

The Conductor Newsletter

Spring 2026



Your Newsletter
Your Point of Contact:

Stephen Swales Guild Secretary
2B Greenacres Road, WORCESTER, Worcestershire WR2 5EZ
Mobile: 07887 807887 | Telephone: 01905422835
Email: ConductorsGuild@outlook.com

Chairman's Message

"It's not just spring that's in the air; there's a renewed sense of excitement and purpose too"

A Heartfelt Thank You

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Guild Management Committee (GMC) for their ongoing dedication, hard work, and commitment to ensuring the continued success and smooth running of the Guild. Their efforts behind the scenes do not go unnoticed, and I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say we're truly grateful for the time and energy you invest on behalf of all members.



A special note of appreciation goes to **Bob Le Vaillant** for stepping up and to join the Editorial Team taking on the role of proofreader for all guild documentation. His willingness to serve in this capacity is greatly valued, and we can all look forward to the positive

impact of his leadership in this role.



We would also like to warmly thank **Daz Garwood** for joining the Guild Management Committee (GMC) and the Events Sub Committee (ESC). Daz is already making a significant contribution. His enthusiasm and commitment are clearly

making a difference.

Thank you all for your service, dedication, and continued support of the Guild.

In This Edition

We've a variety of topics for your delight in this edition, you'll find all the familiar favourites, updates on our events, inspiring member contributions, the latest news from Guild Fundraising and we're also delighted to introduce three new initiatives: our **Guild Buddy Scheme**, created to strengthen connections within our community, the **Royal Hospital Chelsea Old Comrades initiative**, helping veterans stay connected online and continue supporting one another wherever they are in the world. If that's not enough, we have a

brand-new Guild Website, ready for you to check out at conductorsguildrca.co.uk

As always, this is *your* newsletter and *your* guild. Charity begins at home, and we warmly encourage more members to get involved, whether by sharing a story or update for the newsletter, joining the Guild Management Committee (GMC), the Events Sub Committee (ESC), or taking part in our monthly Guild Members Questions (GMQs) session. Your voice, ideas and enthusiasm are what keep our guild vibrant, welcoming and moving forward **together**. We look forward to hearing from you.

What Makes A Successful Guild?

It's a simple question, but an important one.

Is success measured by the size of our events, the funds we raise, or the number of members on our books? These are all things to celebrate, they show energy, commitment and purpose. But they are the results of something deeper.

A successful guild is built on participation, members who attend, who contribute ideas, who volunteer, who share their experiences.

It's built on connection — friendships formed, support offered, members staying in touch and looking out for one another across towns, counties and continents.

And it's built on ownership, when the Guild is not something that happens *for* us, but something we shape **together**.

Success grows when people feel valued. When new initiatives whether our new Buddy Scheme or Old Comrades online network, or a fundraising effort, are not simply announced, but embraced. When members step forward because they believe in what we are building **together**.

Perhaps the real measure of success is this:

- Do we feel proud to belong?
- Do we feel heard?
- Do we know that our involvement makes a difference?

A guild thrives when charity truly begins at home, when we invest in one another, strengthen our shared voice, and support the committees and initiatives that keep our community strong.

So perhaps the question isn't just *what makes a guild successful?*

It may be even more powerful to ask:

What can each of us do to make it so?

We're looking for members, especially younger members to help with running the Guild. Fresh ideas, new energy, and different perspectives really matter, and even a small contribution can make a big difference. If you'd like to shape the future of the Guild or just help, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch and be part of our success story.



To Have a Guild Motto... or Not? That Is the Question

A motto may be only a few words long, but it carries a powerful message. A clear motto captures the spirit and values of a guild, reminding members why they came **together** in the first place. It helps create a shared identity, giving everyone a sense of belonging and pride in being part of the community.

A motto can also inspire. In moments of challenge or change, a simple phrase can refocus attention on the guild's purpose and encourage members to keep striving for excellence. It becomes a guiding principle that shapes decisions, behaviour, and the culture of the group. Finally, a motto helps communicate who the guild is to the wider world. Whether displayed on newsletters, banners, or events, it tells others what the guild stands for in a memorable and positive way. In short, a guild motto is more than a slogan—it is a compact expression of tradition, unity, and ambition.

Members will have an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of adopting a guild motto at the AGM in September. In the meantime, we invite members to help shape this idea by suggesting possible mottos for consideration.

If you have an idea, please send in your suggestion(s) using [this form](#).

We look forward to seeing the creativity and inspiration our members bring to this!

Conductors' Guild Certificate Presentation



Steve Swales presenting the Conductors' Guild Certificate to JPtE A Duffin

On 12 February, on a cold, windswept but thankfully dry morning, more than 500 Junior Soldiers, including 55 badged to the Royal Logistic Corps (RLC), passed out from the Army Foundation College (AFC) at Harrogate.

The Army Foundation College (AFC) at Harrogate delivers initial training for Junior Soldiers aged 16–17. It combines basic military training with education and personal development, preparing young soldiers for further trade training and a professional career in the British Army. The AFC supersedes the former Army Apprentice College system, continuing its tradition while modernising training for today's army.

The previous evening, I had the privilege of presenting the Conductors Guild Certificate to the Best RLC Junior Soldier, JPtE A Duffin. This award marks the successful completion of her Phase 1 Training (basic military training). As part of the pass-out process, Junior Soldiers are presented with their Corps Stable Belt and Rank Slides by the Corps Colonel, Col Jacqueline (Jax) Powell. On leaving the AFC, Pte Duffin will immediately start Phase 2 Trg as a Navigator at Marchwood Military Port, near Southampton, a place the Guild has visited several times.

Colonel Powell was pleased to see the Guild represented and kindly introduced me to the troops. She also invited me to explain the role of a Conductor and where we sit within the Army's rank structure.

While the Conductors Cup is held for a period of six months, the Conductors Guild Certificate is a permanent keepsake for the Junior Soldier. Signed by our President, Maj Gen Malcolm Wood, it provides a fitting and lasting memento to accompany the award of the Cup.

Guild Calendar 2026

To make sure you don't miss out, grab your diary now and pop the dates in?

