

FOCUS

Magazine of

SANDES Soldiers' & Airmen's Centres

July - September 2015



'Let us go forward together'



Welsh Guards at Pirbright rehearsing for the presentation of their colours by H.M. The Queen

We have seen recent celebrations of the victory in Europe at the end of WW2. Looking back to the early part of the war it looked as though Britain could not survive. Then the King called the nation to a day of prayer and although much of our military equipment lay abandoned on the coast of France the Army was saved with a miraculous exodus from Dunkirk. The following years demonstrated the resilience and determination of government and people as they refused to capitulate and withstood the terrifying onslaught of Hitler.

The war spread across most of the world as nations aligned with one cause or another. It became a 'total war' where there was no longer grounds for compromise on any side and total victory was the only solution. It took time to build up our Armed

Forces and young men and women flocked to the colours. They had courage and gallantry in abundance but also needed the right support and provision to overcome powerful enemies. This included personal equipment, transport, communications and weapons but also the best leadership in the field and in government.

Churchill's call was 'Let us go forward together' as he galvanised the nation to a single purpose. The Land Army to produce food; coal miners to power industry, workers to manufacture weapons, logistics to move men and assets and last but certainly not least the courage of servicemen to finally confront and defeat the enemy. Slowly but surely the tide turned. It was a long dark night of war but after years of persistent endeavour the

nation started to see hope of victory. Our enemies started to crumble and at last we could see once again a dawn of peace. Like minded nations had joined us to fight and defeat the common enemy but that final victory was costly and hard won.

For over 146 years now Sandes has been involved in its own tremendous struggle. As a Christian Mission we have nailed our colours to the mast as Christ's ambassadors, called to bring the hope of the Gospel to those in our Armed Forces. Throughout Sandes long history there were many times when the resources seemed inadequate, the workers too few and the opposition seemed overwhelming. Many had thought it would not survive but we had prayerful support behind us and faithful workers at the front and though under great stress, the work never faltered.

The past ten years has been one of those critical periods for Sandes. New commercial policies marginalised many other Christian Missions, leaving them with no option but to close. For a while we survived on the margins not knowing what the future held. Funds were exhausted, workers were too few and it seemed like we were sowing on stony ground. It would have been easy to give up or compromise but we stood firm and remained faithful to our calling. There was no Plan B.

Miraculously we can today look back and wonder at God's mercy because this little

Mission has survived. Our centres have all been renovated and we even have a brand new one in Lisburn. The future looks better following the endorsement of the Army Welfare review. It seems to us that all of this is not without divine purpose and we feel that the tide has turned and we sit on the verge of something special happening.

At our conference the speaker spoke of Caleb being of a different spirit. On an Army camp it is easy to identify Sandes because it too is of a different spirit. Yet just like Caleb there are still giants for us to overcome. We have the centres and the opportunity but are threatened by lack of finance and workers. Our financial position is weak and unsustainable. Should we stop or keep going? Maybe someday it will have to close but this is not that day. Infused with fresh expectation we keep going.

Facilities and finances are essential but not the real measure of our success. In caring for our troops the greatest thing we do is to share the love of Jesus and those finding real peace by putting their trust in Him will be the enduring legacy of Sandes. Yet we stand on the edge and to survive we really need to galvanise support. Would you stand with us to play your part and become part of the Sandes family. Once again, 'Let us go forward together' for the sake of those in our Armed Forces and help us share the victory and peace we have in Christ.

Tommy Mearns



Week one recruits in Pirbright waiting for their introduction to Sandes

'Apart from Me you can do nothing' John 15:5



Devotional from Pastor Val English

One of the great pictures that Jesus paints in the Gospel of John is in chapter 5. The Master speaks of the Vine, the Gardener and the Branches. However the key verse seems to be verse 5. "Apart from me you can do nothing."

A good friend of mine Jennifer Rees Larcombe has a wonderful book 'God's Gloves'. She writes about how our lives can be used by God when the Holy Spirit works through us. Her simple but powerful story is very compelling. If we want to be effective for God we need to be available, as His gloves, to be used by Him. We are instruments that God uses when He enters and fills our lives with the life and love of Jesus. 'Apart from Him we can do nothing.'

