

FOCUS

Magazine of

SANDES

Soldiers' & Airmen's Centres

July - September 2018



Straining forward to what lies ahead



Eric Liddell stretching for the line as he wins Olympic gold

The next few months will see a few changes in Sandes as new people start and others retire. When you are leaving somewhere after a number of years there is a temptation to take your foot off the pedal and freewheel to the finishing line. Surely this is something to be avoided when you consider that a race is only won in how and where you finish.

As I reflect on through this, the example of the famous Scottish athlete, Eric Liddell comes to mind. He was born in China in 1902, the son of Christian missionaries. When he was five he returned to Britain to be educated. Later while he was at Edinburgh University, Liddell excelled at athletics and also played rugby for Scotland. Despite all his fame and success as an athlete, his heart belonged to the Lord and he was a noted evangelical preacher. He became internationally famous when

he was selected for the British Olympic team for the 1924 games in Paris. He was Britain's great hope for the blue riband event of the 100m sprint and a part of the sprint relay races. When it became apparent to him that this would require him to run qualifying heats on a Sunday, his heart sank because he knew that he couldn't do it. He became unpopular with some in the press who regarded him as unpatriotic and the British Olympic Committee did everything to try and persuade him to run but his position was clear that he would not run in any events scheduled for a Sunday.

What lessons can we take from the example of this man's life? I suppose like many people I would have probably thought that if I represented my country at international rugby, that this would be the pinnacle of my sporting achievements.

Rather than this being the climax of his athletic career, he instead used it as a stepping stone to go even higher. His searing pace that made him special at rugby would take him even further. Because you have succeeded and won a battle, doesn't mean the war is over. We too can look for God's next assignment in our lives.

He was a natural for the 100m and the whole country was excited about him and Harold Abrahams both representing Britain and facing each other in Paris at the Olympics. Eric was excited with this new opportunity but when he saw the running schedule, he refused to participate on the Lord's Day. To win the 100m race would have made him famous but his ambition was to glorify and please God and felt he wouldn't be doing that by running on a Sunday. *'I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast! And when I run I feel his pleasure.'* This quote indicates that he had a much deeper purpose than running.

It was proposed that he should run in the 400m instead, a race which he was unfamiliar with. However he practised and prepared so that he could give his best. Against all the odds he ran and won the gold medal. Ironically his widow later recalled *'Eric said that when he stood by his principles and refused to run in the 100 metres, he found that the 400 metres was really his race. He said he would never have known that otherwise.'* Certainly God knows best and makes all things work out for good.

Not only did Eric win the gold medal he also set a new world record for the event. Just like him, things in our lives may not turn out as we expect but nonetheless we must embrace it and give it our best. Mediocrity is not an option. *'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord'*.

After the Paris Olympics he had the athletics world at his feet and could have remained a prominent sprinter for years to come. Alternatively he could have retired to a celebrity lifestyle and enjoyed the trappings of fame and adulation. But he turned his back on all of this because the best was yet

to come. As a Christian, no matter what stage of life we are at, the best is still yet to come. What a wonderful hope we have.

He headed back to China to serve the Lord as a missionary. He believed this was the real reason for his life regardless of what had gone before. He married and lived with his family in Tianjin. When it became too dangerous during the war he sent his wife and girls to Canada but he stayed to continue his work. When Japan entered the war he was interned with all other foreigners. Even as a prisoner Liddell continued teaching and performing his pastoral duties. He organised sporting events for the children, made briquettes from coal dust for the elderly and helped even those who were ostracised by others in the camp. One of his daughters later recalled that he was offered a chance to return home as part of a prisoner exchange, but reportedly turned it down and gave his place to a pregnant woman instead.

Although no one knew it Eric was tired and ill and five months before the end of the war he suddenly died from a brain tumour. Perhaps not the end one would have expected but he is remembered warmly in China and throughout the world. His life showed integrity, compassion and faith.

Perhaps we are at a crossroads in our life; things are changing; not knowing what comes next. Let us learn from this saintly man. He was never finished but built on previous successes to achieve even more. When things didn't work out as he hoped he didn't give up but instead still did his utmost to overcome the challenges. When one door closes we can look for our next assignment knowing that the Lord has a purpose for every day of our lives.

The worse thing for a sportsman to feel after an event is that he didn't give his all. No matter what age we are or assignment we are on, let's be determined to strain for the line and finish well. *'Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us'*

Being shaped for God's purposes



Trevor and Jan hosting a number of Padres visiting the Centre in Lisburn

A quote from Jacob Riis says "I'd look at one of my stone-cutters hammering away at a rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet, at the hundred and first blow, it would split in two, and I knew it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before."

The Apostle Paul knew that to live a meaningful life, we also need to have a worthwhile purpose in what we do. He said in 2 Corinthians 4:1 "Since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart." When we have a God given purpose, it is imperative that we never lose sight of the vision He has given us. In time, we will reap if we don't faint. We may have setbacks and disappointments but failure will only be realised if we refuse to get back up one more time than we've been knocked down.