April

- 01 - **Returns & Payment Deadline** - Parchment Weekend 2026
- 01 - GMC meeting followed by GMQ session, online
- 01 - Spring Newsletter out
- 04 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 12 - RLC Church Sunday
- 24 - All Ranks RLC Association Lunch

May

- 02 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 06 - GMC meeting followed by GMQ session, online
- 29 - Corps Parchment Ceremony, Worthy Down
- 29 - Conductor Reunion Dinner Night, Mess Worthy Down
- 30 - Visit D-D Museum & Afternoon Tea, Portsmouth

June

- 01 - **Returns & Payment Deadline** - Guild World Cup 2026 Sweepstake
- 03 - GMC meeting. **No GMQs**
- 03 - Guild World Cup Draw live via Teams link, 7pm
- 06 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 15 - **Submissions Deadline** - Guild Summer Newsletter
- 26 - The RLC Officer's Club Lunch, London

July

- 01 - **Returns Deadline** - J Buckley VC Remembrance Service, London
- 01 - GMC meeting followed by GMQ session, online
- 01 - Summer Newsletter out
- 04 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 14 - Remembrance Service John Buckley VC, London & evening activity
- 17 - **Returns Deadline** - Guild Presentation & Parade, AFC Harrogate

August

- No GMC Meeting or GMC Session in August**
- 01 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 01 - **Returns & Payment Deadline** - AGM Weekend 2026
- 05 - Presentation Guild Certificate, AFC Harrogate
- 06 - Graduation Pass Out Parade, AFC Harrogate

September

- 05 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 09 - GMQ session, online
- 15 - **Submissions Deadline**, Autumn Newsletter Submissions

26 - Visit to the 'World of Herriot' (**New**)

26 - GMC F2F meeting (**New**)

27 - AGM (**New**)

October

- 01 - Autumn Newsletter out
- 03 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 07 - GMC meeting followed by GMQ session, online

November

- 04 - GMC meeting followed by GMQ session, online
- 07 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 08 - Cenotaph Parade and Lunch

December

- 02 - GMC meeting followed by GMQ session, online
- 05 - Guild Lottery Draw
- 15 - **Submissions Deadline** - Winter 2026 Newsletter

Guild Events in Detail



We've got a fantastic lineup of events coming your way this year, plenty of chances to get involved, catch up with friends, and enjoy some special moments together!

28-29 May 26 Parchment Weekend

Those lucky members attending this year's event are in for a real treat. The programme is shaping up to be something very

special. We're honoured that **HRH** will be attending the Parchment Ceremony, in the RLC museum and there will also be a spectacular light display from the **RLC Corps of Drums** and guest speaker, **Hari Budha Magar**, a double leg amputee who has climbed the highest peaks on all seven continents, including **Mount Everest**, his is a remarkable story you won't want to miss.

The weekend also includes a visit to the **D-Day Museum**, followed by the chance to relax and enjoy a traditional **Afternoon Tea**.

All the above for an amazing , £30 per member and partner and £60 per person for everyone else. There is still time to book your place, but you'll need to be quick! Use:

<https://forms.office.com/r/02NaKkQRdj>

14 July 26 Remembrance Service - John

Buckley VC, Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, London



We will make a respectful visit to the grave of John Buckley VC, honouring the remarkable soldier awarded the Victoria Cross for the Defence of the Delhi Magazine at Meerut, India, on 11 May 1857. To confirm your attendance, 🖱️ [Complete your](#)

['Return' here](#)

Interesting facts about Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. The Park is one of London's historic "Magnificent Seven" cemeteries, is not only a significant ecological sanctuary but also a landscape deeply interwoven with Britain's military history. Opened in 1841 to serve the rapidly expanding population of the East End, the cemetery became a resting place for generations of working-class Londoners, including thousands whose lives were shaped by military service, conflict, and the industrial machinery that supported Britain's armed forces.

The cemetery contains over 270 Commonwealth War Graves, representing both the First and Second World Wars. These graves are dispersed throughout the site rather than arranged in formal rows, reflecting the cemetery's original civilian purpose.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains these headstones, which commemorate soldiers, sailors, airmen, and merchant mariners from a wide range of regiments and services. Many were East Enders who enlisted locally; others were servicemen brought to London hospitals after injury or illness. Their presence forms a quiet but powerful thread of military remembrance across the park's woodland paths.

The First World War is particularly visible in the cemetery's narrative. The East End supplied large numbers of recruits to regiments such as the Royal Fusiliers, Middlesex Regiment,

and London Regiment, and many of those who died from wounds or disease were buried here close to their families.

The cemetery also reflects the home-front experience: several graves belong to munitions workers and civilian casualties of wartime accidents, reminding visitors that the industrial labour of the East End was essential to Britain's war effort.

The Second World War left an even more dramatic imprint. Tower Hamlets was one of the most heavily bombed districts during the Blitz, and the cemetery contains numerous civilian graves from air-raid incidents. Some are marked collectively, reflecting the scale of loss during mass-casualty events. The cemetery also holds the graves of service personnel stationed in London or serving in nearby anti-aircraft units, as well as merchant seamen whose ships were attacked in the Thames approaches.

A notable feature is the War Memorial Glade, created to provide a dedicated space for reflection. This area brings together the names of those whose graves could not be individually marked or whose resting places were lost through wartime damage. It serves as a focal point for annual remembrance ceremonies, linking the cemetery's Victorian origins with its modern role as a community heritage site. Beyond formal commemoration, the cemetery's military connections extend into social history. Many families buried here had long associations with the Royal Navy Dockyards, the Merchant Navy, and the regiments traditionally recruited from East London. Their stories—often recorded on weathered Victorian headstones—trace the East End's contribution to imperial campaigns, colonial service, and the defence of London across two centuries.

Today, Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park stands as a layered memorial landscape: a place where nature, community, and military heritage coexist. Its military connections enrich its significance, offering a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by ordinary Londoners in extraordinary times.



AFC Harrogate

5th August, The RLC present stable belts to JS following their successful military training and the Guild present a certificate to the best RLC JS and then off for a bite to eat.

