

THE TRAYNED SOLDIER

July 2002

The Broadsheet of the Blew Regiment of the Cittie of London Trayned Bandes



July 2002 Trayned Soldier Editorial

Dear Blews

Welcome to the (early) July issue of the TS, which Dave Pavely was hoping to print in colour for hard copy. (Thanks again to the Pavelys for all their hard work in distributing the TS, especially now that the frequency has increased!). Of course, if you are reading this on the website it will definitely be in glorious technicolour!

Just a word about the content of the TS : to ensure that the TS does not duplicate material on the website, I have decided that the TS will not carry material already published on the website **unless I am short of copy**. I understand that something like 20% of the Regiment have 'Net connection, so if you need a piece of copy to go to every member then it's probably best to send it to the TS, which will go to **all** members not on the 'Net in hard copy and will also be published on the website. (Email me on Liz@morgana22.freeserve.co.uk) or by snailmail at the address below)..

Regarding the picture on the front cover, you may be interested to know that it is not actually by Stephen Beck , but by the French artist Jaques Callot, who produced a great deal of work in the first half of the 17th Century.

Last, but not least, many thanks to Scoop for her excellent contributions and for being the mainstay of this issue!
Keep it up, Lass!

Yours in the Cause, Liz Morgan

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The Banquet

Dear Mum,

Just a quick note to let you know how the weekend went. It was excellent! It all started when we got there, natch, put the tents up and got dressed up in our glad rags. Then we stood around outside the powder room for ages. It was really funny. No-one knew why we didn't go in, but no-one went in anyway. At last we found out, and had a very moving "out with the old flag, in with the new" ceremony, with Bob defending the new flag's spots. No dice jokes please.

You should have seen inside the banquet hall Mum. It was beautiful. Candles all the way along the tables, and in little nooks in the walls. It's amazing how much light was thrown out. The meal was fantastic – so much hard work was put in. Hot soup served by the officers, cold cuts and salad, apple pie and cream, and cheese and port to finish up. The speeches were short and sweet. Bob said "You can fuck off to another regiment" so many times I'll be hearing it in my sleep. The L.G lowered the tone by breaking up bread sticks and lobbing them at people – admittedly they were heckling him. Then the disco started, and the enthusiastic got up to dance. The rest, yes, me included, went out for a fag and swigs from the port bottle.



I know what you're going to say, but it really wasn't like that. They're not leading me astray, it's just a lot of fun. I didn't even get drunk. Honest. Oh yes, Phil and Trish brought some friends with them, one of them was called Helen, and in her corset she had the biggest cleavage you've ever seen. Well, Dave asked if they were real or filled with Helium, so she asked him to check for himself. He buried his face in them! Oh Mum, you should have seen her face. Everyone cracked up. It was hysterical. After that there was nothing left to do but to go back inside and



join the port circle. At one point there were three bottles going round, and they kept catching each other up. Poor Hannah got a bit drunk, poor girl, and didn't know what was happening to her. Bless. I understand that she had to have one of Dave's make it better pills the next morning.

Terri Paveley and Jason had a fight with bread sticks. Terri's kept bending and breaking, and she kept saying "Why's mine floppy? Why do I keep getting the floppy ones?" Not that floppy, or she wouldn't have Sarah.....

Lyn lost her glasses. Talk about the blind drunk leading the blind drunk. And both blind and drunk, she drove her car round in the dark, narrowly missing tents and vehicles, so she could shine the headlights down the area where she

thought she'd lost them. Do you remember Steve Pavely, Mum? He stayed at Mark's when we all went to Sweeney's. Anyway, he's described by his brother Dave as the blindest man in the regiment. And guess what – he found them, about 10 yards away from where Lyn thought they were.

