

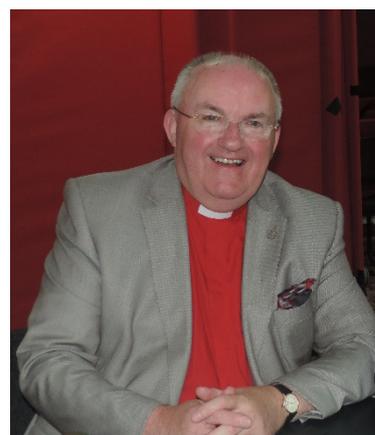


It's FAB!

The Newsletter for Friends of Ayr Battalion Issue 80 May 2020 Coronavirus Issue

This is a very unusual issue for me to publish as due to the present Coronavirus pandemic there has been no Battalion or Company meetings. I will, however, try to update members with details of what has been happening within the Battalion since the previous issue in March.

First of all there is some good news in that the Rev. Fraser Aitken has agreed to fill the vacant post of Battalion Vice President. Fraser, as you all will know, has been a keen supporter of the Battalion for many years serving as Battalion Chaplain for a considerable number of them. We all look forward to having him on board as Vice President and getting the benefit of the wealth of his experience. As an interesting aside this means that Coylebank in Prestwick will have been the address for two Battalion Vice Presidents. Is this a first or has it happened before?



Vice President Fraser Aitken

Given the present restrictions on holding meetings the Executive has had no option other than postpone the Annual AGM and Church Parade both of which were due to be held in Troon. Given that the Battalion has never in its history had to cancel an AGM the Battalion Executive are proposing the following timetable of events all of which are subject to the present restrictions being eased to allow meetings to be held.

Executive Meeting	September 2020
AGM	October / November 2020 at Troon
Council Meeting	March 2021 at St. Andrew's, Ayr
Parade / Service	April 2021 at Troon
AGM 2020/21	June 2021 at Troon

This will mean that the Annual Church Parade and AGM for 2022 will be at St. Andrew's Church in Ayr and we will have only missed the Church Parade for 2020.

With regard to our Headquarters Building our Secretary has been checking the property on a regular basis and everything there is currently OK. It is hoped that if it becomes possible we will be able to get a painter in over the summer and carry out some decoration work.

Duncan Rout from 8th Ayr has updated the Battalion website for us and having had a look at it I must admit that he has done a great job. The site now has a more up to date feel about it and if you haven't had occasion to visit it recently then I would encourage you to visit it. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Duncan for his efforts as it is important we have a positive digital image in the world we are living in.

Obituary: Douglas Wilson, Captain 1st Coylton Company.

Sadly I have to intimate the death of Douglas Wilson, Captain of the 1st Coylton Company, who died on the 29th March. Douglas had been involved with the Brigade for many years and I thought that it was appropriate to give a short background to his career in the Brigade.

Douglas was born in New Stevenson near Motherwell in 1949 and was a member of the Boys' Brigade from seven years of age. After leaving school he took on an apprenticeship in electrical engineering whilst continuing through the ranks in the Brigade to become an Officer. In the late seventies he moved down to Hertfordshire and followed this with a move to Central London. He started work at Brigade House in Parson's Green, London in 1981 initially as a Training Officer and then as Brigade Administrator. He met his wife, Christine, at an Officers' Training Course at Felden Lodge and they married in 1985 living in South London where Douglas was Captain of the 1st Fulham Company. When the Brigade Administrative Headquarters moved to Glasgow he moved as well and was responsible for setting up the offices in Glasgow, moving departments to manage Supplies and the shop in Bath Street in 1989. In 1992 the Brigade closed its operation in Glasgow and moved to St. Neots in Cambridgeshire where Douglas continued to work as the Supplies Manager and became the Captain of the local St. Neots Company. The Brigade was not finished moving though and in 2002 the Brigade moved its operation to Felden Lodge in Hemel Hempstead where Douglas worked until 2005. After retirement from full time working within the Brigade Douglas and Christine moved back to Scotland to their present home in Dalrymple, Ayrshire. Always keen to be involved with the work of the Brigade Douglas became Captain of the then 12th Ayr Company in Coylton in 2018 and was instrumental in having the Company renamed as 1st Coylton to give the Company a greater identity with the local community. Unfortunately in that same year he was diagnosed with myeloma, a treatable but incurable form of cancer. He continued in his role as Company Captain for as long as he could and was a regular attender at Battalion meetings. A loyal servant to the work of the Boys' Brigade Douglas will be fondly remembered by many of the Boys in the Companies which he captained.

The Prodigal Colours

I recently received the following item from Ian Queen, Captain of 17th Ayr (Castlehill) Company and I felt the story is worth repeating.

On March 12th I went to work as I would on most days without any expectation that this day would be in any way different to the average working day. That changed at 10.55 when I received the following email.

Hi,

One of my colleagues, Dougald Donnelly, recently passed away and he was a member of your organisation. Whilst sorting out his belongings we discovered two banners from your organisation and it would be our intention to return them to you.