6th August, Graduation Parades are a proud and memorable moment for junior soldier recruits, marking the successful completion of an important stage in their training journey. The parades showcase the recruits' discipline, commitment, and determination, reflecting the hard work they have put in throughout their time at AFC Harrogate. Marching with confidence in front of instructors, peers, family, and friends, each recruit demonstrates the values of teamwork, resilience, and pride that are central to army life.

19th-20th September AGM Weekend

The perfect time to look back on the year, celebrate our achievements, and plan for what's ahead. There'll be plenty of time for socialising too! And a visit to the 'World of Herriot' Return to go out to members in April.

Monthly GMQs Online

GMQs is a relaxed and welcoming opportunity to reconnect, share updates, and enjoy good company. Everyone is warmly invited, please bring along your ideas and enthusiasm.

The RLC Association & Events in Detail



Overview

The purpose of The RLC Association is to promote and maintain the Corps identity through the encouragement of its membership, Regular and Reservist, serving and retired and their dependants.

This includes preserving a sense of pride in our heritage "in both The RLC and its Forming Corps" promoting comradeship and fraternity, providing opportunities for sport and in creating an ethos of benevolence for those in need.

Membership of regimental associations is more than a way of showing support, it is about belonging to and feeling affinity for one's corps. Members seek commitment, camaraderie, enjoyment and respect and a desire to belong to a family group rather than an organisation. They must feel that they are accepted, affirmed and appreciated as individuals. Membership of the Association requires some form of commitment by both the member and the Association, no different to Guild members.

Members traditionally show their commitment and support through paying a membership fee, and supporting Corps activities, while the Association provides value for money to members by producing publications, and hosting events which members can attend and enjoy. For more info > [Membership of The RLC Association - The Royal Logistic Corps](#)

RLC Association Events

The RLCA has recently begun organising a range of events to which Guild members have been warmly invited, they have included, RLC Church Sunday and the 'All Ranks RLC Association Lunch' this month and for those who qualify, the RLC Officer's Club Lunch, London.

08 November Cenotaph Parade and Lunch

We are waiting for information about this event and look forward to sharing more opportunities going forward and will keep members fully informed by circulating details of forthcoming activities as soon as they become available.

"I'm not going, too expensive"

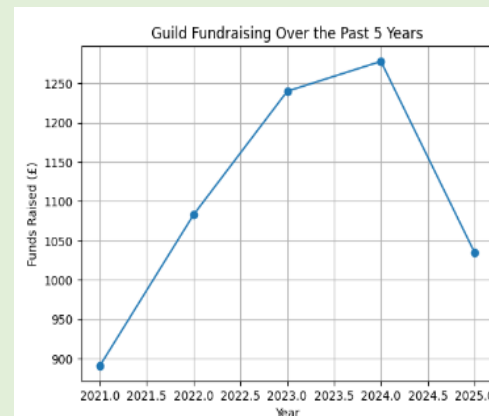
What We Know

We know that rising travel and accommodation costs can sometimes make it harder to take part in Guild activities, but the good news is that **together, we can make a real difference**. The Guild is committed to keeping activities as accessible as possible, and thanks to the fantastic support from our members, we're already helping to reduce these pressures.

Together, We Can Make Guild Activities Even More Affordable!

Guild fundraising has gone from strength to strength, growing from £891 in 2021 to an impressive £1,278 in 2024. Even with a dip to £1,035 in 2025, our fundraising remains well ahead of where we started. These efforts have already helped offset member fees and reduce costs for everyone. If we keep the momentum going and get involved **together, we can raise even more funds** and in doing so, reduce member fees even further. Get involved, support our events, and let's make the 2026 our best yet!

The graph below shows fundraising dipped a little in 2025



- **2021 → 2022:** Funds increase significantly (from about £890 to £1,080).
- **2022 → 2023:** Growth continues, but at a slightly slower rate.
- **2023 → 2024:** Fundraising peaks at roughly £1,280,
- **2024 → 2025:** There is a sharp drop to about £1,030, though this is still higher than the 2021 starting point.

(just a small bump in the road!), but we're feeling hugely optimistic about what's ahead.

With more members getting involved, we have an exciting opportunity to **double or even triple our fundraising in 2026**. Every pound raised goes straight back into the Guild and with enough support we will help to

subsidise travel and accommodation fees.

Every Member Counts

Imagine the impact if every member took part in just one of these initiatives, it would be a game changer! Whether you sign up, join in, or spread the word, **every action helps**.

Together, we can lower costs, boost participation, and ensure the Guild continues to thrive for everyone.

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Veterans Discounts

Veterans' discounts are a small but meaningful way businesses say **"thanks"** for your service. Many retailers, restaurants, travel companies, and service providers offer special savings for veterans, active-duty military, and sometimes their families. These discounts can range from a percentage off a purchase to free items on special days like Veterans Day. Availability and verification requirements vary, some places ask for a military ID, while others use online verification, but the goal is the same: to recognize and appreciate the sacrifices made by those who've served. It's always worth asking, because you might be surprised how many places are happy to offer us a little extra appreciation.

HM Armed Forces Veterans Card

is a way to prove that you served in the UK armed forces. The card can make it quicker and easier to apply for support as a veteran. For those still serving, you'll get your Veteran Card in your service leavers' pack within 6 weeks of leaving the armed forces.



If you left the Armed Forces before December 2018, you need to [apply for a Veteran Card](#). If you've already got your card, you can [get a](#)

[digital version of your Veteran Card on your phone](#).

Defence Discount Service Card

The Defence Discount Card is a UK-based benefit card designed to say thank you to the Armed Forces community by helping them save money in everyday life. It's available to serving members of the British Armed Forces, veterans, reservists, and their families.

Cardholders get access to a wide range of discounts across retail, travel, dining, insurance, mobile phone plans, and days out. Offers can be online or in-store and often include well-known brands as well as smaller businesses that actively support the military community. The card also gives access to an online deals portal, where discounts are updated regularly.

To save even more, pay for goods using your Utility Warehouse Discount Card, a practical perk that helps stretch budgets a little further, simple, useful, and appreciated by many.

To get your card > [Defence Discount Service Card](#)

The **Veterans Railcard** is a simple way for veterans to save money on train travel across Great Britain. Once you



have the card, you can usually get **one-third off most rail fares**, making both everyday trips and longer journeys more affordable.