I think the most embarrassing thing I've ever seen has got to be the officers' 'Full Monty'. Even the L.G. joined in. His sash will never be the same again. I'll shudder every time I see it. The mooning I could cope with, but Bob's frontal view...yes, I know Mum, but I'm not a child anymore. It wasn't anything I hadn't seen before. Anyway, I'd better go before you start lecturing me on morality, temperance and the trials of long hair.

Love you, Scoop xxx

As you can see there is a POSTER in this issue of the T/S (back pages), what we need you all to do is find somewhere to put it.

“Before you come out with the funny comments,” I mean in your local club, shop, sports centre or anywhere that you can think of. *The significant thing is that you all take it and display it.*

We have as of the 26 May 2002 had 14 new members join the Regiment since March 2002, which takes the Regimental Membership up to about 112. Hopefully by the time this issue of the T/S has gone out, the number would have increased by even more.

But the Regiment need you all to promote and advertise to get more members,

So Do It Today

Many Thanks

Steve Rabbits



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16th May 2002

The Blew Regiment L.T.B.

Dear All

Thank you very much for the cheque for £850.00 which was the result of much hard fundraising. We shall be purchasing a new digital camera, some outdoor toys and some specialised switches for children who have severe difficulties. It is impossible for us to buy such things out of our budget as it is very small and barely covers our running costs so all your efforts are greatly Appreciated. If anyone wishes to know more about Portage I can be contacted at the above address.

Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Norman
Senior Portage Worker

The Plague in 17th Century England Part I

*“A ring, a ring of roses,
A pocket full of posies,
A –tishoo, a-tishoo,
We all fall down”.*

It was with a chill that G and I watched Darryl and Sally’s small girls hold little Kathryn Jeal’s hands and guide her gently and repeatedly in a ring to teach her the nursery rhyme game in a pub at Moira. Kathryn laughed with delight each time they softly lowered her to the ground at the last line. A delight to watch, and yet the innocent fun and contrasts so starkly with the sinister words which refer to an inexorable and terrifying tragedy which swept through Europe through several centuries.

In fact, Bubonic Plague is still present in the world today.

The History in Europe

The first recorded Plague pandemic began in Egypt in AD 541 and swept across Europe with attributable losses of between 50 -60% of the population. In the 14th Century the Plague spread from China to Western Asia and Europe again. In October 1347 several Italian merchant ships returned from a trip to the Black Sea (one of the key trade links with China). When the ships docked in Sicily, many of those on board were dying of the Plague. By the following August the Plague had spread to England. By 1352, 25 million people were



dead—a third of Europe’s population.

The Plague and its Symptoms

The word ‘Plague’, has been used as a generic term to describe several outbreaks of fatal epidemics which have decimated European populations throughout the centuries, but in fact there were two types of plague involved

(and some include Septicaemic Plague). The first was the Bubonic Plague (Black Death) which is spread by the bacillus *Yersinia Pestis*, an internal parasite of wild rodents such as squirrels and rats. The bacillus passes to man through fleas leaving the dying or dead infected rodent in search of nourishment.

It enters the bloodstream of man directly when the flea bites, or by contact with the fleas’ excrement through scratches on the skin. After an incubation period of between a few hours to 12 days (but usually 2-5 days) the infected person would suffer

symptoms of a chill, and “buboes” (suppurating ulcers – the ‘ring of roses’ in the nursery rhyme) would appear on the skin, turning from red to black, blue or purple. The patient would develop a high fever, and become restless and confused. Most infected people died between 3-5 days of blood-poisoning, but horrifically, some took a month to die.

The second disease which hides under the general term of the ‘plague’ is the Primary Pneumonic Plague, which had a 2-3 day incubation period, also started with the symptoms of a chill and usually a severe headache. Racking coughing developed which usually produced blood, and most sufferers died 48 hours after onset. This form of the plague spread by bacteria coughed out in the sputum or by the inhalation of infected droplets from a sneeze. Hence “A-tishoo, A-tishoo, We all fall down (dead).” This is also the reason that we still say “Bless you” today after someone sneezes – almost an unconscious reflex action handed down from our ancestors who meant most earnestly “God save you from the Plague”. This is also echoed in those European countries where

We still say “Bless you” today after someone sneezes – almost an unconscious reflex action handed down from our ancestors who meant most earnestly “God save you from the Plague”.

the plague was also rife – the German “Gusundheit!” meaning “Good Health” etc.