We may not feel that we are adequate for what God has called us to but He is faithful

in empowering and shaping us to His will. Apparently the stone that Michelangelo used to carve one of his most beautiful pieces, 'David', had previously been rejected by two other sculptors. When asked how he carved something so beautiful from a rejected stone he said "David was always there. I just removed the parts that wasn't David."

We feel that we have been called into the ministry of Sandes by God. At times we face real challenges as we seek to share God's Gospel of love with a generation of people who mostly have no time for Him. Yet because it is His calling on us we can stand confidently on His promises to us. We will continue to keep loving and caring for those who come into the Centre, trusting that we can share the hope we have and see people personally encounter the Lord Jesus Christ and find the same salvation and peace with God.

Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear. Matt 24:35

Since our last report we have experienced both highs and lows. Two of our former friends we knew from Ballykinlar have since taken their own lives. At least one of them was known to be suffering with PTSD. It is tragic hearing such sad news and we always wonder if there was more we could have done to help or said to encourage these young men. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family, friends and former colleagues of these two young men.

Some of the soldiers have had disciplinary problems and with the high standard of behaviour expected in the military, this has led to them leaving the Army. This is a devastating blow for anyone with a heart set on an Army career. Although we can't change the past, we must learn from it. We can share how God rescued us despite the big mistakes we had made. Understanding this would give them hope that leaving the Army is not the end but can be the start of a bright new chapter in their lives.

We continue to be a listening ear for many

of those using the Centre as they open up and share some of their problems. This is a very important element in our work. They don't really need to us to be judgemental, just to listen. Quite often they are not looking for advice or guidance but want the opportunity to talk and release the pressure of things bottled up inside.

One of the happier events was on the Mayday bank holiday Jan and Illy were able to raise some money for ABF, the Soldier's Charity. They joined Irwin from ABF and took part in a sponsored walk as part of the Belfast Marathon. They completed the 8 miles with a smile on their faces. It is good to join together with other agencies working for the benefit of soldiers and their families.

We have had a massive blessing from God in the recent birth of our beautiful grandson Asaiah. His name means 'the Lord has made'. He really is a gift from God that has blessed our hearts more than we could have imagined. Our daughter Kerri and husband Joel are wonderful parents and



The family room in Lisburn full to overflowing



Trevor receiving a cheque on behalf of Sandes from the Mayor, Councillor Paul Hamill

they have plenty of doting grandparents and other family members close by to help.

This past year, Sandes was chosen by the Mayor of Newtownabbey as one of his chosen charities. They have held many different fund raising events from bag packing in supermarkets to acting Santa at Christmas. On 25th May there was a charity golf day at Ballyclare Golf Club in which three of us played. The weather was beautiful and so despite the poor scores we had a wonderful time. It is a privilege to be chosen as a Mayor's charity and this is the third occasion in recent years that Newtownabbey have honoured Sandes in this way.

Over the summer we will be opening in Ballykinlar for two large groups of cadets who will be travelling from England. The same events were successful last year and we are looking forward to them. It will be very busy keeping Lisburn going during the day and running the Ballykinlar Centre in

the evenings. Last year the dog tags and camouflage Bibles were just as popular as the milkshakes and confectionary. We were also able to chat with a few of the cadets who were feeling down with homesickness or other reasons. We pray that the Lord will bless these times and let us express something of His love to them.

With the passing of time also comes the passing of friends and over the last year we have lost two of our greatest encouragers in Mrs Anna Irons and Miss Beryl Sowden. These ladies along with others would regularly contact us with messages of encouragement. Their passing has left a gap and we are going to miss their little notes and cards. I would encourage you if you are one of our prayer supporters to take on this mantle. These little acts of kindness are precious and remind us that we are part of something bigger and we are part of the greater family of Sandes.

Trevor & Jan Pinkerton

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up,
just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Sandes heart, the same yesterday, today and forever



Fellow Guardsmen shield their eyes as Dee kisses his bride

Just as I was about to start our report, our frozen food order delivery arrived at the Centre. There were boxes and boxes of chips, chicken and bread etc. It was all hands to the deck and our delivery driver Darrell was impressed by the team work as we worked together to get it all unboxed and put in the right freezers. It was all done in a few minutes. We have a great little team here in Sandes. We are really pleased to say that we can see this same team ethos throughout the Army Foundation College. It important for everyone here to feel valued, looked after and generally feel loved. This camp is a brighter and sunnier place when everyone is pulling together for the good of each other.

Next year Sandes will be celebrating its 150th anniversary. During that time many things have changed. The military is much smaller in numbers, the welfare provision has changed beyond recognition and we

have fewer overseas responsibilities. Technology has also changed everything ranging from our weapon systems right down to social habits. People living 80 years ago would not recognise the country today. However I do believe that a soldier from that period of time would still recognise Sandes and would still feel at home here. We have survived because we have a shared history with the military and have always been accepted as part of the team.