To use it, just buy your train tickets as normal, online, at a ticket machine, or at the station and select the **Veterans Railcard** option when asked about discounts. When you travel, keep your railcard with you, either on your phone or as a physical card, as you'll need to show it if your ticket is checked.

The discount generally applies to the cardholder and **one adult companion traveling with them**, and children traveling with you can often receive an even bigger reduction. The railcard is valid at any time of day, although some specific tickets or routes may have restrictions, so it's always worth checking before you book.

Overall, the Veterans Railcard is easy to use and a great way to cut the cost of rail travel while recognising your service, just remember to carry it with you and enjoy the savings.

And don't forget to pay with your Utility Warehouse Discount Card and save even more!

To get your card > [Veterans Rail Discount | Railcard | National Rail - Veterans Railcard](#)



The Veterans Oyster Card

is a travel benefit for all eligible veterans, giving free access to public transport across the city. It

allows holders to travel at no cost on **London buses, trams, the Underground, DLR, London Overground, and most Elizabeth line services within Greater London**.

To use the card, simply touch in and out at ticket gates or on buses and trams, just like a standard Oyster card. There's no need to buy tickets or top up for eligible journeys. The card is for the veteran's personal use only and must be carried when travelling, as you may be asked to show it to transport staff.

The Veterans Oyster Card is designed to make getting around London easier and more affordable for those who have served, supporting everyday travel for work,

appointments, and leisure. It's a practical, widely used benefit that helps veterans stay connected across the capital.

To get your card > [Veterans Oyster photocard - Transport for London](#)

War Disability Smart Pass

The War Disability Smart Pass is a travel benefit for veterans who receive a War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme award for serious service-related injuries. It provides **free or discounted travel on public transport**, depending on the local authority and region.

The pass is usually issued as a **smart card** and is valid for the veteran's personal use. In many areas, it allows free travel on buses, and sometimes on trams or local trains, typically during off-peak hours. Some councils also extend the benefit to all-day travel, so it's worth checking what applies where you live.

To use the pass, simply show or scan it when boarding public transport, following local travel rules. You may be asked to show ID if requested by transport staff.

Overall, the War Disability Smart Pass helps make every day travel easier and more affordable for veterans with service-related disabilities, offering practical support and recognition of their service.

To get your pass > [War Disablement Smart Pass](#)

News Round up



Guild Buddy Scheme

As we get a little older, some members may find travelling to Guild events more difficult. To help everyone stay connected and continue enjoying Guild activities, we are introducing a **Guild Buddy Scheme**.

The scheme is all about friendly support. A Guild Buddy might travel with another member, attend events **together**, or simply meet up for a chat and companionship.

If you would like to **volunteer as a Guild Buddy**, or if you **would like a Guild member to contact you**, please complete [Guild Buddy Scheme Form](#)

Taking part is entirely voluntary, but even a small gesture of friendship can make a big difference.

Thank you for helping to keep our Guild friendly, supportive, and welcoming to all.

New Conductors' Guild Website

After 25 years, the Conductor website has undergone more than just a facelift, it has been completely rebuilt. The new design is clearer, more modern, and much easier to navigate, helping members quickly find the information they're looking for.

All the familiar and essential content is still there, including contact details, what's on, historical facts and more. The site also now features a direct link to Membermojo, allowing members to easily view and update their personal details.

We now need your help. We're inviting members to submit testimonials that will add provenance to our heritage. Your stories and experiences are an important part of the Conductor's history and will help preserve it for future generations. Send in your testimonial to ConductorsGuild@outlook.com or complete the website 'Contact Us' form.

My Motoring Life

By Bob Le Vaillant



Bob Le Vaillant holding his Guild 'Get Well' card

Last year I reluctantly surrendered my driving licence, sixty-five years after I first sat behind a steering wheel. I am now knocking on eighty: my sight is not the clearest

and my reflexes are slower. It felt like the right decision.

Looking back, I realise that I spent a substantial chunk of my life driving Land Rovers—though they were nothing like the last one I owned, a Range Rover Evoque, nearly two tons of technical wizardry.



I began at sixteen in Boys' Service, learning to drive Austin Champs on our in-barracks circuit. From there we graduated to Bedford ¼-tonners and, finally, the majestic, if noxious, three-tonners. We drove those on the open roads around Snowdonia.

Then came the Far East. After a twelve-month stint in Borneo, I moved on to Singapore, where I finally passed my driving test. This was achieved in a battered Morris Minor with a terrified Sikh instructor who kept his knees pressed firmly to his chest and his bare soles braced tightly against the passenger seat. Downtown Singapore streets were terrifying.



Germany followed, where my Singapore licence was not recognised. Another civilian test ensued, followed by my first solo drive along a completely fog-bound autobahn from Bielefeld to Herford. By then I had my first car: a 1962 Volkswagen Beetle, white, with the registration BFG 495 B. Amazing what you remember. That little car took me everywhere, and after I left BAOR it motored happily for another decade with a friend in Liverpool.



Next came secondment to the Navy in a role called Carrier-Borne Ground Liaison. The matelots affectionately called us “Seaballs”. We had our own venerable Army diesel vehicle, with the ship’s name, *HMS Ark Royal*, bolted proudly to the front. Winched ashore from the flight deck beneath a Sea King helicopter, it took us to places as varied as Oslo, New York

and Puerto Rico, as well as ports across the North Sea, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. It even stood by loyally while we played our part in quelling the Guatemalan uprising in Honduras.

Naples came next. No Land Rovers this time, but I was the proud owner of a lilac-blue Opel Kadett, in which I explored Italy, one of my favourite postings.

After that, Seoul. South Korea was freezing and menacing, technically still at war with its brooding neighbour, but I had free use of the Commonwealth Liaison Mission’s Land Rover and explored carefully but thoroughly.

Two tough tours followed in Hong Kong. Don’t chuckle, while few needed personal transport, I found it a debilitating place to serve.

London was my final posting, where I finished my career and gradually transitioned into civilian employment. To assist this, I had off-duty use of charity minibuses. Much of my time was spent ferrying excited children around the East End, and on trips to camps in Hay-on-Wye, Kent and Epping Forest.