In addition to these, there were also other diseases which felled European populations – particularly Smallpox and something called “The Sweat” or rather more ironically “Knave Know Thy Master” which was rife in Tudor Britain, which had



some symptoms in common with the plagues above. It is thought that these diseases and plagues ran concurrently, and while the Black Death of the 13th Century was definitely Bubonic plague, I have not yet found any research material that says categorically that the Plague of 1665 was either Bubonic or Pneumonic. This perhaps explains why the symptoms alluded to in the nursery rhyme have elements of both plagues.

The History of the Plague in Britain pre-17th Century

Bubonic Plague first hit the British Isles in 1348 – killing nearly a third of the population. Regular outbreaks occurred ever since (but the one in 1665, the year before the Great Fire of London, was the worst).

“In the 15th Century the pressure to try to do something to limit the ravages of the plague forced the English Parliament to legislate a kissing prohibition on the 16th July 1439 ”

Parliament to legislate a kissing prohibition on the 16th July 1439 (which was probably as

ineffective as the Government’s more recent Safe Sex initiative).

Plague Doctors and Cures

All types of plague respond well to anti-biotics in the early stages (although some people have been known to recover naturally), but in the 17th Century the Plague was considered a punishment from God. Despite that there were many attempts at cures, many of them bizarre, and some in themselves quite lethal. One of these was to cover the victim in mercury and bake him or her in an oven – mercury is of course poisonous and people sometimes died from the burns. Other, less drastic measures were to drink hot drinks to sweat out the disease, smell herbs to purify the air (the pocket full of posies referred to in the nursery rhyme), carry a charm, be bled, take laxatives, or smoke a pipe of tobacco.

Despite the mortality rate being around 80% there were some “Plague Doctors” who did their best to help despite the limited resources and opportunities for success open to them.

The protective costume that they wore looked horrifically sinister and no doubt doubly struck terror into the hearts of their stricken patients. They carried a stick



to ward off over-clamorous infected persons, a long waxed coat and leather breeches, hat and boots as clothes that would be “impenetrable” to the disease. (It was also thought that the costume would ward off evil Plague carrying spirits). In addition to this, they would wear masks reminiscent of a predatory bird with glass in the eyes, and the long beak stuffed with herbs and spices to purify the “air” they inhaled. A quote from Samuel Pepys later in Part II of

this article indicates that the vast majority of the Plague Doctors also succumbed to the disease despite these precautions.

The Plague in 17th Century Britain.

Our interest in the 17th Century warfare perhaps makes us forget that the Civil War was not the only human tragedy which those living at that time had to survive.

It is apocryphal that a morbid fear of the plague was one of the reasons that Robert, Earl of Essex morbidly insisted in carrying



Robert, Earl of Essex

all the trappings of a full blown funeral, including a coffin, with him on campaign. This is perhaps not so surprising, after his experiences in 1625 when the English fleet returned defeated from an assault on Cadiz under Edward Cecil (a friend of the Duke of Buckingham). On the voyage home plague had broken out in the crowded fleet, and crews were so badly hit that some ships were unable to sail through the rising storms. Madly, Cecil ordered thirty of his ships to send two healthy men each to the stricken ships in return for two of the sick men. As a result the Plague spread further through the fleet. Through the winter of 1625 –26 the ships limped home, and Cecil's flagship limped into Kinsale with 160 sick crew and an horrific cargo of 130 plague-ridden corpses. When you think of the length of time the crews were immured together, and the insufferably overcrowded condition of the ships, it is not

surprising that anyone should carry a life-long horror of the disease after this experience. One can only wonder why the dead were not cast overboard, but brought home like some gruesome cargo on Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner'.

