The BSAP (UK Branch) Regimental Dinner - 2012

The Annual Regimental Dinner of the UK Branch of the Association took place at the Victory Services Club, London on Friday 28 September 2012. Members and their guests were gathering in the bar well before 17:00 with the greetings of old comrades. 4955 Bob Morriston called in to meet up with old friends but was unable to stay. The dinner bugle call sounded at 19:15.

The Carisbrooke Hall had been decorated with BSAP and Rhodesian flags and the BSAP banner displayed. HM the Queen’s response to the Branch’s greetings on her Diamond Jubilee was also on display alongside the President’s plaque, a model of a mounted BSAP Officer and Dave Blacker’s remembrance poem. A total of 74 members and guests found their places at tables which had been tastefully dressed in blue and gold and bearing the names of well-known Rhodesian raptors. The film of the Last Parade was shown during dinner.

Chairman, Peter Phillips, started proceedings by saying that greetings had been received from the Queen and various Branches around the world, making special mention that John Pirrett (Transvaal Branch) had delivered his personally. Barry Henson, recuperating at home after a lengthy stay in hospital had also sent his best wishes. Peter welcomed Lord Michael Walker (Patron of the BSAP Trust), Brigadier Vic Walker (Rhodesia Army Association) and The Honourable Judge Robert (Bob) Hardy (Guest Speaker), then those attending from overseas, in particular Will Cornell (USA), Richard Barnes (Australia), Laurie Ibbit and his wife, Liz (South Africa) and Murray Harrison (Spain) and those who had travelled long distances within the UK. After the loyal toast, and grace by Rev Terry Mesley-Spong, enjoyed a very tasty meal. After the customary break for those needing a breath of fresh air, Peter introduced our guest speaker who had done his three in the BSAP before embarking on a long and distinguished career in the legal profession.

Judge Bob Hardy began by saying that it was an honour and privilege to be asked to speak at the dinner. Having been raised up in the austerity of post-war Britain he was attracted by an advertisement for policemen in Rhodesia. He applied, was interviewed by Col. W H D Walker (father of Lord Michael Walker), the then BSAP recruiting officer at Rhodesia House and in due course set sail from Southampton, aged 19 years, with ten other recruits. After 13 days at sea and three days and nights on the train from Cape Town to Salisbury, they arrived at Depot where they were joined by four local recruits forming Squad 2/58. He spoke about his training, pass-out parades, both mounted and dismounted, and subsequent posting to Salisbury Urban together with the whole of his squad (despite all of them
requesting more exotic postings). He later spent time at Harare and having tasted urban life, applied for the District Branch and spent time at Rusape and then his final station Inyanga.

He returned to England in 1961 and began his legal career as a barrister at Gray’s Inn, was called to the Bar in 1969, leading to his appointment as Circuit Judge in 1992, before retiring from the Crown Court (Southwark) in 2011. He felt that common sense, judgement and experience were all applicable to being a policeman, barrister or judge. Bob proposed a toast to the Regiment and Regimental Association, followed by a standing ovation and the presentation of an engraved glass tankard. Charles Bennett, junior troop, suitably replied before proposing the toast to absent friends.

Mick York with the help of Bob Hardy then held the in-house raffle – Lisa Pirrett winning the first prize of £50 which she generously donated towards the cost of the dinner. Bertie Cubitt, Bert Hilliard and Bob Clark won the three main prizes in the main raffle and £1749 was accrued towards Association Funds. A bottle of wine donated by Fred Punter was auctioned by Biff Way, raising a further £50.

The Chairman ended the formal part of the dinner by expressing a special word of thanks to Parry Jones for the organisation of the dinner, to Bertie Cubitt for manning the sales department and to the staff of the Victory Services Club for their help and efficiency. He also mentioned that for the first time there were no 46ers at the dinner.

Sitting down to dinner were: Lord Michael Walker, Brigadier Viv Walker, 5803 The Honourable Judge Robert Hardy, 4278 John Balchin, 4503 Derek Humberstone, 4600 Terry Mesley-Spong, 4819 Brian Lay, 4851 Murray Harrison, 4853 Fred Punter, 4857 Mike Wiltshire, 4882 Peter Dancer, 5111 Jack Bacon, 5248 Alan Lane, 5322 Stuart Rodda, 5358 Mick York, 5408 Richard Barnes, 5559 Dick Thompson, 5615 Tom Meekin, 5625 Biff Way, 5725 Phil Mead, 5755 Stewart Edwards, [5761] Gwen Fairer-Smith, 5975 Mike Abbotts, 6059 Laurie and Liz Ibbitt, 6193 Peter and Cheryl Good, 6355 Mike Moysen, 6360 John Moxham and Phillip Moxham, 6366 Jim Stoker, 6388 Will Cornell, 6432 Chris Roberts, 6509 Don Scarff, 6513 Terry Young, 6514/7562 Chris Johnson, 6609 Parry Jones, 6610 John Pirrett with Lisa Pirrett and Greg Welsh, 6632 Gerry Paxton with Col. Jim Pearson and Tim Callow, 6657 Keith Samler, 6721 Peter Russell, 6737 Mike Coleman, 6905 Peter Phillips, 7211 Peter Biddulph, 7212 Tony Brown, 7359 Bertie Cubitt, 7391 Alan Toms, 7677 Peter Dewe with Rob (Wings) and Gail Wilson, 7784 Steve Accornley, 8021 Mike Rowley, 8163 Robbie and WP199 Lin Robertson, 8275 Alastair Morgan, 8338 Mal Thurman, 9086 Tony Granger with Penny Timmis and Lts Nicola Alvord and David Robertson (USN), 9270 Geraint Jones with Sqd Ldr John Chappell and Dr Chris Kinsey (USC), 9439 Glen Seymour-Hall, 9591 Les Burrow, 111697 Charles Bennett, WP189 Carol Paxton, WP190 Glynis Dibden, WFR 201279 Heather Milner and Associate Stan Mills.