



June 2020

Once again the WARG committee has had to make the difficult decision about whether to continue the 2020 programme of walks and talks, and has concluded that the time to recommence is not yet here.

In summary:

- All Outreach events have been either cancelled or postponed pending future directives on safety measures
- The CBA Festival of Archaeology – Virtual events only will be run during July, with the main programme postponed to 14 Oct to 1 Nov
- A suggestion to provide links to online events will be actioned on the WARG website, with notice in the next flyer
- The Hyde 900 dig is postponed, provisionally to 22 to 25 Oct. There will be some opportunity for WARG diggers to participate as usual
- The visit to Winchester College Treasury, the New Forest walk and picnic, and the walking tour of Winchester Medieval Religious Houses have all been cancelled, but every effort will be made to to rebook them for later in the year. Maureen will advise everyone who has booked and paid and confirm all cheques have been destroyed
- The Big Dig as been postponed to 2021 as IBM offices at Hursley are closed, with no access to the grounds or facilities. Research about the site will continue as far as possible.



A Lollipop for those missing the monthly talks

History in the Making

At a time when the creativity of 'mankind' has again taken us into space, I wanted to share a lollipop which is part book review and part local history about how human qualities exist on

unimaginable levels. The book I recommend to you is '**Johnson Beharry VC - Barefoot Soldier – A story of Extreme valour**'. Pub. Sphere 2006 ISBN 10: 0316733210 ISBN 13: 9780316733212

We live in or around a garrison town and a Royal naval port. This is an area with a long history of defence of the Realm and comradeship in adversity. Winchester, once capital city and now a County Town, Portsmouth the premier Royal Naval base, and Southampton, the home of the Spitfire.

With a proud history the Hampshire Regiment (Queen's and Royal's Hampshires) could honour six recipients of the Victoria Cross, the highest military honour, only bestowed for outstanding bravery. The Hampshire's Regimental Museum can be visited at Searle's House in Winchester museum@serleshouse.co.uk

Whilst not specifically a Hampshire based regiment – with its Headquarters in the Tower of London, the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment (PWRR), is an amalgamation of twelve Regiments of foot, including The Hampshire Regiment. Founded in 1572 the PWRR was originally nicknamed the Buffs, as in Herbert Alexander's painting 'Forward the Buffs', and subsequently inherited the name 'The Tigers' from the Hampshires. The battle honours and theatres of conflict are too numerous to name here, but the south Hampshire Regiment lives on in the Tigers as, after twenty-one years of active service in India, the 67th (South Hampshire) was ordered back to England in 1826. In commemoration of this service, King George IV authorised the figure of the Royal Bengal Tiger with the word 'India' superscripted, to be borne on its Regimental Colour and other appointments. The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment retains this honour today and proudly maintains the soubriquet. In the 1970s I lived in Paignton and often visited the zoo with my small son to see Rosa, the magnificent Tiger mascot of the Hampshires.



The Hampshire Regiment The Princess of Wales Royal Regiment and right shoulder combat patch

In the proud tradition of the Hampshires, PWRR can acclaim 57 Victoria Crosses (For Valour in Combat) and three George Crosses (For Valour other than in Combat)

The book I wish to recommend concerns awards bestowed on members of the regiment's 1st Battalion for their service during operations in Iraq in 2004. I would not comment on the rights or wrongs of the response to any conflict, and feel deeply saddened for the plight of all the people caught up any conflict, in times of war or peace, but these awards were recognition of the extraordinary valour and comradeship - man's humanity to man when under threat to his or her own life. I see a close parallel to the work of carers in these strange times. The 1st Battalion earned one Victoria Cross, two Conspicuous Gallantry Crosses, two Distinguished Service Orders, one Order of the British Empire, seven Military Crosses, fifteen Mentions in Despatches and one

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service on this extremely challenging tour, making the regiment the most highly decorated serving regiment in the British Army at that time. Later in 2006, whilst attached to the 1st Battalion, Michelle Norris of the Royal Army Medical Corps became the first woman to be awarded the Military Cross following her actions on 11 June 2006

Private Johnson Beharry of the 1st Battalion, PWRR was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions during his unit's deployment to Amarah, near Basra. The award was bestowed by HM the Queen who told him he was an extraordinary young man, and it had been a long time since she had bestowed the Victoria Cross.



Dr. Sergeant Johnson Beharry VC



The Grenadian flag

This extraordinary young man was a driver in the PWRR. He was born and bred on the Commonwealth Island of Grenada in the Eastern Caribbean. From a poor family, he was literally bare footed, and was raised by various family members, being particularly close to his beloved grandmother and fortunate to be taken in by his Uncle. From a very early age he wanted to be a driver and built himself various vehicles of questionable road worthiness. Another Aunt and Uncle, who owned a garage, allowed him to learn to drive a real vehicle at an early age. After a few understandably tempestuous years, he moved to live with relatives in London, and life almost came off the rails. However, after visiting an Army recruitment office and accepting advice, he joined the army and fulfilled his dream of becoming a driver.

In May 2004, as the driver of the Platoon Commander's Warrior armoured vehicle on deployment in Iraq, his vehicle was set on fire by a rocker propelled grenade. He was shot in the head but still managed to lead the convoy to safety. He then climbed out of the burning vehicle and saved his commanding officer, badly injured gunner and two other crew members, leading them to safety. Following this rescue he drove his Warrior to a safe place and disabled it, to avoid it being used against his comrades, only then did he collapse. He was back on duty in six weeks after discharging himself from hospital. The following month, back in a Warrior, his company was ambushed in Al Amarah. Again wounded, with a fractured skull and barely conscious, he drove

in reverse at high speed, again saving his comrades, before he fell into a coma which lasted several weeks.

Johnson still serves in the Army, in public relations. His charity work includes his JBVC Foundation <https://www.jbvc-foundation.org.uk/> which helps steer under-privileged children away from a life of gangs and crime. He is a Special Ambassador for Headway – the brain injury association <https://www.headway.org.uk/> and is involved with Help for Heroes <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/>. He was awarded an Honorary Degree by the University of Sussex in July 2011.

Biography is not my normal reading choice, but I found it difficult to put this book down.

Never one to miss a quotation from the Bard, I think this one is tailored for this exceptional young man.

In peace there's nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility; But when the blast of war blows in the ears, then imitate the action of the tiger.
(William Shakespeare, King Henry V)

Janet Backhouse