“Cecil’s flagship limped into Kinsale with 160 sick crew and an horrific cargo of 130 plague-ridden corpses..... it is not surprising that Essex should carry a life-long horror of the disease”.

In 1631, the Plague was taken to the Cumbrian village of Dalton by one Lancaster and his wife, who moved there from London. It was thought that the Plague was carried (as in Eyam) in their clothes, and within 7 months 360 inhabitants (half of the population of the small town) were dead. Remarkably, Lancaster seems to have assumed the role of the local Plague Doctor (although he was later to be accused of administering poison to the Plague victims), and was also responsible for burying the dead with another man named Noble. At the end of this period, the townspeople fumigated their house with Frankincense, Bitumen, Myrrh and Sulphur, and solemnly pledged to burn their garments and infected bedding, but “Noble (a person false and belying the name) and his wife



privately concealed in a granary amongst heaps of corn, in beds and other places.... rugs and many sheets, garments, gowns, shirts and webbs” horrifically collected while burying the dead during the time of the Plague. This was discovered by the townsfolk, and Noble

and Lancaster were stoned on leaving the village. Noble was killed, but Lancaster escaped the townsfolk by feigning death.

To be continued..... Liz M.

Brigade Training

Moira: Easter 2002

And so the season began, with a clear night sky, a full moon, and the temperature rapidly plummeting towards freezing. We got 14 in Steve and Margaret's caravan that night, 15 if you count baby Isabelle, all cuddled up to each other for warmth. No-one wanted to leave to go to their cold beds, but when the time came, I was surprised to find that I was actually quite toasty, wrapped up in my sleeping bag, blanket and cloak. The Saturday dawned, another nice day, and Curly Dave decided to hold a sword school as Brigade Training wasn't until the afternoon. Tim and Julie, the new recruits, were keen to have a go, and so, armed with a shiney blade and a pair of gloves, they stepped out into the unknown world of torture.

Brigade Training wasn't too bad, I don't think. It was certainly short and sweet. So short, in fact, that the Blews demonstrated their indomitable enthusiasm and stayed for extra. Unfortunately, Mr Rabbitt's new halberd was broken, the tip of which spent the rest of the afternoon in my snap-sack. The evening in the pub was certainly warmer than the previous night. The layer of clouds probably helped, as did the central heating and copious amounts of alcohol. Everyone group-hopped and caught up on the Winter's news, apart from Mark B, who was so knackered after his ski-ing holiday he nodded off in the corner for a while.



Sunday was tough, what with the clocks going forward an hour. I wasn't the only one asleep on their feet through drill. Greys came to play with the pike block, while the musket amused themselves, but alas, where was Mel when the pike needed him the most? They were pushed from pillar to post, although they did manage to win a couple. The afternoon's battle was fun, for me anyway, but that could have been because I've hardly managed to make it to the field for the last two years, what with the accident-proneness and the fainting spells. I don't know who was meant to win, but the musket blasted everyone in their path, leapt about the field, and battered everyone who came within range, and apparently the pike had a fair bit of fun as well, although there weren't really enough of them to do any serious damage.

Down to the pub in the evening. We kidnapped a family from another regiment and, holding them at gunpoint, forced them to join us for the evening's festivities, which naturally included depth charges. Henry got a bowl with 2 pints and the obligatory Baileys in, plus a pickled egg. Down in one. I got half a pint of port with a few spirits in, plus a pickled egg. Down in one. Curly Dave (his birthday) got half a pint of shots, but the Baileys turned into yoghurt at the bottom, and he had to chew his way through it. He tried to down it in one, but it was never going to happen.