Several versions of these vehicles followed, donated for similar use during my second twenty-year career as a social worker based in Whitechapel. While Val and I were bringing up our girls on the Isle of Dogs, I drove Val’s company car—a Land Rover Discovery, eventually replaced by another. They were heavier even than the Evoque and not ideally suited to London’s backstreets, but they were big and ugly enough to persuade suicidal cyclists and taxis to keep their distance.

When my London career ended, we moved to the coast, swapping the Discovery for a second-hand seven-seat Ford Galaxy. Plenty of room for the girls, the dog and the shopping, but my wife didn’t like it. Apparently, it was not befitting her status as an architect. And that, really, is where the Evoque came from: bought used from Cazoo just before Covid, then barely driven for ages.

Between you and me, I never much liked the Evoque. I sometimes hankered for the days when the stubborn Sea balls Land Rover refused to fire up without a tow-start from the dockyard fire engine. In those days it took two days to drive from the air station at Yeovilton to Cape Wrath, the Navy live-firing range at the very tip of Scotland. Happy days—foot down and lucky to reach fifty on the motorways.

So, do I miss driving? Not really. I’m content now to walk, take the bus, or travel by train with my Veterans’ Railcard.

Right, tell us: where did *your* motoring take you?



“Ask My Mum, She Knows”

By Dave Patterson

In December 1966, I was given a metal toy tractor with a steering wheel that actually turned the front wheels. This was cutting-edge engineering, as far as I was concerned. I loved it so much that I announced to my mum, “I’m taking the tractor to school after Christmas to show my friends.”

“Oh no you’re not,” she replied.

“Oh yes I am,” I muttered — quietly, bravely, and incredibly foolishly.

After Christmas it was back to school. As my brother and I were leaving the house, we endured the usual last-minute ritual: hair brushed, ties straightened... and then came the hammer blow. Mum opened my school bag, spotted my precious tractor, took it out and clipped me round the ear and said, “I told you — the tractor stays at home. Now get off to school.”

The door slammed shut.

My brother turned right and went to school like a sensible child. I turned left like a criminal mastermind, in the direction of a play park about one mile away.

At school, my absence was eventually noticed. A teacher asked my brother,

“Where’s David? Is he ill?”

“No.”

“So where is he?”

“I don’t know”

This caused mild panic. The school contacted my mother at work, who immediately dispatched my nan to find me. Meanwhile, I was happily playing on the swings, fully convinced I’d made an excellent life decision.

I don’t know how long it was before I spotted my nan heading towards me like a stampeding bull, shouting, “DAVID! Get down from that swing and come here!”

Now, as everyone knows, the correct way to get off a swing is to wait until it’s at the highest point and then jump off. So I launched myself heroically into the air... and landed flat at my nan’s feet. Big mistake!

Nan grabbed my ear, hauled me upright, gave me a thorough verbal dressing-down, and proceeded to frog-march me to school, about a mile away. For the first few hundred metres, I was shackled to my nan who maintained a firm grip to my ear, after that, she settled for a very firm grip on my hand.

Eventually, I found myself sitting outside the headmaster’s office, wondering what all the fuss was about. After a short while, the Head’s door opened, Nan stood up, dragging me with her and the headmaster said, “Come into my office, young man.”

He sat me down, looked me straight in the eye and asked, “Now David, why didn’t you come straight to school this morning?”

I replied, without hesitation, “Ask my mum — she knows.”

And that day, I learned several important lessons:

Never underestimate your mother.

Never underestimate your nan.

And if you’re going to skip school, **don’t do it somewhere with swings and a clear line of sight.**

Most importantly... the tractor never did make it to school.

A Rumour That Came True

By Kevin Hartley



During my penultimate tour of duty I was serving in the MOD in the Directorate of Manning, which meant frequent phone calls to the various Regimental and Corps Records Offices. Whenever I rang the RAOC Records Office, I always

finished the conversation with the same line:

“There’s a rumour going around that my next posting is to Cyprus. You won’t have heard it yet — I’ve only just started it.”

I kept that rumour circulating for months.

One day the Head of RAOC Records was visiting the Head of DMA. As the PA served coffee, the General remarked, “I hear there’s a rumour Mr Hartley is being posted to Cyprus.” Col Records chuckled, until the General added, “I hope he isn’t disappointed.”

As it turned out, my final tour of duty really was in Cyprus, posted to HQ Near East Land Forces at Episkopi. It was my second tour there and brought back many happy memories, not least because Cyprus was where I met my wife, June, then the formidable Cpl Rawlinson. We married on 24 October 1970, and she still bosses me around... usually for the better.

The year before that posting, while working in the MOD, I ran a marathon to raise money for BLESMA, long before charity marathons became fashionable. The run raised about £1,500, which Bob Le Vaillant helped collect and present to Lt Col Bob Holland, then head of BLESMA.

My second Cyprus tour was initially very quiet, some even called it a “holiday posting”. With time on my hands, I decided to collect humorous stories from veterans with the idea of publishing a book for BLESMA. I advertised in *Soldier Magazine* and other service publications, and soon letters and stories began arriving.

One contribution stood out. It came from Sub Conductor Bill Hughes, RAOC, written in beautiful copperplate handwriting. Bill described commanding a textile unit in Italy during the war, recruiting Italian seamstresses to repair uniforms, some merely worn, others bloodstained or riddled with bullet holes, before sending them back to the front. As

the Allied advance moved north, he would close the workshop, pay the machinists, move forward, and start again.

I later discovered Bill lived only a town away from my parents in Manchester. We began corresponding and eventually met during a visit home from Cyprus. I spent hours listening to his remarkable life story.

After I left the Army in 1988 we remained good friends. Bill kept his life story in a cupboard full of carefully organised folders, and we often discussed publishing his memoirs. He once gave me a small cannon he had carried around for years, saying that otherwise it would probably end up in a skip when he died.



Bill's Cannon given to Kev

Sadly, when Bill passed away, his estranged daughter dealt with his belongings. When I asked about his papers, books and medals — which he had hoped might be displayed somewhere — she simply replied:

“All that old junk has gone.”

A sad end to a remarkable story — but one I am glad I had the privilege to hear.