Our greatest ability is availability and it's when we 'abide' or 'remain' in Him, it is then that He enables us to be what He wants us to be. Our spiritual relationship with Jesus determines the impact we have on others. In the Gospel of Mark chapter 3, the Lord is appointing His disciples to ministry. You will notice in verse 14 how Jesus calls them to be with Him; contact so that He might send them to have impact in a needy world. It is only when we seek to develop that close relationship with the Lord that he gives us the strength and ability to go and do what He wants us to do.

In many ways 'doing' is easier than 'waiting'. Someone has spoken about the

'barrenness of a busy life'. Waiting and Working are twins that need to live close together. To have genuine impact upon others we need good contact with God. He is the one, who through the indwelling Holy Spirit, can fill our lives to make them meaningful and effective.

It is so interesting and helpful in John chapter 15 to see God's process in making us what He wants us to be:

*He Prunes us – It is Painful
He Loves us – It is Graceful
He Blesses us - It is Joyful
He Uses us – It is Fruitful.*

John chapter 15: Verse 2: *Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.* Verse 16: *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*

We can see the progression in these verses from no fruit to fruit and more fruit in verse 2 and then lasting fruit in verse 16.

Dr J Sidlow Baxter used to say:-

*What I give He takes.
What He takes He cleanses.
What He cleanses He fills.
And what He fills He uses.*

Oh how we need the hand of God in our lives. Galatians 2:20, so that we will lovingly touch others for the King and the Kingdom. 'Apart from Him we can do nothing'.

Pastor Val English



Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus



Ballykinlar Centre receives a group of young people coming to the Army for work experience.

The Lisburn team is currently covering both Thiepval and Ballykinlar Centres until the committee make a final decision on the future of the Ballykinlar Centre. The staffing resource is split depending on the expected attendance at each centre. Dave and I have been primarily working here in Ballykinlar whilst Trevor and Jan, set up and get the new centre in Lisburn up and running. As many of you are aware, we transferred to Ballykinlar from Pirbright in 2013. We believe that this was providential and an answer to prayer. Dave's adult children have lived in Northern Ireland most of their lives and had been experiencing difficult times and now our prayerful support is more available to help them.

During our 18 months at Ballykinlar there have been significant changes. The most significant was the 2 Rifles and their families moving to Lisburn which made the future of the centre uncertain. The staffing levels here in Ballykinlar compared to Pirbright meant that our role as Support Workers had a different focus, from having

considerable direct contact with people using the centre in Pirbright we had to take on more responsibility working behind the scenes in the kitchen here at Ballykinlar. Life in Christian work isn't always what you expected it to be but through trust and obedience, God is faithful and is moulding and shaping us into who we were intended to be. (James 1:12).

Since Trevor and Jan have now to spend most time in the Lisburn Centre, we have remained here whilst Sandes Ballykinlar remains particularly busy. With the influx of 100 police each week, as well as soldiers from the Royal Regiment of Scotland, Irish Guards, among others, we have been kept busy. We are really grateful for our volunteers Sally, Frances and Alan who have remained faithful to the work here in Ballykinlar. Trevor and Jan still manage to come down during busier spells and to cover the evening openings but they have been increasingly busy setting up the new centre in Lisburn and training new staff. We do miss them in Ballykinlar, but we know that

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who will also do it. Brethren pray for us. 1 Thessalonians

all things work together for good to those who are called according to His purpose' (Romans 8:28).

There are also those faithful few who don't miss the opportunity to come into Sandes when they can and as I write this we currently have some of the 2 Rifles training on camp. One of the regular visitors to Sandes, Joe said he would like to help the work of Sandes. Rather than bringing in outside caterers we have provided cases of cans of soft drinks & chocolate bars for him to sell to his men whilst training and on Thursday evening we are providing cheeseburger, chips and a soft drink to each of the 40 soldiers. There are also those faithful contractors who come in every Friday for their Ulster Fry or poached egg sodas, providing us the opportunity to get to know and befriend them.

In amongst the busyness, the Lord has provided numerous opportunities to engage with visitors creating surprising situations to share the Gospel as well as learning interesting facts about army life, and sharing personal stories. One such opportunity was with a group of servicemen celebrating a birthday. When asked if they would like a knife to cut the cake they had brought, I recognised the birthday boy, Dale

from Pirbright. He had many fond memories of Sandes Pirbright, in particular the karaoke nights! We recently said farewell to Paul, a retired police instructor and as he left he was very grateful to receive one of the Army Bibles with a personal inscription and one of the Sandes Scriptural dog tags. Being in a shooting club he said he looked forward to visiting Sandes on his return to Ballykinlar. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord' (Isaiah 55:9).

