



Your journey starts here...



Alan Carter – Deputy Governor

My connections with the Brigade stretches all the way back to my great uncle, the Rev William (Bill) Hetherington. He was an Officer in the Church Lads Brigade and in 1910 changed St Cuthbert's Blaydon, Boys Brigade into a CLB company.

My father joined St Cuthbert's JTC in 1935. As a keen bandsman he progressed to become Battalion and Regimental Drum Major. Then in 1955 became CO of St Cuthbert's. My mother started a CGB company at St Cuthbert's in 1962 which replaced the existing GFS.

In 1966 we moved to Tintern in South Wales where, in 1972 my father started the Lower Wye Valley Company and my mother started the CGB Company the following year.

I was born in Blaydon in 1963 and taken to North East camp that year as a three month old. I later attended the 80th Anniversary Camp at Avon Tyrrell in 1971 and officially started in the YBC in 1972. Due to my father succeeding Ken Mathers as the National Training Officer in 1973, I had the privilege of touring the country as a young member. Sitting in on training courses, joining in with various outdoor activities and taking part in many, many parades. I attended the 1979/80 Junior Leaders training course passing out at St. Pauls College Cheltenham in 1980.

After my father was made redundant from the Brigade in 1981, my parents moved to South Harrow and become CO and 2 IC of Christ Church, Roxeth & Harrow Company.

In 1981 the Lower Wye Valley Company moved to Chepstow and I drifted away.

I attended Usk Agricultural College and started my working life in agriculture (qualified to de-horn, castrate and drive a tractor). With the start of my family I started work for Pirelli Cables installing power and telecom cables. After working for a number of companies, in 1997 I started with the National Grid as a senior clerk of the works on the national roll out of the Energis telecom network. After a spell as commissioning engineer for the congestion charging scheme in London I was offered an opportunity as a project manager running various security projects on the UK's critical national infrastructure.

For the last twelve years I have worked for Gallagher Security (Europe) Ltd looking after various major security projects throughout the UK and Europe.

In 2012, after my father's funeral, our then vicar, The Rev Nora Hill, for whom I was a Church Warden, gave me a kick up the backside and decided that I should re-start the Brigade Company in Tintern. With perfect timing this coincided with the closure of St. Mary's Chepstow. So we were out on our own. With Bristol being our closest neighbours I relied for support from Trixie Owen and her team.





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Starting from scratch after quite a long lay-off was challenging. I quickly had to realise that times had changed. The general attitude towards uniform, drill, commitment, church attendance and activities from both the young people and parents came as a surprise. There is now a great deal more competition for their time. Parents will happily pay vast sums for their children to dance, act, sing, play sports etc. and due to the expense put those activities ahead of what we can offer, especially church attendance.

I enrolled our leaders on a NVQ (level 2) course with Monmouthshire youth services to get us up to speed with present regulations and thinking.

Early on I made the conscious decision that we should have an ethos of nudging our young members to church rather than demanding. I believe that we should always hope that they will come next time or the time after. I freely admit that this does lead to a great deal of frustration. But, we have to acknowledge that family tradition and peer pressure around church attendance is very rare these days in most Christian societies. However, if we can show that these big stone buildings and the ceremonies that go on inside are not scary or weird. If we can instil in our members, by our behaviour and the way we run activities on meeting nights the basis of faith and that one day if, or when, they need it, it will be there for them I believe we will have done our duty.

St Michael's, Tintern, company has now been operating for over seven years and appears to be keeping steady at around twenty eight members averaging an attendance of around twenty every week. Considering the small catchment area I consider this to be quite a successful. We endeavour to offer our members a challenging and exciting program of activities. We now have, in addition to myself, two commissioned officers and three volunteer helpers including our lay reader. We also have the support of several parents who help occasionally on meeting nights and at weekend events and camps. My leaders have all changed since that first night and we are still encouraging adults both from a church background and from outside the church to bring their skills and enthusiasm. On that point, encouraging people from outside the Brigade to take a rank is quite difficult as it can appear a bit archaic and militaristic. Maybe, we should look at a means of greater recognition for the role of helper as well as some sort of insignia for uniforms, both casual and formal.

The ambition is to grow the Brigade within South Wales and the southern border region. However, this is restricted due to time constraints but progress is being made. Hay on Wye and Griffithstown have expressed an interest. Both of whom have had companies previously.

Over the last year or so, at the invitation of our Governor, Liz Butterfield, I have chaired the Uniform Committee and by default taken on the task of renewing the badge scheme. Although we had a bit of a false start with the new polo shirts, thanks to Helen and Zoe I think we are now back on track. Father Chris saved the day with regards to the uniform, finding an independent tailor in Leeds. It does however mean that every uniform will be made to measure but, won't we look smart! The key outcome is that NHQ won't have





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money tied up with stock on the shelves and our members will receive the goods that they require. There is still more work to do on this project, mainly explaining to OICs' etc. how it will operate, the slight delay in delivery and what they need to do to ensure that what they receive is what they wanted (measurements and sizes).

The badge scheme is progressing. The ambition is to launch the JTC scheme in January 2020 with the other sections following throughout the year, Seniors, Y Team, Martins. Although, there is still a great deal of work to do and costs still need to be agreed.

As the future of the Brigade is dependent on growth a formalised starter / inquiry pack would be a good first step and maybe could be explored once the badge scheme has been launched.

One of the biggest and most disappointing changes that I have seen since becoming involved again in 2012 is the massive decline in the south of the UK. Speaking to remaining leaders and ex leaders there is a definite feeling of neglect in this area. Given how the numbers are within the country and the location of NHQ, it is no wonder that the emphasis often appears to be in the northern half of the country. However, I also know from personal experience how difficult it can be to get any form of physical support or resource south of the Leicester Regiment. I would hope therefore that as a Deputy Governor based in the south of the UK I could help to redress the balance in some way.

Alan Carter

