



Welcome to the Maple Cross Fellowship Newsletter

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I hope you are all well and coping with the restrictions of Covid. Before the current lockdown we still managed to meet friends and also went to a socially distanced theatre talk in our local arts centre. This was by Simon Yates, the British climber who had to cut the rope to his climbing companion Joe Simpson in the Peruvian Andes, the story told in "Touching the Void". It was very interesting.

The second half of the year continued like the first, with record breaking weather. On the 3rd October the country had the largest amount of rainfall ever recorded since records began over 100 years ago.

We discovered this was true when we tried walking to our local park which has a café, and found fields had changed to lakes. It took a large diversion off our normal route to eventually find our way around the water. We think this route may well be "out of bounds" till next spring or even the summer. We're back to using the local lanes.

This edition of the newsletter is shorter than the previous as we haven't had any events at all in this half year. I've included the memories of our Christmas lunch in 2019, and hopefully we'll be able to enjoy one together next year.

I was pleased to receive an article from Arthur Bishop, thank you Arthur, recalling his national service days. It's included in this edition and I hope you find it as interesting as I did.

I just love personal history and Arthur's story inspired me to locate the computer file of my autobiography, which I started writing about 15 years ago. I found I'd written the first 20 years (approximately), so still a long way to go, with a lot of metaphorical, and actual, water under the bridge since then. I'm working on a timeline to try and remember what I did for the next 40+ years which is interesting though difficult.

I hope you all have a good Christmas & New year, and hope the vaccine arrives soon so perhaps we can get together again next year.

Jeff Taylor



A takeaway beer on the Thames near Cookham between lockdowns

Organiser's Report

Dear Fellowship Members,



May I start by wishing you all a very merry Christmas but very unusual Christmas. I hope that all our members are well and have not been too traumatised over the events of the last year. I was really hoping that we would be able to get together for our annual Christmas Luncheon but sadly Covid 19 got in my way. Currently I am unsure when we will be able to get together again, it is unlikely that it will be Valentine's Day or St George's Day, but after that I am keeping my fingers crossed.

I thank Jeff for his effort in preparing this latest newsletter and Arthur Bishop for his wonderful recollections of his Army days (Well done Arthur), also for Duncan's light hearted antidotes in these difficult times. If anyone has stories of their past and of what they have been getting up to during the lockdowns due to the Coronavirus please send them to Jeff or me.

In the summer I made a drinks bar for the garden (see photo) so we could invite a few friends all socially distanced to have a few drinks during the good summer evenings. The grandchildren loved it and I have to say I think that they've found their career routes as bar staff. However recently this has become an unused addition due to all the restrictions. It may get used by the family at Christmas but we will all be dressed up with our fur coats (that may not be politically correct though) and socially distanced. I also resorted to a lot of decorating and recently due to having a tree surgeon around to trim some trees in my garden, I have been making rustic reindeer for all my family and friends out of the logs as in the photo. (*Well done! Ed*)

"I've been making rustic reindeer for all my family and friends"

During the period between lockdowns I continued to play golf with friends. I was also able to meet up with a few Fellowship Members - Phil Durigan, Neil McMinn and Kevin Byrne for a few rounds in St Albans, Henley and Wycombe. Sadly that has had to be curtailed recently. Many local walks have been undertaken by Sue and me, I'm also aware that Jeff and Shirley have been out walking and cycling to keep themselves active. It is good that we live close to the Thames as there are some lovely riverside walks.



I have not prepared a programme for next year currently as I believe whatever I do will get changed. As soon as I have a better understanding of the way forward I will send out a programme to enable us to get together again. Please all of our members have a safe and good Christmas and I hope a Happy New Year.

Best Wishes

Norman Elliott

Sayings from Duncan

I don't mean to interrupt people. I just randomly remember things and get really excited.

When one door closes and another door opens, you are probably in prison.

I finally got eight hours of sleep. It took me three days, but whatever.

I remember being able to get up without making sound effects.

My luck is like a bald guy who just won a comb.

I had my patience tested. I'm negative.

D Mort

Christmas Luncheon (2019)

On a rainy Thursday in December 40 members gathered for the Christmas lunch at Shendish Manor which has become a regular venue.



It's always great to catch up with friends.