Finally, we are very grateful and excited to see the Lord at work in our family lives too. Dave's Daughter was married in October 2014 and she, her husband and their children have all begun their walk with the Lord and are becoming increasingly involved in their local Salvation Army church. We also have the privilege of being their mentors and meet with them for Bible study once a week. Whatever trials you are going through, we want to encourage you to look beyond your situation to Jesus and watch in wonder, the mighty works of our Lord. "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:17).

Dave & Alison Hossack



Dave taking some time to sit and talk with a soldier in Ballykinlar

A new start in Thiepval Barracks



Soldiers from 2 Rifles renew their acquaintance with Sandes as we open in Lisburn

After a wait of over a year we were delighted to open our new centre in Thiepval Barracks on the 29th of April. After having seen buildings being offered then turned down, work starting and then being delayed, plus other setbacks along the way, it was with great excitement and anticipation that we finally opened the doors. We received a very warm welcome to the camp and lots of good comments about the homeliness, peacefulness and freshness of the centre. We have to say thank you to so many people whose efforts made this possible including those involved in the renovation work and those who helped fund the project. The goodwill and support for Sandes was absolutely incredible. Most of all we are extremely thankful and grateful to God for His faithfulness, grace and mercy because throughout this project we have really felt His presence and leading.

Jan and I have been working for Sandes in Ballykinlar for ten years and over this time

we have shared God's love, through proclamation and demonstration. We have had the opportunity to engage soldiers and their families, police, security guards, contractors and civilian staff. In this time we have made lots of friends, shared the gospel and helped many people through difficult circumstances. During this period, the team was aware of intense spiritual opposition as we faced tremendous challenges keeping the Centre open. It was like a time of trial and the work was hard and sometimes felt unrewarding as we longed to see a harvest in terms of lives won for the Lord. Despite this we did see some people come to faith and we shared tremendous fellowship together as we saw God answer prayer time and again.

We have been encouraged lately though by the verse in John 4:38 'I sent you to harvest where you didn't plant' and we believe that God is telling us that there will be a Harvest in Lisburn. We felt a sense of confirmation during a series of Bible studies

'I sent you to harvest where you didn't plant' John 4:38

on Haggai, and in 2:9 it says 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord'. Leading up to the opening many have prayed for a secure spiritual climate here in this new centre and we have felt a real awareness of His presence. One lady said as she walked into prayer room that it felt like she had been "given a hug". One man said that the centre was like a sanctuary of peace. After a busy day we went to clean up the family room and one of the parents had wrote on the kid's blackboard "This place is awesome".

We praise God that people are recognising that there is something different about Sandes and we know that God makes the difference. We have an open time of prayer every morning from 7:00am when we pray for the camp and the specific needs that have been made known to us. We have had people coming in to ask us to pray for situations and have also had people sharing personal problems that are troubling them. We know that the greatest issue is our relationship with God. Every day we give thanks for our Lord Jesus Christ who made a way for us to be reconciled with our heavenly Father. We pray the Holy Spirit will give us grace and

compassion as we endeavour to share this message of love and hope in a broken and uncertain world.

One of our Fijian friends came to pay us a visit and Jan was sharing with her about the prayer room and the relevance of the "Rehoboth" sign above the door and her eyes started filling up and she said she could just feel God's peaceful presence in the room. This resulted in the Fijian wives being the first to use the prayer room for their monthly women's fellowship. Jan was able to pop in for a while and join them in prayer. We are hoping to start the Bible study soon and are seeking God's leading for this ministry, i.e. when to have it and what format and which passages we should study. We will also be restarting the children's work "Sandy Cove" possibly after the school holidays. We have been asked by parents and children alike when it will be starting. God is good!

It has been so good to see many of our old friends from 2 Rifles coming in and being pleased to see us. It seems they are even more pleased to see their special 'Dog Bowl' meals and the delightful sweet and healthy 'fifteens'. We praise God for the new workers we have too and it is so good



The canteen area of the new Sandes Centre in Lisburn

to see them eager and enjoying the work here. We had a surprise call from Illy who worked with us in Ballykinlar until the Rifles moved to Lisburn. Her husband was medically discharged but they are back from Fiji for a while. She was so excited to see the place and we are pleased to have her back working with us for a while. If anyone would have a couple of hours free one day a week and would like to volunteer by doing dishes and clearing tables, please get in touch. That would be greatly appreciated as it would free us up to spend more time with those who come into the centre.

