

Bun, Cuppa and Chat

Veterans' Group



NEWSLETTER

September 2024



This month's newsletter seems to have gone to the dogs, or at least it has been taken over by the dogs! Marty, the big-hearted Staffie, who is still grieving the death of his Master Jerry, has researched the wartime story of Rags the dog, with a little help from his new Pack Leader, Rick (who with Helen is a Bun, Cuppa and Chat regular). Marty, Sugie and Sahara are all trying to cope with some feisty incomers to their respective packs – in Marty's case, three small but boisterous kittens, and for Sugie and Sahara, another pre-loved Danehaven Toller, called Nacho aged eight, who has kindly agreed to write a bit about himself for this edition and will from next month join with Sugie & Sahara to write the regular column. Thank you to them all, plus of course Norman for keeping your chuckle muscles in peak condition!

Bun, Cuppa and Chat News

Our next three get-togethers will be on **Thursdays 26 September, 31 October and 28 November, 2.30-4pm** at the Mariners Galley in Rushall as usual.

A few other dates for your diaries:

Poppy Appeal: 17 October – 10 November

If you would like to help, particularly with collecting at the Long Stratton Co-op, please contact Rosemary

Remembrance Sunday: 10 November

There'll be services in the morning at Dickleburgh, Pulham St Mary and Starston, and at 3pm at Rushall.

Please let Rosemary know if you will be joining us for refreshments at the Mariners Galley café before the Rushall service (from 2pm).

Christmas Lunch: 12 December, Mariners Galley Menus and time to follow. £30 for three courses and £25 for two, but we hope to subsidise the cost, as last year. Open to Bun, Cuppa and Chat members (and carers) and our lovely volunteer helpers. Numbers are limited, so please book early (even if just provisionally) and let us know if a lift will be needed. If we are heavily oversubscribed, we will try to book a second sitting the following Thursday!

2025 Dates - We will be reverting to the **fourth Thursday** for our Bun, Cuppa and Chat get-togethers next year, apart from the Christmas Lunch 2025. The full list of dates will be in next month's newsletter.

Geoffrey Bates

It is with sadness that we learned of the sudden death of Geoffrey Bates, who with his wife Anne, has become a regular member of our Bun, Cuppa and Chat Group over the past year. Our thoughts and prayers are with Anne, and their daughter Suzanne, and other family and friends.



Hi, I am Nacho (or Danehaven Swift if I am being formal!) and recently joined the Steer Household. Both Sahara and I are 'Pre-Loved Danehaven Tollers' as we had to change families (via Chris, our breeder at Danehaven) because of changes in our original families' circumstances.

I was getting very anxious about living with an 18-month-old noisy human, so my family felt it might better if they found me somewhere less stressful to live. So now I am back in Norfolk – don't tell my new Master and Missus, but Starston Beck is a bit of come-down after swimming in the River Severn, though I love the garden pond!

I do miss my old family, but the Steer Pack has made me very welcome and are helping to calm my anxieties with lots of cuddles and massages, and walks in the fields, by the beck and in the town, I have two lovely new companions, Sahara and Sugie, the Staff are at home most of the day and let me sleep on the sofa, though I now know the Master's chair is out of bounds! Just need to get more confident getting into the car as I think there is a trip to the seaside in the offing!



Rags - What a Dog - My Hero -

Rags was a mixed-breed terrier found abandoned on the streets of Paris in July 1918 by Private James Donovan, a signal corps specialist serving with the U.S. 1st Infantry Division. Donovan initially thought the dog was a pile of rags, hence his name. Rags was to play the role of 1st Division Dog Mascot for 18 years.

Private Donovan was posted to the front line where his job was to string communications wire between advancing infantry and supporting field artillery. He also had to repair field telephone wires that had been damaged by shellfire. Until the wire was replaced, runners had to be used, but they were frequently wounded, killed or could not get through shell holes and barbed wire so Donovan trained Rags to carry written messages attached to his collar.

In July 1918, Rags and Donovan and an infantry unit of 42 men were cut off and surrounded by Germans. Rags carried back a message which resulted in an artillery barrage and reinforcements that rescued the group. News of the exploit spread throughout the 1st Division. A couple of months later, Rags and Donovan were involved in the final American campaign of the war. On 2 October 1918, Rags carried a message from the 1st Battalion of the 26th Infantry Regiment to the 7th Field Artillery that resulted in an artillery barrage that led to an important objective, the Very-Epinonville Road, being secured. It saved the lives of many American servicemen.