As another group was also having a meal here at the same time, Norman issued tokens for the free drink at the bar so he wouldn't get charged for the other group's drinks. As it transpired, we had pretty much taken over the bar area, so there were few if any takers from the other group. Still better safe than sorry.



"There was evidence of the previous days wind, with the chairs in the outside seating area in total disarray

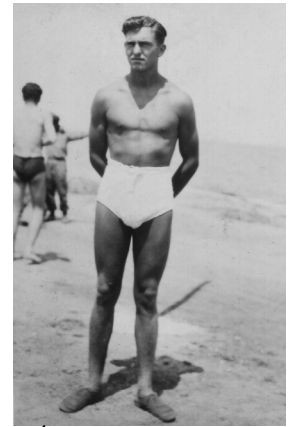


Despite a reduction in Fellowship funding for next year, and a small reduction in events you might like to note that there are still 6 events planned, and also the possibility of a Fellowship organised Garden Party. See the back page for more information.

There was evidence of the previous days wind, with the chairs in the outside seating area in total disarray, or perhaps it was the result of a passing herd of cattle.



Arthur Bishop - My Army Life

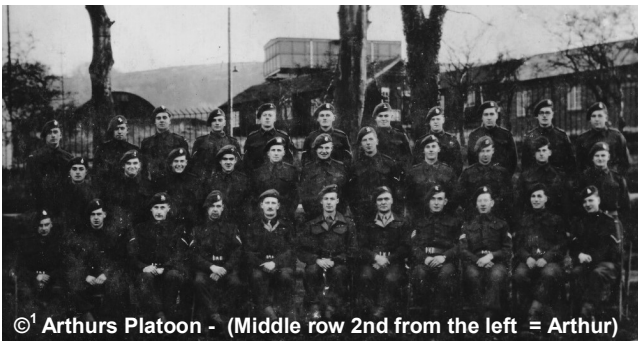


©¹ Arthur - Tripoli 1948

At 15½, I joined the army cadets, and became the champion boxer for Bedfordshire at my weight (9st) for 2 years. We were also taught map reading and arms drill. I became CSM (*Company Sergeant Major. Ed.*) for Sharnbrook company.

In May 1947 I went to St. Albans for my National Service medical and met Derek Green, who I didn't know at the time but became a great friend, and from then on we were together for the whole of our army time.

I passed the A.I. course (*Medical. Ed.*) and joined up on 7th August 1947 (Army number 21026775) at Kempston Barracks - Group 115.



©¹ Arthurs Platoon - (Middle row 2nd from the left = Arthur)

I was kitted out on the first day and had fun filling my Palliasse with straw! Normally new recruits weren't allowed out of the barracks for the first 10 days as they had to learn how to wear their uniform correctly. As I'd been in the cadets and knew some of the trainers, I was allowed out on the first weekend.

Twice I was chosen to be Stick Orderly by the Orderly Officer.

(*This was the smartest man on Parade, who assisted the Lt Col Commanding Officer Kempston Barracks Ed.*)

Basic training was completed in Bedford taking 6 weeks.

We had competitions to strip down and reassemble a Bren gun whilst blindfolded. Because we did well, Derek and I were selected for 12 weeks intensive training. So on 17th September 1947 we sailed from Stranraer to Belfast to join the 28th training Battalion in Holywood Barracks, which was for potential officers and NCO's.

Derek was in the Beds and Herts 16th Foot company and, because I was born in Taunton, I ended up in the Somerset Light Infantry. I managed to get an interview with the Company Commander to get moved to the Beds and Herts, which led to me being at odds with the training corporal. He put me on a 252 (*Charge Report. Ed.*) but I got off anyway. The corporal then put me on another 252, and when I appeared before the Company Commander the next day, he took one look at me and said "Weren't you here yesterday? What's the matter this time?" I replied, "The harder I try, the more trouble I get into, Sir!" His response was "Get out, case dismissed!" After that there was no more trouble.

I also spent time at the "Worlds End Camp" in Ballykinlar about 30 miles south of Belfast. (*Renamed Abercorn Barracks in 1949. Ed.*)

Whilst around Belfast we used to visit the Mecca Dance hall on a Saturday night. The Irish girls told us to beware of the Falls Road.

All the rifles were locked up at night, and we did training on an assault course.