Jan and I were busy when we were asked to provide 120 sandwiches for a unit lunch following a special church service but we managed and the time together give us an opportunity to talk through the opportunities and challenges here on this camp. We are also offering to open up evenings on request for platoon nights or other activities for the units that are based on camp. On 3rd June I had a holiday and played golf with some soldiers from camp playing in an ABF charity golf day. Although I lost about nine

golf balls, I did find quite a few opportunities to share about the work of Sandes with people who had never heard of it.

In the weeks and months ahead as we settle into life and work in Lisburn we are looking to God to lead and to guide as we seek to serve Him, and we stand on His promises and in His strength. We know that we are not alone and we thank everyone for the prayers, phone calls, gifts and cards, all of which are very encouraging. One such encouragement included these words:

“May God give you a sense of what He is up to in your life. May you see glimpses of the breakthrough that is just up ahead. May you, with all your heart, believe that trusting Him over what your eyes see is totally and completely worth it. May you shift the weight off your logical reasoning and onto the weightiness of His powerful promises to you. You have got the help and resources that go far beyond anything you could ever need. Smile with joy and walk by faith today. He has got you.”

Trevor & Jan Pinkerton



Wives and children using the new family room in Lisburn Sandes Centre.



Prayer Diary



24th -28th August	Bangor Missionary Convention
3rd September	Sandes Committee Meeting
18th September	Sandes Prayer Meeting : The Beacon @ 14:00

Called home to Glory: Mrs Rosemary Dobbin 24th April 2015

Thank you for your prayerful support

Despite many challenges over the past 146 years, this mission has continued to be used by the Lord to bring the hope of the Gospel to those in our Armed Forces. Many things have changed during this period but the spiritual need is always the same. We have been blessed by your faithful prayerful support and we have seen the Lord moving in the most wonderful ways during the past number of years.

The last 10 years have seen many Christians organisations withdraw from their military outreach for various reasons. We are so grateful to still be here. All centres have been brought up to date and renovated and we have even opened a new centre this year. These are wonderful blessings but not a measure of our success as in our heart, first and foremost, is the desire to see soldiers and their families putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The biggest challenges that lie ahead are finance and workers. Although we have seen much blessing, the longer term financial position is unsustainable and we also need the right workers to secure the future of the mission. We would ask you to pray to that end and as we focus on the Lord's work of seeing people saved that we would know His provision in both finance and people.

Thank you again for your faithful and prayerful support.

July 2015

Please pray for:

- 1** new members for the Sandes Committee who would take this work forward in the years ahead.
- 2** protection for troops serving in various deployments.
- 3** Inspiration for Army Padres taking services today both at home and abroad.
- 4** health and well being of all Sandes staff and their families at this time.
- 5** success with the continued distribution of Sandes dog tags and other material
- 6** Rev Jonathan Woodhouse as he takes the Chair of CVWW of which Sandes is a member organisation.
- 7** move of God's Spirit within the military community with people being saved.
- 8** financial provision for Sandes as current situation is not sustainable.
- 9** Volunteers to help out in all our centres especially new Centre in Lisburn
- 10** a good attendance at the fellowship meeting in Pirbright tonight.
- 11** God's favour in the discussions within Army on future of CVWW Missions especially their housing needs.
- 12** all the Bibles and other Christian literature being distributed thorough Sandes and other agencies.
- 13** new and sustainable opportunities for Sandes in other camps.
- 14** a spiritual breakthrough where we would see people being saved.
- 15** Plans underway to bring the Sandy Cove children's work to Lisburn
- 16** the marriages of those in the Armed Forces which come under great strain.
- 17** growth in the financial support base for Sandes as we continue to face shortfalls.
- 18** wisdom on how Sandes could use online social networking for outreach.
- 19** boldness and confidence for all Christian believers serving in our Armed Forces.
- 20** new opportunities to reach out to 1 Scots in Holywood.
- 21** rest and recovery for any of our teams who may be on Summer leave.
- 22** all Christian agencies working together to bring the hope of the Gospel to our Armed Forces.
- 23** continued recovery and increase in the attendance through all our centres.
- 24** opportunities for the Bible quiz within the busy training schedule at Harrogate
- 25** younger people to come into the work of Sandes who would be able to take the work forward into the future.
- 26** wisdom on how to sensitively promote a legacy support program for Sandes.
- 27** those who continue to suffer as a result of their military service.
- 28** wisdom on new initiatives for Sandes to reach out to the soldiers and families.
- 29** wisdom on recruiting Support Workers and for housing to be available for them.
- 30** all our Vice Presidents as they faithfully represent Sandes .
- 31** continued opportunities for Sandes to witness at personal and group level though this work.