Monday was a bit drizzly. The traditional end of muster packing the wet tents away occurred after drill, which saw the Blews take on the Greys again. Henry was obviously bored, as he took to amusing himself by rugby tackling the opposition, shouting "We Shall Never Surrender" and running away with his hands in the air, and charging the block towards them when they weren't looking. Darryl, one of the kidnapes from the previous evening, joined the pike for drill, and he and his wife Sally, niece Kelly and 3 children, are thinking of transferring, which is great news. I hope they follow it through. The battle was good again. I enjoyed it anyway. We were near enough to the crowd line to make it all seem worthwhile. All the musketeers skipped backwards and forwards, happily swinging their weapons, mugging anyone who got within range. Oh, how I'd missed this over the long dark winter months.



Scoop

Another Bird's Eye-View

Sunday Night at Margam Park

Well, it didn't bode well, but then first impressions can be deceptive. After a cold and windy day the Blews were ready for a jaunt to a pub for hot food, and after some research with the host regiment a pub was duly selected for its nearness, good food and child-friendliness. In addition, Darryl kindly volunteered for the Herculean task of ferrying the regiment to and fro. Unfortunately, the first carload abandoned the idea of the original pub for another one twice as far away which did good food etc. The second carload then abandoned *that* pub and rather bizarrely chose a nearby pub which did not serve any food at all, leaving the first contingent stranded in the other pub (albeit enjoying a stufferama). Regarding this organizational masterpiece the phrase "P*ss up in a brewery" springs to mind, but the locals seemed friendly and the landlord liberal, so we all tightened our belts and settled down for an enjoyable night in the pub.

And a cracking night it was too – with the

"Prawns have the highest cholesterol levels of any food – that's why I avoid them" said Mel.

odd surrealist moment thrown in for good measure. Like the time when Mel offered Miss X (who does not wish to be identified) some critical healthcare advice by informing her rather urgently while she ate her prawn sandwich that "Prawns have the highest cholesterol levels of any food – that's why I avoid them". (Pause for thought....mmm...nice one, Mel).

Soon the singing took off and Henry gave us a rousing rendition of "Red Fly the Banners O!" which was later followed by Curly Dave and Bik inverting Mossad for the time-honoured "Two Little

Boys" (once the Lost Boys of the first carload contingent had returned). Only Mossad isn't a little boy these days, a situation somewhat exacerbated by the stufferama that he had just enjoyed at the other pub, and Curly Dave and Bik pogoing an inverted Danny began to struggle to hold him after the very first few lines. Danny's surrogate mother began to have an acute anxiety attack, bravely concealed by what appeared to be an uncontrollable fit of the giggles. However, she did manage to slip a casaque between the flagstone floor and Danny's violently plummeting head before those holding him dropped him unceremoniously before the start of the second verse through sheer exhaustion. That song gets shorter by the month.

These lively proceedings were punctuated by the CO frequently practising his new and chivalrous salute which involves showing any nearby females the back of his right hand at face height, accompanied by a new war-cry which sounds something like an offer to 'Smack (?) the Monkey'. Somewhat confusing but we think he'll get the hang of it soon.

As it was Phil's birthday Bob cooked up one of his dastardly potions. He has now got this down to a fine art, with the success of the mix being measured by the solidity of the curdled lumps of Baileys floating in the pint of 97% alcohol. He was somewhat crestfallen at the lack of his favourite ingredient – the Mandatory Pickled Egg. After his toast Phil fell upon the concoction with manful relish and downed it swiftly in one, returning to his seat to continue calmly imbibing pints in rapid succession. Over the course of the evening Phil was seen sitting with his arm outside the window, then his upper half, then his torso and one leg, until finally he slid through the window altogether to lie in state, deathly-pale (Goth-style) on the table outside. The event was commemorated by Shortstraw by a memorial photograph – a photograph which was forcibly withheld

from Tessa to save her motherly distress. In the meantime Phil's Auntie both shocked and impressed the Regiment with her word-perfect knowledge of the lyrics of the most obscene rugby song known to Man with which Horse treated the Regiment.