The passing out parade (Irish Guards) was on 15th December 1947, & on 19th December I travelled to Colchester via a ferry from Larne to Stranraer. At Colchester we were issued with K.D. kit (*K.D. = Khaki drill. Ed.*)

consisting of 3 pairs of trousers & 3 of shorts, plus 3 shirts & hose tops (*hose tops were worn to cover your legs if wearing shorts. Ed.*) On the 27th January 1948 I had 7 days embarkation leave.



©²

Worlds End Camp

After returning to Colchester, I travelled to Liverpool and caught the

SS Scythia on 10th February 1948, and travelled to Malta.

We arrived at Valletta about 20th February and the following day moved to St. Paul's Bay about 10 miles away. Here we had a routine FFI check (*Free from infection, sexual health check. Ed.*) We then went training on a commando assault course climbing cargo nets etc. at Imtafa Barracks.



©²

SS Scythia

At the end of March 1948 I boarded the SS Peacemaker travelling to Tripoli, Libya. The Tripoli Riots started in June following the Israeli declaration of

©¹ - Arthur Bishop

©² - Copyright free Wikipedia

©³ - Jeff Taylor

independence in May. (*This was the start of the first Arab Israeli war. Ed.*) Here I was a Pay Clerk with "D company" and shared the same room as the Storeman, Private Sharman. My role was to prepare the pay sheets and cigarette allocation, which was a tin of 50 cigarettes and 2 boxes of matches per man, for the Company.

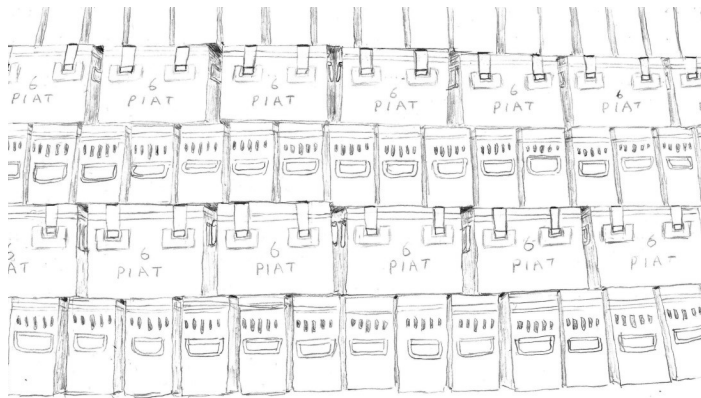
I collected the cigarettes, which were either Players, Senior Service or Gold Leaf, in a blanket from the main quartermaster's stores. No one seemed to know how many people had been added to the company strength each week, so one week a miscount by the main quartermaster store gave us 10 extra rations.

Towards the end of September we were off again, this time to Thessalonica in Greece, where there was a civil war.

©²

SS Peacemaker

Here we had stores separated by a wall made from empty Piat Bomb cases (*Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank bombs. Ed.*). We were not supposed to leave the stores unattended but sometimes "A" company from the next store, used to go to the NAAFI together. Once, "A" company went out and left the store unattended. So we climbed over the "wall" by the case carrying handles and helped ourselves to 10 blankets. Private Sharman made a deal with the local Greeks who bought them from us over the barbed wire.

©³

Arthur's P.I.A.T. Wall

The CSM Pithers was not happy and knew something was going on. He came into my office and told me he was going to get me back into company lines. Next thing I knew I was on Company Orders.

I was promoted to Lance Corporal on 30th October 1948. Our Company Commander Peter Young DSO MC cross and bar was sent to the 2nd Infantry Brigade Training School and Major Phipps took over. I managed to get on a course at the Brigade Training School in Thessalonica from 27th November 1948 to 15th January 1949 and passed out best all-rounder. I was promoted to full corporal on 22nd February 1949.

I took on the duties of B.O.S. (*Battalion Orderly Sergeant. Ed.*) at the beginning of April 1949. So from Reveille to "Lights Out", I was on duty with the Orderly Officer, mounting and dismounting the guards, inspecting the cookhouse and checking the Guard House. Major Phipps gave me 7 days leave 15th June 1949.

I went on a forced march and had a dip in some sulphur baths. I used to meet Helen, my girlfriend at the time, who worked at the NAAFI after it closed, for a goodnight snog. One night I misjudged the time and the Provost Sergeant had to provide transport (after curfew). I had to get the NAAFI Sergeant to back me up that Helen had worked late.