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart. Luke 18:1

Please pray for: August 2015

1 younger committee members to join Sandes to ensure future of the work.

2 blessing on the old CO as he leaves and favour with the new CO as he takes command in Harrogate

3 encouragement for the team from Lisburn running both Ballykinlar and Lisburn centres.

4 breakthroughs with the Welsh Guards in Pirbright.

5 Soldiers and their families to come to trust in the Lord Jesus for their salvation.

6 growth in our support base to provide prayerful and financial support for the work of Sandes.

7 courage for all Christians serving in Armed Forces to live and share their faith.

8 new fundraising initiatives being discussed would be effective in raising funds for Sandes mission work.

9 inspiration for all Padres today in bringing encouragement and hope of the Gospel.

10 all the Bibles, literature and Dog Tags being distributed through our Centres

11 housing at Harrogate to employ Support Workers to secure future of work.

12 increased footfall and outreach opportunities in all of the Sandes Centres.

13 soldiers and former soldiers who may carry the emotional scars of conflict

14 encouragement for those who faithfully support Sandes

15 new opportunities to reach out to the families within the military community

16 a growing awareness among the troops and families of the love of God

17 a sense of fellowship and single purpose for all Christian agencies working within the military.

18 new junior soldiers at Harrogate to 'find' Sandes early in their training.

19 opportunity to develop Bible study and fellowship meetings in the new Lisburn Centre.

20 people to prayerfully consider Sandes Mission in their legacy planning.

21 a good attendance at the Encounter fellowship meeting in Pirbright tonight.

22 younger people to come into the work of Sandes to take the work forward into the future.

23 the families of those people working in Sandes.

24 guidance on any future purchases of dog tags and other outreach material.

25 Bangor Missionary convention that people's support for missions like Sandes would be encouraged

26 the Lord's provision for Sandes in finance and staffing but, more importantly Kingdom growth through the work.

27 protection for troops on various deployments and on their families at home.

28 wisdom on decisions concerning the longer term future of Ballykinlar Centre

29 opportunities to speak to people at the Garrison church services today.

30 encouragement for all Sandes Centres in seeing fruit from their labours.

31 wisdom for Government and military command in the face of worldwide threat of terrorism.

*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man
avails much James 5:16b*

September 2015

Please pray for:

- 1** plans to restart the children's work 'Sandy Cove' in Lisburn will come to fruition this month.
- 2** Sandes help and care to make a difference in people's lives and reveal to them the love of God.
- 3** Sandes committee today as they meet to discuss future plans for Sandes.
- 4** good educational opportunities for military children as they go back to school.
- 5** opportunities to help and reach out to those families within 2 Rifles at Lisburn
- 6** a spiritual breakthrough and a season of harvest with soldiers being saved.
- 7** Sandes not to be squeezed out by pressure from contracted caterers.
- 8** new Vice Presidents and Committee members to take Sandes forward in future years.
- 9** the physical and spiritual well being of the families of Sandes workers
- 10** protection and promotion of Christian values within military and the Government.
- 11** marriages of those in the military which face tremendous challenges
- 12** a new Bible Study planned for Lisburn and for the prayer meeting to be restarted in Hollywood.
- 13** divine inspiration for all Padres today leading Garrison church services.
- 14** divine strength and encouragement for all Sandes workers to persevere when the work is challenging.
- 15** new and sustainable opportunities for Sandes in other camps.
- 16** a secure future for our centres in Northern Ireland as and when they roll out commercial catering contracts
- 17** new people to come into the work of Sandes to secure the future of the work.
- 18** those gathering today to pray for the work of Sandes.
- 19** soldiers and families dealing with injuries and emotional stress of conflict.
- 20** convicting presence of the Holy Spirit to fall on all Garrison Church services today.
- 21** Army housing to accommodate a future Support Couple in Harrogate.
- 22** continued recovery and increase in the attendance and outreach opportunities in all of our centres.
- 23** for soldiers to come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 24** volunteers with a real passion to help soldiers through our caring ministry.
- 25** good attendance at the Encounter fellowship meeting in Pirbright tonight.
- 26** God's favour to be reflected through those in command positions making decisions about Sandes.
- 27** opportunities to speak to people at the Garrison church services today.
- 28** Naval Military Air Force Bible Society in its distribution of Bibles and other Christian literature.
- 29** the work of Sandes to bear fruit both in helping people but most importantly in people being saved.
- 30** the future of Sandes which is under threat through lack of funds and workers.

Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice Psalm 141

The joy of a generous God



Regular visitors to Sandes in Holywood enjoying some downtime

Just before Easter, I was invited to preach at one of the local Congregational Churches. When I walked into the church reception area, between the two double doors that led into the sanctuary was the largest arrangement of fresh flowers I think I have ever seen. As you can imagine it was bursting with colour, perfectly arranged and the fragrance was heavenly. It stopped me in my tracks and sitting down I took a few minutes to admire its beauty. As I sat there, it made me think that there is something about abundance that takes hold of our hearts, captures our thoughts and has the “wow factor”. It made me think of the reactions of those customers who for the first time, see a Super Salad Bowl pass by their table here in Sandes. “Wow!” is the usual reaction to the generous helping, the joy of abundance.

This reminds me in a way of the far greater generosity of God. He makes our cup overflow (Psalm 23:5), and is above all that we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20), His

grace is sufficient for any difficulty that life brings our way (2 Corinthians 12:9) and it is He who kills the fatted calf and calls for the best robe when the prodigal returns (Luke 15:20-24). No wonder the Psalmist rejoices. “How precious is your loving-kindness, O God. Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings; they are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house” (Psalm 36:7-8).

Our God is abundantly good so let us praise Him. I thank God for His many blessings as we serve Him here in Holywood. The abundant blessing of precious occasions as we get to minister to:

1. The Police

From time to time throughout the year, the first port of call the Police make when they are on camp is of course Sandes. Although we do not normally open until 9 am, they can be heard knocking on the door from 8 am, looking for something to start the day

like an Ulster Fry. The craic is good and some of them would take the daily Bible reading notes. Some are Christians, some seekers, while others would say that they have turned their back on the Lord, such as one young policeman who used to attend a CEF clubs and summer camp with us. He told us that he is no longer walking in fellowship with the Lord. We praise God for these opportunities to talk with and pray for those in the PSNI. Our God is abundantly good for giving us such opportunities.

2. The Guards

We have a very good relationship with the guards who often use the Centre. Some have shared their concerns with us and some have asked us for prayer. Recently, while I was talking with one of the guards, our conversation turned to the subject of religion. He told me that he had attended church with his parents, who are devout Christians and had become a Christian when he was about 8 years old. He had been involved in all the different church activities but in his late teens he decided to leave the church and is still not walking with the Lord. He came back the next day with a handful of 50p pieces (£80 in total) and told me this was a gift from his father after he had told his parents about the conversation he had in Sandes. They were so encouraged to hear that such a place was available and for the encouragement their son received. God is abundantly good in giving such opportunities.

3. The Soldiers

Since the current regiment arrived last June, they have been away on numerous exercises and tours. Indeed, by the time you receive these notes, the regiment will be away again on a peacekeeping tour in Bosnia. They will be away for several

months. Marlene will no doubt miss some of our regulars, as she loves the banter, they too seem to enjoy the good-natured joking. Please remember the regiment and their families during this time of separation once again.

4. The Children

Another year of GNC ended just before Easter and we praise God for the greatly increased numbers with the arrival of the new regiment. We were so encouraged to see some of the boys and girls return to the centre for the annual 5 Day Club at the beginning of June. I would like to thank Joyce, Stephanie and Kerry for all their hard work and for the love they have for the boys and girls. This ministry also allows us to build relationships not only with the children but with their parents too. Our God is abundantly good for giving us such opportunities.

5. The Staff

During the 3 months that I have been off, following surgery on my ankle, a new member of staff joined us to help cover during my absence. We thank Evelyn as she has been a great help to Marlene and we thank God for His provision of help. Evelyn has said she will help out as a volunteer one day a week for as long as she is available.