In the meantime, Miss X imbibed some strong cider on an empty stomach and was now adversely affected in her faculties of judgement, and had left the safe embrace of the Blew family and unaccountably started flirting with five lecherous, antiquated and toothless Welshmen. This much to the bemusement of some of the youthful Blew LTB males who still had their teeth (well, some of them anyway, eh - Mel?) and who had until that time provided her with a most gallant escort, and to the general amusement of the rest of the Regiment. These friendly locals responded by finding ingenious ways to encourage Miss X to bend low over their table, to the extent that even the barman gravitated to the group to see the comprehensive mountain view on offer. This interesting tableau was accompanied by the ever-increasing rumble of Miss X's brother gnashing his teeth in barely concealed fury. Fury which finally broke out in a violent episode of pointing at the barman with an aggressive finger and shouting very loudly "Oi, Barman – NO!" some two times, (reminiscent of the 'Fast Show'). Both times without noticeable effect other than causing the gallant escorts of the Blews to double up with laughter.

Finally, Miss X was lured away from the clearly irresistible attractions of these refined local gentlemen by a cunning plan of Shortstraw's, and Miss X's brother's blood pressure finally returned to normal.

Back at camp a large Port/Whisky/Wine circle was formed, crisps and dips appeared, and the party went on. Shortstraw invited the members

to explain why they joined the Blews and what made them remain. The general consensus was that membership of the Regiment bestowed much laughter, booze, rigorous physical exercise (of one kind or another) and the benefits of a non-judgmental, affectionate and extended family.

This was instantly belied by a very funny Shortstraw drawing his gums around his teeth and mumbling toothless-sounding blandishments in a Welsh accent to the now rather 'under-the-weather' Miss X. She responded by hurtling haphazardly around the wine circle in a frenzy of indignation threatening to overturn the chairs of all and sundry, much to the amusement of the entire circle. For a brief, lucid interlude her focus must have returned because she did manage to up-end Shortstraw out of his chair with a shocking degree of speed and violence much to the amusement of the circle and the gentleman himself. After that she was led away like a docile child to go to bed, only to find that Mr. Whizzy-Helicopter and not Mr. Sandman visited her when she closed her eyes. After that Mr. Gordon was enlisted to assist Danny's mum to perambulate Miss X around the campsite of Parliament in an attempt to return her now long-vanished equilibrium.

Despite this interesting fracas, Bik had managed to fall asleep in his chair, wrapped up in a huge duvet so that he looked all the world like a very handsome and very huge, blue slug which happened to be wearing a bandanna. Kari had also succumbed in a ladylike position on her chair, which nonetheless looked like it would give her a crick in her neck for the rest of this millennium and possibly next. Gradually the rest of the circle retired to their respective beds (well, I haven't heard otherwise on *this* particular occasion) to recharge their batteries for another day.

Mossad's Mum.

"Bik had managed to fall asleep in his chair, wrapped up in a huge duvet so that he looked all the world like a very handsome and very huge, blue slug which happened to be wearing a bandanna"

The Years Of Turcus (Formerly 'Piking News')

By Henry

Stratford-on-Avon

For some the week-end started early, joining a drill display and parade at the local fete in Chipping Camden on Friday evening. Except, as this was Mike Jeal's home town, instead of the normal fete we had The Dover Games/Cotswolds Olympics with shin kicking and other rural pursuits, followed by a torch light parade. Very impressive, but not a little eerie in the middle of nowhere. As Gerry said, if we saw any of the locals putting a pillow case over his head we were all going to have it away on our toes.

Blabber, not only did Chipping Camden but also organised a few Blews to attend drill display by Newcastle's in Bristol on Saturday morning (at 9am!) plus a talk on civil war Bristol and radio interview.

Saturday and the Blews started to gather on the small portion of the (vast) field once again allotted to Northern Brigade to avoid a feelings of agoraphobia.

