

Open Letter to The Regimental Family

Before embarking on this article on the subject of the museum, I thought I should first of all establish my credentials for doing so. I joined The Seaforth as a young National Serviceman on 07 July 1956 and served on apart from a very brief spell after demob in 1958. I soon realised the error of my ways. The Civil Service was not for me and I re-enlisted in plenty of time for amalgamation. I then served on in the ranks until I was commissioned in 1981. I finally retired from active service at age 55 in 1993. On then to the appointment of Camp Comdt. At HQ Scotland for a further 10 years before final retirement at age 65.

By my reckoning then, I served my regiment, The Seaforth, The Queens Own Highlanders and The Highlanders over 6 decades, '50s, '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s and '00s. I was conscious throughout all this time that I belonged to an organisation which cared for its soldiers and families and for that reason was content to put all my trust in those in authority over me.

Having hopefully established my credentials, just a few words on the caring regiment which I served for so long. One example will suffice. It is that which I quoted on this web site quite recently in my obituary to Frank Blincow and illustrates perfectly what the Blue Mafia are all about. (And still are!)

I speak of the young wife in Osnabruck whose mother had died at home in Thurso. We had her on her way home that same day. In the meantime I had phoned Frank Blincow at RHQ informing him that this girl was on her way, but that air travel, any travel, onward to Thurso from Inverness at that time of night would probably be out of the question. Undaunted Frank simply ordered a taxi to take her home from Inverness to Thurso. This is the sort of people we are. We care deeply for all ranks and their families. Just look to the large sum of money disbursed by us annually to deserving regimental welfare cases. The regiment is more than capable of making difficult decisions on all our behalf. I certainly do not feel betrayed on the issue of the museum.

I hope that somewhat lengthy preamble will have pricked not a few consciences and led some of you to revise your thinking on the museum.

Most of you will have read General Peter's recent open letter on the subject and its naming in particular. I found it to be the most informative letter on the subject which I have read to date, and dare I say it should have been written some years ago when the museum's naming must have been raised, and before the present regime was put in place. Let us all take a reality check right now. Two well known military phrases come to mind. "We are where we are" and "Get on with it". So let us be quite clear. The name of the museum is not going to change, for reasons of sheer economics. Additionally it should be remembered that to get where we are has been an absolutely Herculean task and reasonably there may be some minor issues still causing concern. They are no doubt being addressed now and will come right. Let us get on with it. The sustainability of the museum must not be threatened!

I have probably gone on long enough. I have deliberately avoided the use of some of the vilifying, sarcastic, and confrontational language which has been all too prevalent on the guestbook. There is no advantage to any party resorting to this. We are all better than that. Let us resolve to pull together and not "tear ourselves apart". Regular readers will recognise that last quote as coming

from a daughter of the regiment. Yes! daughter of the regiment . She like all other daughters and wives, also follow the drum. Let us admit it, she got it right.

A final plea:

Read General Peter's letter in detail. Everything you would want to know about the progress of the museum is in there.

Aye

Dougie Shepherd

P.S. When my standing order to the museum comes due I intend to cut down on my garden expenditure and up my contribution.