On a personal note, I would like to thank all who have prayed and sent cards as I recover. Everything seems to be progressing smoothly and as expected, so God willing, by the time you read these notes, I hope to be back in the driving seat at Sandes (if Marlene lets me!). Thank you for standing with us in prayer and remember always the joy of a generous God.

Chris & Marlene Wilkinson

'They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house and you give them drink from the river of your pleasures' Psalm 36:8

The same yesterday, today and forever



Soldiers from Harrogate parading through the town as part of the VE celebrations.

Today we had a visit from an old soldier who had done his training here in Harrogate many years ago. His brother had arranged for this trip down memory lane as a surprise for him. He came into Sandes for a coffee break during his tour of the camp and showed us an old picture of him on the parade ground. I must say he looked very smart indeed and he went on to serve with the Royal Engineers. We presented him with a regimental dog tag and one with the Army core values. He was absolutely delighted and said that all his old buddies would be jealous. As he went to leave he stood smartly to attention and gave us a very smart salute along with a big beaming smile. It made me realise how military service changes people for the rest of their lives and our hope as we present the Gospel is that it will make an even bigger impact on them in this life and beyond.

We also had two other old warriors visit us

recently. Mr and Mrs Irons are like Sandes royalty. They are loved by everyone still serving in the mission and I'm sure by those many lives touched during their service. Whenever you speak to anyone about Sandes they always ask about Sam and Anna. They served the military through very difficult times and personal tragedy during the troubles in Northern Ireland and never ever thought about giving up. When you look at them they are not physical giants but when you hear them talk you know they are spiritual giants with enormous faith that will and did move mountains. Sam was recovering from major surgery and it didn't look like they would make the Sandes Annual Conference this year. I should not have been surprised when they arrived to stay with us because nothing could ever hold them back. We all travelled together to our Conference at Rydal Hall in the Lake District where we were greatly encouraged by the ministry of Pastor Val English.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." Isaiah 40:8

Time stands still for no one but at the conference we were challenged that it is ok to become older but don't let yourself become old. Having just celebrated my 60th birthday I must confess that I am now feeling better than I have done for the past few years and am determined to follow the example of Mr and Mrs Irons and keep battling on. I am only too aware after recent health issues that we cannot count on our own strength but need to stand in His strength. We know God is faithful especially when we remember how He miraculously healed Jim when all medical knowledge had given up. He saved us for a purpose and so 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes' Romans 1:16. With that I am excited about the future and still longing to see a harvest of souls saved.

At the moment we have five junior soldiers from Gibraltar and are pleased that they are making themselves at home in Sandes. Being from the Mediterranean they eat very healthily and love our freshly made Pizza. As a big birthday treat I will be going to Gibraltar in June for our half-term leave. I lived in Gibraltar many years ago during one of my dad's postings. It was lovely for me to swap stories with the boys. I seem to remember it being like a big rock but they tell me a lot of new building has taken place and even some land has been reclaimed from the sea. It must have changed so much but I'm excited to be going back.

Our soldiers from the College took part in a freedom of Harrogate parade and marched proudly through the town as part of VE celebrations. It is always a proud day for the Junior Soldiers to parade in front of the public. One of our instructors remembers doing the very same when he was here as a Junior Soldier. Martin was here in training in 2003 in Cambrai company and he had found Sandes and became a regular during his time here. He returned as a Corporal instructor in Burma Company and we were delighted to see him back in Sandes. He and his wife Amy are



In Sandes as a recruit and now an instructor expecting their first baby in a few weeks. He will be leaving the college to re-join his Regiment, having just been promoted to Sergeant. So many congratulations to Martin and Amy and we will continue to pray that they will know God's call and protection in the years ahead.

Time just seems to be flying by and it seems to be at a premium as Junior Soldiers move about camp going from one lesson to another. They come and go from camp with great regularity with exercises, adventure training and trips away. Some have come back from France visiting the war graves. It was special for many who may never have been out of the country.

Things always change here but Sandes has remained constant. We want soldiers to feel safe and at home in our Centre. As Christ's ambassadors we must present the Gospel with the same gentleness, love and compassion with which He drew us.

Please pray for the footfall which is still too low to maintain the work and also for housing for a Support Couple. Thank you for your continuing prayerful support.