On a night out in Thessalonica I drank too much champagne with many girls and suddenly realised, about 15 minutes before curfew, that I was still in the town with no hat. I managed to get a lift in a 15cwt truck back to camp, but as I had no hat I sat on the Guardroom steps as you couldn't book in without one. I finally grabbed someone else's hat and booked in at last. I remember I woke up the next morning with nothing on, under a mosquito net. The lads had put me to bed. Somehow my hat and watch re-appeared in the morning.

One day we went up to Mount Chortiatis on detachment and dammed a stream with sandbags forming a swimming pool. Helen and her sister came up to the camp one Sunday and we went down to the village to visit their uncle who had plenty of food and wine. A good time was had by all.

©¹

Arthur - Salonika 1949

In September 1949 demob day arrived. I was due to leave Thessalonica by ship to go home. However the ship was found to have diphtheria on board so we were sent by a local ship to a transit camp in Piraeus, where we took another ship to the UK.

After Demob I got a job at the Odell Leather Factory, north west of Bedford, being paid 15 shillings a week!

Games & puzzles

Sudoku

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| | 6 | | 9 | | | | | |
| | 2 | 1 | 6 | | 7 | | 3 | 8 |
| | | 8 | | | 2 | 1 | 6 | |
| | 9 | 7 | 2 | | 6 | | 4 | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 4 | | 5 | | 3 | 7 | 8 | |
| | 7 | 3 | 1 | | | 8 | | |
| 4 | 8 | | 7 | | 5 | 2 | 1 | |
| | | | | | 4 | | 9 | |

Easy

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 8 | | 9 | 2 | 4 | | 1 | |
| | | | 3 | | 1 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | 2 | | | | 9 | | |
| 5 | 7 | | | | | | 6 | 2 |
| 8 | | | | 6 | | | | 3 |
| 7 | | | 2 | 5 | 8 | | | 4 |
| | 4 | | | | | | 2 | |
| | | 9 | 6 | | 3 | 7 | | |

Hard

Wordsearch

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | I | N | I | M | E | G | K | I | Q |
| N | R | O | C | I | R | P | A | C | J |
| L | E | A | R | I | E | S | H | T | D |
| L | O | B | S | L | E | A | O | T | M |
| X | Y | L | E | Z | R | Q | T | Q | S |
| O | O | I | C | O | Q | U | C | C | D |
| G | S | B | S | F | G | A | O | L | H |
| Z | X | R | I | P | N | R | F | E | P |
| V | R | A | P | C | P | I | I | H | L |
| B | K | J | E | I | U | U | B | V | G |
| K | E | R | O | S | G | S | P | C | M |
| S | U | R | U | A | T | G | Z | H | W |

Which of these Star signs is not in the grid?

- Aquarius
- Pisces
- Aries
- Taurus
- Gemini
- Cancer
- Leo
- Virgo
- Libra
- Scorpio
- Sagittarius
- Capricorn

Also which has a symbol like a bow & arrow?

Answers on the back page.

1971 - 50 Years ago:-

January – The new Emily Moor transmitter started broadcasting. At 1084 ft it is still Britain's tallest freestanding structure.

February – The UK switched to decimal currency.

March - The first ever UK postal strike ended after 47 days.

April - The planned Barbican centre was given the go-ahead

May - Jackie Stewart won the Monaco Grand Prix.

June - The EEC agreed terms for Britain's proposed membership, and it was hoped that the nation would join the following year.

Wordsearch - The words can be found forwards, backwards and on both diagonals and in either direction.

Kier Fellowship

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If you wish to be added to the closed group, send your Facebook e-mail address or details, to:-

kfmaplecross@virginmedia.com

This magazine serves the Kier Fellowship members from the Maple Cross area. It is provided by members for members. Please send any contributions you may have, e.g. items about your history, photos, recent events, holidays etc. which may interest others to Jeff Taylor.

Also if you have any suggestions for other events please contact Norman Elliott.

Also Kier now have a dedicated Fellowship website go to :-

www.fellowship.kier.co.uk

Forthcoming Events 2021

Wordsearch

Sagittarius is the answer to both questions.