We Are Volunteers

By Bob Le Vaillant

How do you read the title at the top of this piece? The words you stress and the tone of voice can make quite a difference. Let me explain. Occasionally someone comes up to me and, using the same words, “We Are Volunteers”, puts a quite different stress on them to that used by most of us. Sometimes they use the same tone as I’ve heard employed by someone seeking to justify a piece of inadequate work – a late report, or a slow response to a call to

help! “But we are volunteers you know.”

I find myself wondering whether this is a justification. It is difficult to see why someone who volunteers for a role should feel it merits lower standards of response from him or

her than any other aspect of his or her life, where presumably he or she would not dream of failing in any undertaking to which a personal commitment had been made.

I am inclined to feel that a volunteer for something should be all the more punctilious about it. The stress should be with pride, on the last word, “We Are Volunteers.” This pride in being something special and something extra – in providing a depth of understanding and compassion no mere paid official could hope to match is something that should come over quite clearly. Thank goodness it is our great and good fortune that the vast majority of our workers put the stress on both ends of the statement – and say with pride, “We are Volunteers”.

The above quote is attributed to Admiral Sir Peter Herbert, Chairman of SSAFA from the mid-80s to 90s. During the same years, Bob Le Vaillant made sure that every volunteer who worked for him read and inwardly digested the Admiral’s words! During his last years in the Army Bob founded and then ran an Inner-city charity, mainly for young East Enders who were vulnerable to crime and offending, and to support their families. To deliver his projects he relied on 300 or more young adult volunteers that he recruited each year throughout UK and overseas.

Volunteering is in Bob’s blood and for most of his army career he was an off-duty youth worker – in Germany, Italy, Hong Kong and UK. His volunteering continued while working in the Charity Sector – with roles in uniformed and non-uniformed youth organisations, mainstream and special education, criminal justice, ex-forces welfare and fostering and adoption. Bob’s recent posts include Borneo Veterans Association Rep in East Kent, RNLI Visits Officer and Dogs Trust Homes Visitor.

Engagement with the community will have been key in the selection for appointment to Conductor and I am sure that every one of us will have stories about our voluntary roles both in and outside the forces. Please send your stories to ConductorsGuild@outlook.com so they can be featured in this Newsletter. And, maybe, as an inspiration to others.

A home for Ukraine – Update

Bob Le Vaillant. Photos with parents’ permission

Four years after Russia invaded, and four years since we first saw Alona jammed in the exit gates at St Pancras, exhausted, frightened, struggling with a suitcase, pushchair, and a loudly protesting 18-month-old, Orest...

With our four adopted daughters grown, three already moved out, our seafront home had more than enough space to offer. Volunteering for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme felt natural. Would we take two young mothers and their babies fleeing Kyiv, washing in rainwater at the roadside? They crossed Poland, to Italy, only to be refused UK visas in Milan. One mother stayed behind; Alona endured a 23-hour bus journey back to Poland and weeks of queuing at the Warsaw

Embassy. The process was chaotic and frightening, but eventually she had the right visa.

We recognized her fear from our daughters' early days with us. When Alona agreed to be our "Number 5 daughter," the dynamic shifted. She wasn't a guest anymore; she was part of the family. Our girls accepted her as a sister, remembering their own confusion and despair.

We couldn't hide the news from Ukraine. She cried quietly as the counteroffensive stalled and casualties mounted. Her husband, Bogdan, a taxi driver, had returned to Kyiv the day after the invasion to volunteer. Her parents and grandparents stayed in the city under bombardment; her siblings were safe studying in Poland. Phone conversations with Bogdan were brief and cautious, fearing Russian interception. He survived the atrocities of Soledar and was eventually moved to a safer training role.

With one of us retired, we kept Alona and Orest busy. They made friends, Orest settled into nursery, and we took them on trips across the UK. Summers by the seaside echoed the childhoods of our daughters. We shared Christmas, New Year, and we hosted Alona's grandparents for two weeks. We weathered many emotional storms together.

In April 2023, during a visit to Kyiv, doctors found a large tumour in Orest's stomach. It was diagnosed as a mesenchymal hamartoma of the liver. Surgeons removed the tumour and his gall bladder. A month later, Alona returned to the UK with her mother for support.

By September that year, homesickness and anxiety overwhelmed her. Alona worried about Orest's recovery, her own unresolved medical issues, and pressure to work despite childcare responsibilities. When her younger sister reached 16 and lost college accommodation in Warsaw, we applied to host her, but the government rejected the application on a technicality. Then Bogdan was sent to train in the UK but forbidden from seeing family. It was too much. Alona packed and returned to Ukraine, despite having no job, flat, or certainty of seeing Bogdan.



Alona & Orest

In March 2024, exhausted, she and Orest returned to us. We helped reinstate benefits, and Orest thrived at a nearby primary school. After several short visits to Ukraine, Alona became pregnant. Her daughter, Solomiia—meaning "Peace"—was born at the hospital in Margate, on 8 April 2025, with my wife beside her. Alona's mother came back from Ukraine to help later.



Solomiia

In November 2025, Alona returned to Kyiv with both children for medical reviews and the first time for Bogdan to see his daughter. Orest's MRI was clear, but Solomiia's showed a shadow on her liver. Despite the danger, Alona

chose to stay. She knows she can return. Their rooms, toys, and flags remain ready for them.

Help4Homeless Veterans (H4HV)

Members will be pleased to learn about the outstanding work being carried out by H4HV. The charity provides vital, practical support to homeless and vulnerable veterans, including accommodation assistance, welfare support, advocacy, and help accessing essential services. Through their dedicated work, they play a crucial role in helping former service personnel rebuild stability, dignity, and independence in their lives.



Amber pictured with local children in Kabul 2007, while on patrol in Afghanistan, serving with the RLC Pioneers.

Former Afghan War Army Front Line Medic Amber Guymer-Hosking was medically discharged. She had a son but became estranged from her husband and ended up homeless. The H4HV Charity provided them with a home for 2 years until Amber was strong enough to return to her family home county of Suffolk.

Amber gave back her time to our charity as an Ambassador helping other vulnerable veterans. She has also had books published representing our charity in various media outlets.