A week later, Rags and Private Donovan were both wounded. Rags had his right front paw, right ear and right eye damaged by shell splinters, and was also mildly gassed. Donovan was more seriously wounded and badly gassed. The two were kept together and taken back to a dressing station and then, together, to several hospitals. Whenever this unusual treatment for a mere dog was mentioned, the term "orders from headquarters" was brought into play. Rags' reputation helped smooth the way. He quickly recovered, but Donovan's health deteriorated and after he and Rags were repatriated back to Fort Sheridan in Chicago, Donovan died of his wounds in early 1919. Following his master's death, Rags was cared for by soldiers at the base until in 1920 he was adopted by Major Raymond W. Hardenbergh and his family, with whom he remained for the rest of his life through several postings.

In addition to his message-carrying skills in France during World War I, Rags displayed other unique behaviours. When Rags was first in the front lines and came under shellfire, he simply imitated the men around him who would drop to the ground and hug it tightly. Before long, the soldiers observed Rags hugging the ground with his paws spread out and soon realized that Rags' acute and sensitive hearing were telling them when the shells were coming well before they could hear them. The doughboys learned to keep their eyes on Rags, and he became an early-warning system for artillery shell fire. During a rest period behind the lines, James Donovan taught Rags a method of dog saluting that Rags would use for the rest of his military life. Instead of extending his paw out to shake hands, as most dogs were taught, Rags would raise his paw a bit higher and close to his head. For many years afterward, Rags would appear at the flag pole at various military bases for the retreat ceremony. As the flag was lowered and the bugle played, Rags could be seen saluting with the assembled troops.

Rags was awarded several medals and awards and died in 1936 at the great age of twenty. He was buried with military honours. A monument was erected at the Aspin Hill Memorial Park in Silver Spring, Maryland near the Hardenbergh's family home.



Rags, c. 1930



Thank you, Rags - Marty

‘A nation that forgets its past has no future’

Winston Churchill

This year sees the 80th anniversaries of several key battles of the 2nd World War, across different theatres, as the tide began to turn in favour of the Allies. Although some, like D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, were seen as broadly successful, many died or were wounded, on both sides. The Battle of Kohima in India, a hill town on the Burma (now Myanmar) border, took place between April and June 1944 between British (and British Indian) forces and the Japanese and saw fierce fighting; it was seen as the turning point in the Burma campaign. The Japanese advanced into India, aiming both to prevent the British moving into Burma, and potentially for they themselves to gain a significant foothold in India. The Japanese captured Kohima Ridge to block the supply route into Imphal, where allied troops were besieged. Eventually the Japanese were driven out of their positions and the road recaptured, and the Siege of Imphal ended when British and British Indian troops from Kohima and Imphal met at Milestone 109 on 22 June 1944.



Indian troops inspect captured Japanese ordnance

Today this battle is best known for the ‘Kohima Epitaph’, often said at Remembrance services as an invocation, which is engraved on the 2nd Division’s war memorial in the Kohima Cemetery in north-east India. However, these words are unconnected with the Battle of Kohima; they were written at the end of the First World War by a Cambridge classicist, John Maxwell Edmonds, who wrote many other epitaphs including:

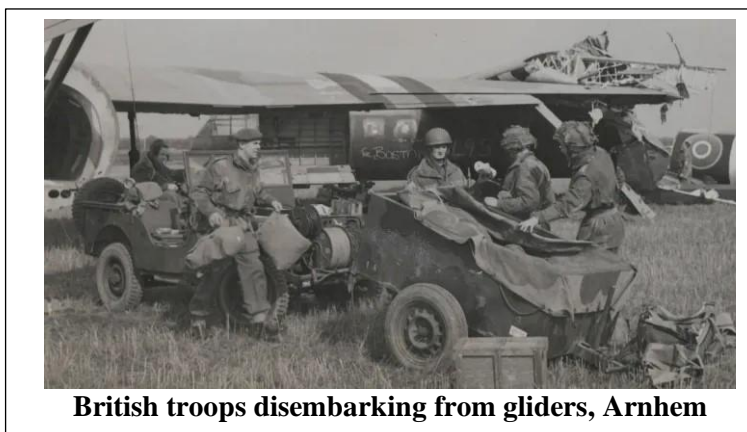
*Went the day well? We died and never knew;
But well or ill, England, we died for you.*

Edmonds’ original words, intended for a British cemetery in France, later used in a slightly amended form for the Kohima memorial, were:

*When you go home, tell them of us, and say
"For your to-morrows these gave their to-day".*

Operation Market Garden, carried out between 17 and 26 September 1944, will be forever associated with the Dutch city of Arnhem, close by the German border, and the title of the 1977 film, *A Bridge Too Far*. It was a daring and ambitious plan by the Allies combining an airborne assault with an armoured attack through the Netherlands to capture several key bridges, including Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Arnhem, to enable the British 30 Corps to advance across the Rhine and into Northern Germany.