Drill and brigade drill were both cancelled in the face of the difficulties of transferring everybody down to a car-park on the edge of town for a mile march to the battlefield. Which means that Mr Bland is still under the impression that pike men don't drill (and might also explain why we need a couple of pushes to settle into the groove at the start of each battle).

Saturday night was very gentle (this means I remember eating my baked potato and mushy peas from Kog's Kitchen) as most people worried about their stamina in the face of a long week-end. Andy, the pikeman from the Scots-Irish Brigade who was injured fighting against us at Margam Park, was along for the week-end and we duly bumped into him in the beer-tent. He is walking fine and was back to work on the following Wednesday, though on physio and off piking for the rest of the year.

On Sunday morning, we headed off early so as to watch the first half of the England game and then hurried back for the pre-battle display. Unfortunately our efforts on this front were thwarted by a fine example of the SK bureaucracy who was in charge of the car-park.

"I don't know anything about a pre-battle display (pause) do you want any powder for the pre-battle ?"

We promptly gave up in face of such stupidity and listened to the rest of the game on the radio.

There were eight of us for the opening day, Bland, Darrell, Horse, Curly Dave, Mike Jeal, Gerry, Blabber and Henry. Must be the first time for many a year (ever?) that Blews didn't have someone from Essex in the pike block !

Stratford was a bowling-green flat field, with the battle fought straight up and down with a minimum of manoeuvre. Reminded me of Blackburn, especially on Monday, when we nearly reached the ropes by the end of that day's contest with Slannings. We spent all the three days fighting Hopton's tercio, consisting of Hoptons, Hawkins and best of all Slannings. With their light blue coats and cross of St Mark flag waved by 'Ewok', the Cornishmen of Slannings were always nearby once battle was joined. With no easy wins and three days of battles, this proved to be a great piking event.

Since Short-straw was required to command the musket block (congratulations to both him and Neil as sergeant for taking on the task and making such a good impression through all three days), the flag was carried in the pike block by Mr Bland, Q and Blabber respectively. No extra points were awarded to Q for bleeding on the flag on Monday since, as it was a cut to the bridge of the nose, there were offsetting de-merits for wiping his nose on the flag!

We opened the day by taking on the entire Hopton tercio and through sheer bloodymindedness were third time lucky. At that point were told to engage only in combination with Manchester's. This was a mixed blessing. With us on the front, we did well. But unfortunately, Manchester's weren't tight enough to take the impact of a tight, strong and very powerful Hopton's tercio. So when they led off, Blews often quickly found themselves facing the Royalists coming through the front (and Manchester's also demurred from a quick push after the battle when we were still keen and looking for the opportunity to recover the couple of points forfeited at Rockingham!)

Eventually, Hopton's tercio agreed that smaller blocks were more sensible and split off Slannings to take us on separately and we had an excellent series of encounters. Their shouts of 'Cornwall' and the sight of the St Mark's flag led to me becoming all Shakespearean/unnecessary and shouting "For England, Henry and St George".

This was a scorching day and much praise to Fil and Lucy for keeping the water coming. Gerry was in top form, obviously deciding that, as we were short of numbers, he needed to contribute twice as much, he managed to be both a 'BBB' (Big Bloke at the Back) and a Jason-style cheer-leader, and pushed us (literally) onto greater efforts. It wasn't all easy going though, Lieutenant Spiro had one of his feathers broken in a particularly hard push.



Another evening in the beer tent, as most of us had enough of driving on and off the camp-site. Looking at Boomer's excellent photos of Margam, we suggested a couple should be added to the web-site including an excellent shot of Bic grinning at Boomer in the midst of chaos and the 'Snow White and the seven pikemen' shot. Someone picked up that trend and suggested the nickname of 'Dopey' for Gerry. However this was bettered later, when listening to Gerry's description of a game of strip-pool in which he was wearing a bra, apparently the thing that stuck in his mind was the brand-name 'Little Miss Naughty'. At that point Gerry decided that 'Dopey' was a great nick-name after all, but Blabber was already wagging his finger and saying 'Naughty, Naughty'. Only time will tell.