Amber was successfully nominated for a High Sheriff of Suffolk Community Service Award in 2025. She continues supporting H4HV our work as a volunteer. Visit [Home | Help 4 Homeless Veterans](#)

Amber's Story

I've been thinking about how to put into words what H4HV has meant to me, and honestly, it's difficult to capture just how much of an impact the charity has had on my life".

When I was medically discharged from the Army, I was struggling with **Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD)**, anxiety, depression, and a lower limb injury. I found myself homeless, with my son, and at one of the lowest points of my life. I felt completely alone and didn't know where to turn.

Reaching out to H4HV changed everything. The fact that the team travelled across the country to collect me and my son and place us into temporary housing still means more to me than I can express. In that moment, it wasn't just practical

support it was hope. It was someone showing me that we mattered.

Since 2017, the charity has been more than an organization to me it has become family. A family built not by blood, but by trust, safety, and genuine care. My son has grown up around this community; he's now nearly 15, and the stability and support we received back then helped shape the life we have today.

Volunteering and supporting other veterans through fundraising and events has given me purpose something I didn't realize I had lost. Living with CPSD can be an ongoing battle, and there are still days when I struggle. But being part of the charity gives me a reason to keep moving forward. It has unknowingly "saved" me many times by reminding me that I'm not alone and that I can still make a difference.

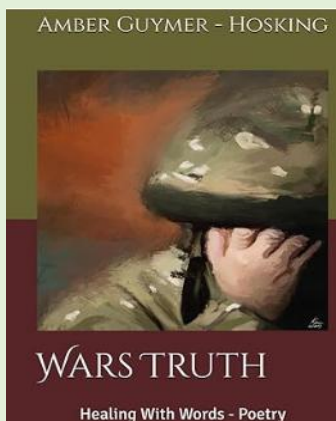
The charity gave me confidence to follow my dreams, to trust again, and to believe that there are people who truly stand in your corner. Even though I've since moved back down south, I will always travel north when I can to volunteer and reconnect. It genuinely makes my heart happy to be there.



Amber and son Brandon safe at home

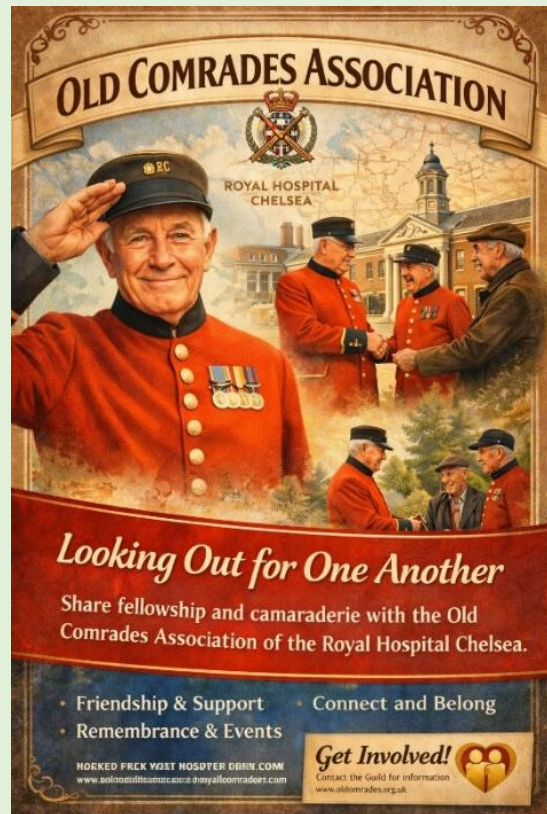
together a book filled with poems from serving soldiers, veterans and their families. The reason I collaborated was to help veterans express themselves, to build a community and to feel seen and have their voices heard. Every book sold helps raise money for H4HV.

The book has been a success so far and has encouraged others to write and express their healing through words, and it's helped raise money for H4HV



<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Wars-Truth-Healing-Words-Poetry/dp/B0DD7XPBFP>

The Old Comrades Association (OCA)



Old Comrades is a digital community and support space for older veterans from the Army, RN, RAF and Merchant Navy. Designed to help former service members stay socially connected, the platform offers opportunities to reconnect

with old friends, join interest-based groups, join chats, and attend virtual or in-person activities in a secure, members-only environment. The community also aims to provide emotional and practical support tailored to veterans' needs and reduce isolation by fostering friendships and shared activities.

The spirit of comradeship is at the heart of the **Old Comrades Association (OCA)** of the Royal Hospital Chelsea is something many of our Guild members understand well. Looking out for one another, sharing experiences, and offering support have always been central to life in service, and those values remain just as important today.

This same spirit is reflected in our **Guild Buddy Scheme**. Offering companionship, reassurance, and a sense of belonging.

The Royal Hospital Chelsea stands as a symbol of dignity, care, and lifelong comradeship. While not everyone in our Guild has a direct connection to the Hospital or the Old Comrades Association, the principles they represent strongly align with what we aim to provide for our own members: friendship, inclusion, and mutual support.

To find out more visit [Old Comrades](#)

Our Guild, our strength

Today, a small number of members give their time and energy to keep our Guild thriving.

Will you step forward, share your ideas, and help shape the Guild's future?



We're delighted to invite you to contribute to the next **Conductor Newsletter** and help shape the stories we share as a Guild community.

If you have ideas, experiences, insights, or news you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you.

Topic suggestions are always welcome, whether they highlight recent projects, celebrate members, share lessons learned, or offer anything you feel would inform and inspire fellow members.

We also encourage everyone to take part in our **Guild fundraising schemes**. These initiatives are vital in supporting our shared goals, strengthening the Guild, and creating new opportunities for members. Every contribution, no matter the size, plays a meaningful role in our continued success.

At the heart of our current focus is **resilience**, keeping the fire burning so no member is left out in the cold. Maintaining a strong, welcoming, and supportive guild takes active involvement, and we need your help to sustain that warm sense of community.

To do this, we are looking for more members to step forward and join the **Guild Management Committee (GMC)** and the **Events Sub Committee (ESC)**. Getting involved is a valuable way to support fellow members, help shape the future of the Guild, and ensure our activities and events continue to thrive.