Jim & Maryjane McCracken

Show hospitality to strangers

Hbais132



Personnel from the Turkish Air Force attending Sandes during their recent visit to London.

In 1869 Elise Sandes reached out to care for soldiers long before there was an established Army welfare system. Soldiers at that time were scorned by society at large but God put something special in Elise's heart. If she was to bring the message of God's grace and mercy to these young men, she needed to demonstrate something of His love in how she cared for them. Then, when she preached the Gospel they would know she was sincere and spoke with integrity. Today that same principle is still at work in Sandes, we care because He cares. We build bridges through our friendship ministry that allows us to speak directly into peoples' lives.

We meet people here who would never dream of going to church unless for a family occasion and because Sandes is a Christian mission, they come in here not knowing what to expect. We are an open door where people can come with no preconditions and they will be warmly welcomed and cared for. We are Christ's ambassadors here in Pirbright and so our character and behaviour must represent Him. As we build trust it opens the hearts

and minds of people to hear and hopefully receive the good news of the Gospel. Our heart is to win them for the Lord. The love and compassion shown in the hospitality of Sandes is key to that end. Paul tells us in Corinthians that without love we are just a 'clanging cymbal'.

At one of our fellowship meetings here in the centre we talked about the importance of hospitality and how we value others. It led to challenging discussion about caring. If we, as God's people don't care about people does it not make it more difficult for them to believe that God cares either? We are reminded of the example of Les and Vera Waterhouse who worked here in Sandes Pirbright for many years. The impact they made for the Kingdom is still being felt. We visited Vera recently and she is an amazing lady, humble and so unassuming and yet still a powerful witness for Christ. Truly an inspiration.

The last few weeks have been very busy in the Centre. The Gallipoli commemoration parade in London saw Brunswick lines full to capacity. Despite ordering extra supplies we ran out of a number of menu items.

The team here worked their socks off every day as we opened from 9 am to 10 pm every day. Also preparing for the parade we had people from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and the Turkish Air Force Band. We knew many of the soldiers who had passed out of Pirbright in recent years and it was good to renew old acquaintances. We were particularly pleased to see Lee Lawson who was a great friend of Sandes. The Turkish Air Force band were really nice, mostly Muslims but we were able to give many the Scripture Dog-tags with the Prayer of Salvation. They promptly put around their neck, kissed and touched their forehead with it. A true sign of respect but hopefully a challenge to them.

We were very fortunate to be invited to Windsor Castle to see the Welsh Guards receive their new colours from the Queen. It was a wonderful day and an amazing sight to see a full battalion of Guards in their red tunics and bearskins against the backdrop of Windsor castle. Prince Charles, The Duchess of Cornwall and Prince Phillip were also there and Prince Charles spent a long time talking to the Guardsmen and their wives at the garden party afterwards. Jillian was also invited to the Beating of the Retreat with The Royal Logistic Corp band. They were superb and the evening was finished off with a fantastic fireworks display.

Sadly we have lost another member of our team. Rachel has been with us for five years and will be greatly missed. We wish her well and pray for her in her new job. Padre Nick Todd, our senior Padre is leaving us soon and so is Roddy, our SASRA scripture reader. Roddy had been here for the same length of time as us. Padre Nick was the Padre to 1 Royal Anglian before joining the chaplaincy team here and is moving on to be Chaplain to the Irish Guards. The Welsh Guards also have a new Padre, Catherine Gillam who popped in to see us and to introduce herself.

In the last Focus we mentioned a young Christian recruit who was starting his training here at Pirbright. Unfortunately he broke his leg on the assault course in week twelve and was in a cast for six weeks. He is now in rehab and hoping to go back into training in the next few weeks. He regularly attends fellowship on Friday nights which has been well attended now for a number of weeks. We have had a young lad who was a Muslim and has now given his life to Jesus, a Sikh and a number of others coming along on Fridays. This is a real encouragement and a real answer to prayer.

Thank you for your continued support, we are so grateful to all those who pray for us.

Phillip & Gillian Orme



The Pirbright Sandes Centre fully renovated and with a secured lease for the future.



SANDES

The Soldiers' Friend since 1869



As a Christian Mission we depend on your prayerful and financial support to sustain this work. Please consider making a donation or joining our mailing list. Stand with us as we seek to bring Christian love and witness to those within the military and help us secure this little foothold for the Gospel.

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Soldiers' & Airmen's Centres



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