The airborne divisions landed on 17 September and one battalion succeeded in capturing the Arnhem Bridge, although the remaining airborne troops were beleaguered in an area near Oosterbeek to the west. Allied intelligence failed to identify that the Germans had tanks in the area including two SS Panzer Divisions. The airborne troops were only lightly armed and had few heavy weapons to defend themselves against tanks. Although all three bridges were captured by airborne or ground forces, the ground forces were held up by the terrain and fierce



British troops disembarking from gliders, Arnhem

German resistance and were unable to reach the final bridge at Arnhem to relieve the airborne troops. There were also difficulties in supplying the beleaguered troops from the air. Sergeant Dennis Smith of the Army Film and Photographic Unit, with the airborne forces at Arnhem, wrote:

We have had a very heavy shelling this morning September 23rd and now the situation is serious. The shelling is hellish. We have been holding out for a week now. The men are tired, weary and food is becoming scarce, and to make matters worse we are having heavy rain. If we are not relieved soon, then the men will just drop from sheer exhaustion.

On 24-25 September about 2,100 troops from the 1st Airborne Division were ferried back across the Rhine. The remaining 7,500 men had either been killed or made prisoners of war. This defeat set victory in Europe back by six months, but the airborne troops at Arnhem showed great courage, resilience and defiance. As the war correspondent Alan Wood wrote later that year: ‘If in the years to come, you meet a man who says, “I was at Arnhem”, raise your hat and buy him a drink.’

Norman's Chuckle Corner

- ✚ A man and his grandson are listening to the radio in the car. "Hey Grandad " says the lad "What music did you like listening to when you were growing up?" "I loved Led Zeppelin," says his grandfather. "Who?" says the boy. "Yeah, I liked them too" says the grandfather.
- ✚ A family had moved house because there was not enough room as the family grew. Grandma visited and spoke to her eldest grandson. "How do you like the new house?" "Terrific Grandma, I have my own room, my brother has his own room, and my sister has her own room, but poor Mum is still sleeping with Dad!"
- ✚ Never date a radiologist - she'll see right through you.
- ✚ Customer "Waiter I can't find any chicken in this chicken soup." Waiter "You won't find a horse in horseradish sauce either, sir"
- ✚ A man says to his friend that he was concerned about his memory. "I am sad about that", said his friend "I have a superb memory, for example I can recite ten pages of the London telephone directory by heart! Ready? Smith, Smith, Smith....."
- ✚ A musician gets a job in the orchestra of a cruise ship. He was having a little trouble keeping in time with the rest of the orchestra. Finally, the captain said to the struggling musician, "Either you learn to keep in time or I'll throw you overboard, It's up to you to sync or swim!"
- ✚ What has two wheels and flies? A black wheelie bin.
- ✚ A group of psychology students from different universities were attending their first class to learn about emotional extremes. "As a start," the professor said, "let us establish some parameters." To the student from Oxford, he asked "What is the opposite of joy". "Sadness," said the student. "And the opposite of depression?" he put to the young lady from Cambridge. "Elation" she replied " "And you, sir" he said to the young man from Devon, "How about the opposite of woe"? After a little thought, he smiled with some relief and said, "Sir, I believe that would be Giddy Up!"

Musings from the Mutt and the Moggie



As you know, we have been helping Nacho to settle in over the past few weeks, especially telling him about the things that will endear him to the Master and Missus,

such as jumping in the pond, lying across doorways and the stairs, removing items from the recycling box and chewing them, filching human food, and looking at them with tragic eyes, pleading imminent starvation. He is a quick learner! He has one less endearing habit though, humping other dogs! I (Sahara) have made my feelings about this clear!



I just want to say that the robin hopping around the back kitchen, cheeping loudly, was nothing to do with me (Sugie). Watching the Master shepherd it out through the open cat flap, it is obvious that is the way it came in, of its own accord!! Not Guilty!

Sahara and Sugie

Help for Bun, Cuppa and Chat Members

If you need help or have any queries or concerns, please contact Norman on 01379 854245 or 07941473255 the number below, or email him on steernorman@gmail.com. If he cannot help or advise, he will usually know someone that can!

The Bun, Cuppa and Chat Group is part of the Benefice of Dickleburgh and the Pulhams,

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