On Monday we were joined by John Harris (who had such a good time that he was persuaded to stay on for Tuesday!) and Q (who turned up late on Sunday to miss drill and missed the whole battle!). In addition we had two guests, Bill from the King's Guard, inviting along by Blabber to see how the other half fight and Tim - the CO of Weldon's in ECWS, brought along by Horse.

As a consequence we were a dozen strong and were able to take the field unaided. Despite the early rain, this developed into a pleasant enough day and fine evening (for which see below). We spent most of the day battering against Slannings. This was a good hard fight between even numbers of equally determined pikemen, conducted with the best of humour. Regularly we were reforming a couple of yards away from each other. Once when the clash of the blocks was immediately aborted by a 'man down' due to a Slannings slipping on the wet grass underfoot, both blocks merely stood up again, allowed the errant pikeman to regain his feet and resumed to the cheerful cry of 'Once again, from the top, Close Order, Closest Order, Ready, Ready, Go !'

Eventually, we turned back from near the ropes as Slannings were unable to muster more than five for yet another push. Our attempt to take on the rest of the Hopton's tercio was unsuccessful as obviously we were, by then, only capable of beating five men and a dog (no offence meant to Ewok)

On a more serious note Louise/Mum had to be taken to hospital after a clash with a Royalist pikeman, but was badly bruised rather than broken and back on the wine for Kirky's birthday celebrations that evening. For which there was a particularly good sing-song. Short-straw sang three versions of Bohemian Rhapsody, first the curry version, then along with the live radio broadcast from the Jubilee celebrations and then a full regimental encore. Auntie/Larni obviously became confused by the early end to the battle, and the inevitable followed - "I've never been drunk in daylight before" she said as Tessa celebrated 'breaking' her sister and then helped her off to bed.

While 'The Recruiting Sergeant' was sung, it was Horse's performance of 'An Old Department Store' that attracted the attention of Anthony (16) and his girlfriend. Having arrived with another regiment on a day-pass, he signed up to Blews, before drinking an impromptu depth charge and being put to bed. His girl friend watched with horrible fascination and wisely refused all offers of alcohol.

Ritchie, the head of the Scots Irish Brigade refused a similar invitation. "I saw what you did to your Lord General at Rockingham, I wasn't going into that snake pit without back-up. But when I asked some of my lads in the beer-tent if they would come down with me, so there would be somebody to haul me out, they just backed away and said they wouldn't go. I've never seen them afraid of anything else before, but they wouldn't drink with the Blews !

For the final day, Tuesday, Mike Jeal led an 'Old Gits' front rank with Mr Harris and Horse. The qualification for being in the front rank for that day was obviously having had a position of authority in another pike-block. With me back a Corporal (allegedly due to injury - just hungover really) we had a solid nine and high hopes for another fine day.

However, as is the case if we muster less than the dozen, we were combined to form a full strength unit. A mixed block produced mixed results and mixed feelings among the Blews. We were joined by the entire Scots-Irish pike-block (called David). More significantly, we were also joined by half a dozen from Jones, and a Hammond or two.

We had been deployed on the right side of the field for a change, but there were few surprises when Hopton's tercio swerved across the field and took position opposition. A rather scrappy fight ensued with consequently large numbers of casualties. Most of the greencoats fell out, like leaves off a tree, and less happily Darrell (or 'Dave' or even 'David Beckham') collected a suspected broken finger, while Mr Bland had a pike butt on the back of the head, which put them both into the medics team for a check-up.

And then it was all over.

PS

See some of you at Garstang (22/23 June).

PPS

And I would just like to add a personal recommendation for Winscombe (even though I may not make it myself). This is being organised by Motormouth and Tillier's. They always have good beer and entertainment and put on a more interesting than usual small battle.