Our guild is defined by its members: their commitment, professionalism, and willingness to support one another. Every shared idea, helping hand, and word of encouragement strengthens the community we are building together. What truly sets us apart is the spirit of cooperation and respect shown across our membership.

As we continue to grow, let's keep that spirit alive by staying engaged, supporting one another, and contributing where we can. Strong members create a strong guild and **together**, we move forward with confidence.

Thank you for your continued enthusiasm, creativity, and support. This guild thrives because of you.

Useful Contacts

Business	Purpose	Contact Details
Army Catering Corps Association POC: Maj (Retd) Eric Lewis Role:	A fraternal/heritage group for former members of the British Army Catering Corps and related service personnel. It organises commemorations, reunions, and social activities.	Regimental Headquarters The Royal Logistic Corps Worthy Down Winchester SO21 2RG Tel: 01962 887767 (weekdays, 9:30 am–4 pm) Email: secretary@ACCassociation.org chairman@ACCassociation.org Website: https://www.accassociation.org/
Help4Homeless Veterans (H4HV)	A charity supporting veterans facing homelessness, mainly across Yorkshire and nearby areas.	C/O BCVS, 23 Queens Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S71 1AN Tel: +44 730 526 0798 (not 24/7) Email: ceohelp4homelessveterans@gmail.com Website: https://help4homelessveterans.org/
Royal Army Ordnance Corps Association POC: Maj (Retd) Colin Stephens Role: Controller/Secretary RAOC	The RAOC Association exists to support former Royal Army Ordnance Corps members and preserve the corps' history and traditions. It promotes camaraderie, remembrance, and maintains links with the Royal Logistic Corps.	Regimental Headquarters The Royal Logistic Corps Worthy Down Winchester SO21 2RG Tel: 01962 887766 Email ContrAOC@rhqtherlc.org.uk
Royal Army Ordnance Corps Online	Exists to support fellowship among former members of the RAOC. The purpose of this online fellowship is to provide a community space for ex-RAOC soldiers and veterans to connect.	Website: https://raoc.websitetoolbox.com
Royal British Legion	One of the UK's main charities supporting veterans and their families (including help with housing, hardship, mental health and more):	Royal British Legion 199 Borough High Street London SE1 1AA Tel: 0808 802 8080 Email: info@britishlegion.org.uk Website: Royal British Legion
Royal British Legion Poppy Shop	Purchase wreath Type 'C' with Conductor Badge (Sticker)	Tel 0345 845 1945 Option 2 then Option 1
Royal Corps of Transport Association		RHQ The Royal Logistic Corps Building 204 Worthy Down Camp Winchester Hampshire, SO21 2RG, UK Tel: 01962 887766 Email: rasrcrtsec@rhqtherlc.org.uk
Royal Logistic Corps Association POC: Victoria Parkes Role: Veterans, Families & Civil Engagement Officer	The Royal Logistic Corps Association supports serving and former members of the Royal Logistic Corps by promoting comradeship, preserving regimental traditions, and providing welfare and benevolent support. It helps members stay connected through events, communication, and remembrance activities, reflecting the Corps' motto: "We Sustain."	Regimental Headquarters The Royal Logistic Corps Worthy Down Winchester SO21 2RG Tel 0196 288 7785 Mil 94271 7785 MODNET victoria.parkes100@mod.gov.uk Email vfceo@rhqtherlc.org.uk

Royal Pioneer Corps Association Online	The Association supports former members of the Royal Pioneer Corps and promotes camaraderie, heritage, newsletters, reunions and member services	St George's Barracks Arncott Bicester Oxfordshire, OX25 1PP, Tel: 07380 748565 Email: thepioneerhq@gmail.com Website: https://www.royalpioneer-corps.co.uk/
SSAFA	Supports serving personnel, veterans, and their families with welfare, financial, and specialist assistance, including housing and homelessness advice	SSAFA the Armed Forces Charity Unit 7 Eagle Court 170-172 Hagley Road Birmingham B16 8PR Tel: 0800 260 6767 Website: https://www.ssafa.org.uk/

Guild Merchandise

We are incredibly proud of the passion, dedication, and community spirit that makes our guild so special. Every achievement, every collaboration, and every milestone we reach is possible because of *you*.

Now you have a fun and meaningful way to show that pride! Our official guild merchandise is available, and it's more than just apparel or accessories, it's a symbol of the teamwork, commitment, and shared goals that unite us.


By purchasing guild merchandise, you're not only representing our community with pride, but you're also helping support future guild activities, events, and initiatives. Every item worn or used is a visible reminder of the strong, supportive network we've built together.

Let's represent our guild with confidence and enthusiasm! Check out the merchandise, find something you love, and wear it proudly. **Together**, we shine even brighter







Scan to place an order or go to: membermojo.co.uk/conductorsguild/store

Merchandise note: Sadly, as from 1 March we have had to increase prices for online purchases, because of increased postage charges.

ITEM	Description	Image	Retail Price (Incl P&P)
Guild Tie	RLC Corps Tie with Conductors' motif placed central. Motif is about the size of a 50 pence piece		£21.00

Cuff Links	Circular Conductors' replicated badge. Size is about new 20 pence piece		£29.00
Branch Pin	Circular Conductors' replicated badge on white background. Size is about 50 pence piece		£4.00
Ladies; Brooch	Enamelled Red Circle with 'gold' enamelled Conductors' badge. Size is about 50 pence piece.		£4.00
Metal Travel Mugs	White body, Conductor Badge on two sides, black handle and lids. Fits in most car drinks holders.		£14.00
Guild Plaque	Conventional Wall Plaque with Conductors badge motif. Above the badge is 'CONDUCTORS' BRANCH' and below is 'ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS ASSOCIATION'		£31.00

Framed Conductors' Badge	Bullion embroidered Conductors' badge. 6" Badge inside 11" wooden, glass fronted frame		£74.00
Coffee Mugs	White Ceramic with Conductors' badge and history printed on. Normal Mug size		£12.00
Guild Umbrellas	Large, Black 'Golfing' type with Conductors Badge and sleeve for storing		£35.00
Car Sticker	Kings Crown Conductors Badge on clear vinyl. Approx 77mm across		£2.00

Newsletter Distribution:

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