy-buddy system well organised so that those who can, take care of those who cannot! Rapid dissemination is a sound military tactic common to us all and we must exploit it in any way that we can. In a communication void, rumour control and black information is unwelcome and unhelpful!

I send my best wishes to all Members and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM in October.

There is much more to do and so I will turn my attention back to the key issues that I am addressing.

Yours aye,



Tex Pemberton  
6<sup>th</sup> September 2010