

## A FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM ALLAN AND CATH SOLLY

Dear Friends

Now that the dust is beginning to settle on retirement, I wanted to say a big "Thank You" to you all for your support and friendship over the past 19 years that I have been working for you. Firstly, as your Membership Secretary and for the past 4 years as the RAA Secretary. I have made many hundreds of personal friends during my time in post, and I value every single one.

I was extremely proud of the association's presentation of the RAA Medal to Cath. She has been a constant comfort and supporter of mine over the many years and has worked exceptionally hard on your behalf. This has been most noticeable at our annual events. I too, have been honoured with the award of the RA Medal. An achievement I never imagined. These two awards have attracted much pride from our family and friends.

Certainly, the most memorable occasions for Cath and me must be our annual events. We most looked forward to meeting as many of you as possible. The requirement to engage with outside agencies has led to building precious personal and professional relationships. We have developed these events over the years to the extent that they are both well received and well attended by our members.

I have been incredibly grateful to those Branches that have invited me to join them over the years. It helped me develop a greater understanding and appreciation of our members, their needs, and concerns. It has also helped shape the path of progress.

Undoubtedly, the saddest part of my job has been hearing news of the passing away of old friends. Their loss has not only been very personal to their families and friends but to the whole association. Their number is countless but their contributions boundless. We will always remember them.

Over the years I have witnessed many Branches that have closed. To you, I say, you have done your work and have provided support to your members and the wider veteran community for as long as you saw necessary, and I thank you for your valuable involvement. Please remember, you are still part of the association and do not hesitate to get in touch if you need help.

On the flip side, I have managed the opening of new Branches. I hope you have all enjoyed your membership and engage with our national events. A little effort brings enormous benefits.

I would now like to turn my attention to the serving regiment and express my huge appreciation for their support. Under the guidance and encouragement of successive RASMs and Regimental Colonels. Your support has been immensely appreciated, especially as you have such busy diaries and finance is tight. I must just make a personal mention of Major Guy Booth and WO2 Matt Speight and all members of 103rd (Lancashire Artillery Volunteers) Band who have been outstanding in their support of the association. Your performances at Blackpool and the NMA have been nothing short of excellent. You have constantly been on hand to with your advice and help, enabling us to achieve the very best experience for our members and guest.

Before I finish, I need to say a very special thank you to our Regional Representatives who do an excellent job in monitoring the temperature of the association and providing a guiding hand to their Branches and much valued advice and support to RAA HQ.

Lastly, but by no means least, a huge belated thank you to all the staff in RHQ RA who have been constant companions to me. Their unselfish generosity, giving up their time to chat and providing advice and guidance will be forever appreciated and remembered for a very long time. I couldn't have survived without you.

Wishing you all every success and happiness in the future and, who knows, we may meet again, God willing.

I trust I have served you well.

Love and best wishes Cath and Allan