Kind regards

Hugh McCormick

Attached to this email were two images, one of the Queen's Colour and the other of the Company Colour belonging to the 17th Ayr Company both of which had been removed from Castlehill Church in 1997. At that time we had no idea who might have wanted to remove the Colours which were of great value to the Company but not to anyone else. That turned out not to be the case.

Dougald Donnelly was in care as a young boy in St. Leonard's Home for Boys. Like a number of other boys from the home he was a member of the 17th Ayr Company. Dougald was seven years older than me and I have no memory of him. I did, however, meet him when he arrived at Castlehill

Church on a Friday evening in the late 90's a bit dishevelled and not completely Compos Mentos. I wasn't sure what to make of him. He told me about being a member in the 60's when he was in care and how he had come down to Ayr from Glasgow to visit Castlehill Church because his time in the Boys' Brigade had been the happiest time of his childhood. He just wanted to sit and remember the happy times which he had had in the hall. Dougald spent an hour or so in the hall and then left. Twenty three years later I found out his name and a great deal more about his life. I attended his funeral at 2.00pm on the same day that I received the email.

Dougald had a troubled life with mental health issues. His working life began in Iona where he claimed to be the founding and only member of Iona Ayr United Supporters' Club. He then worked at Ibrox as a groundsman before working for Glasgow City Council in children's homes.

He retired in 2016 and his mental health had deteriorated by that time. He unfortunately died on 5th February with no known family. Social Work were only able to conduct his funeral having received substantial donations from a Rangers Supporters' Club and his trade union.

After the funeral I spoke to the retired Church of Scotland minister who had conducted the service and who had worked with Dougald in the Iona Community and remained friends after that time. I also spoke to Dougald's social worker. The principal thing I wanted them to know was that I didn't regard Dougald as a thief as he had wanted a memory of the happy times which he had spent at Castlehill and no matter how misguided the act of removing the Colours was it was a means to tangibly hold on to the happy memories of his childhood. The other important thing which I wanted them to know was that I felt a great sense of closure. Having had a 23 year mystery solved brought a great deal of closure to me.

The important thing for anyone who works with young people to know is that the work which we do is so important. We may not know the importance of the impact we have on any individual while we work with them and we just have to have faith that we are making a difference. Most Boys who go through the Boys' Brigade will benefit from their membership of our organisation whilst others will be changed by their membership. Boys like Dougald are changed positively by their membership. It now seems perverse to say that the importance to Dougald of the Boys' Brigade can be measured by his desire to have a permanent reminder of his time with us by removing the Company's Colours.

God Bless you Dougald. I wish I had known you in life.

An update from the Smith Memorial Museum

Although Companies are no longer meeting work for the Smith Memorial Museum has been continuing. I recently received a letter from John Russell in Poole containing a history of the 4th Enfield (Edmonton) Company of the Boys' Brigade which had been compiled by Martin Holst, a friend of his. The letter also advised me that Martin had also compiled a Power Point presentation about this Company but this could not be mailed to me. Always on the lookout for material for the museum I contacted Martin and he was happy to provide me with a digital copy of the 4th Enfield's history together with a copy of his Power Point presentation. Both of these have now been bound together and are in the box of memorabilia which will go north once the present restrictions are eased.

Following the death of Douglas Wilson (see earlier obituary) I was delighted to receive a number of publications and other memorabilia from his widow, Christine. These are now also in the box of material which will be heading to the museum.

Can I ask readers that if they are ever in the position of clearing out old Boys' Brigade material to please speak to me first so that we can ascertain if the museum would be interested in holding any of it. The staff of the 1st Thurso Company do a magnificent job maintaining the museum which is a

veritable Aladdin's Cave of BB memorabilia and certainly well worth a visit if you are ever in the north of Scotland.

Thought for the day

Among the material received from Christine Wilson was a copy of a book of Centenary Music published by the Brigade in 1983. The first item in this is "The Founder's Hymn" and as it is one that I was not familiar with I thought that I would include the words in this item.

The Founder's Hymn

*Praise God that he who founded
Our brotherhood on truth,
With faith far-seeing sounded
A call to rally youth:
That Boys of every nation
Be roused to play their part
Which calls for consecration
Of body, mind and heart*

*He led his Boys by living
The life he'd have them live;
He sought to serve by giving
The whole he had to give.
He blazed the trail for others,
And pointed men the way
Which Christ, who made us brothers,
Would have us tread today.*

*Our God be praised for giving
A vision to this man,
Of Boyhood nobly living
To serve the master plan.
May we, who follow lowly,
Be led, all things above,
To give our service wholly-
The service of our love.*

A Final Note from the Editor.

I am always looking out for pictures or stories about Company events and if you have any material available please pass it to me at the E Mail address below. Thanks.

Your points of contact for all the information you would like to see included in, or deleted from this newsletter or any comments about it are as follows:

Battalion Secretary	Stuart Hyslop	01292 269803	stuarthyslop@btinternet.com
Editor	John Inglis	01292 475169	j.inglis38@btinternet.com
HQ and Supplies	8 Limekiln Road, Ayr 07709 715545 (note change of number)		
Web address	ayr.boys-brigade.org.uk (Note: do not include www.) the web site has recently been updated and well worth a visit if you have not already been in it.		