Perhaps Miss Sandes never realised that the work she planted all those years ago would still be functioning today. However, the same vision, the same fire that was kindled in her heart is still burning in the hearts of those working in Sandes. That sense of being part of something bigger than ourselves, a real team ethos has been handed down through the generations to us today. We value the privileged position we have and do all we can to protect the

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. Hebrews 6:11

reputation of Sandes and all we stand for. So in Sandes we all work very well together, we are part of a bigger team in the Colledge and part of an eternal fellowship that spans many generations of service in this mission.

This is the little field where the Lord has planted us to serve. Over the years it has had its ups and downs and I don't think we could have survived if we did not have a genuine love and concern for our soldiers. This is the fuel and motivation that has kept us going. We just love them and delight to see them happy and relaxing in Sandes. It's not a chore for us, it's our mission, purpose and *raison d'être*. We really appreciate the people who encourage us with phone calls, letters and cards but it's the responses from the soldiers themselves that encourage us most of all. We know then that we are making a difference and impacting their lives.

Tommy always likes us to get good photos for this magazine but as soon as I appear with my camera they all run away. The junior soldiers love to appear in the magazine and will gladly pose for me all day but our training staff can be bashful and

camera shy. I think it is because they don't want the others taking the mickey out of them. We always find one or two willing to smile for Sandes, bless them.

It's good to know that many will keep in touch with us when they leave Harrogate. Recently we had great pleasure by receiving a message on Dee's wedding day on the 26 May. He worked here at the Colledge and was a super supporter of Sandes. He was fussy and wanted his chunky eggs and toast made just right for him. He was a popular member of the training staff and is missed by us. We wish Dee and his beautiful wife God's richest blessings for their future life together.

We have been truly amazed by the turn around as we see more and more junior soldiers coming into the Centre again. Some nights we are bursting at the seams just like the old days. We have a great mix from all the companies, permanent and civilian staff. We always try to get to work early to get things warmed up for opening time and we laugh when we find them waiting at the Centre doors to follow us in. I asked "How did you know we were coming



Member of the training staff enjoying the facilities in Sandes



Junior Soldiers enjoying a little break in Sandes.

early?" They laughed and answered "We watch for you driving past in your car and rush over to the Centre." I am so pleased they feel at home in Sandes so much.

Jim and I were called over to the Garrison Church recently to be introduced to Padre Alex Bennett, a senior member of the chaplaincy. He spoke fondly of his time in Northern Ireland and asked about Trevor and Jan. He was a lovely man who was really interested to hear about Sandes' work at Harrogate. Our Padre Richard Hall said to him "I wish I could say that the chaplaincy is the most popular place on camp, but we are not because Sandes is." We had tea and cake and then the Padre gave us a cheque for £150 and thanked Sandes for all their work with those in the Army Foundation College.

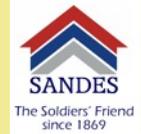
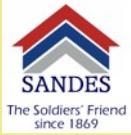
Many of the junior soldiers are presently away on phase two visits to get a taste of their new regiments. All very exciting for them and another step nearer the big day when they will pass off and leave Harrogate. Meanwhile in both the quiet and busy times we always get those special God given moments to smile, chat and share our faith. Many need to off load

concerns or fears and we are always available as that listening ear, to encourage and even pray with them. The Bibles, dog tags, daily readings and tracts disappear off the book shelves and the Bible Quiz remains a popular event. For all these special little blessings we pray the Lord will touch their hearts.

We have been busy with a few Health & Safety inspections, a fire inspection and audit. Thankfully they all went very well, praise the Lord. Sandes always has to try and ensure that everything we do is done to the highest standards as befitting our calling. The next two months for the College will be very busy with final exercises and tests taking place. Please pray for all the young soldiers facing these tests and also the training staff.

So we keep looking forward with expectation and some excitement for what's coming next. We stand here serving the Lord knowing that His word never changes but rather it changes us. It is our real privilege to be here and we are so grateful for your prayerful support and encouragement.

Jim & Maryjane McCracken



Prayer Diary

21st September Sandes Prayer meeting @Noon in Beacon Church

21st September Sandes Committee meeting

Promoted to Glory - Miss Beryl Sowden

Prayer Requests

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Matthew 9:37-38

Pray that we could continue to build a good team in Sandes in all positions.

A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps. Proverbs 16:9

Pray for divine wisdom for those planning the way forward for this mission.

Names of our serving Superintendents and Support Workers:

<i>Jim and Maryjane McCracken</i>	<i>Harrogate</i>
<i>Mark and Sal Nieuwoudt</i>	<i>Harrogate</i>
<i>Chris and Marlene Wilkinson</i>	<i>Hollywood</i>
<i>Trevor and Jan Pinkerton</i>	<i>Lisburn/Ballykinlar</i>
<i>Martin and Deise Lewis</i>	<i>Pirbright</i>
<i>James and Michelle Loubser</i>	<i>Pirbright</i>

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Ephesians 6:18

Please pray for: July 2018

1 new recruits in Pirbright would quickly be introduced to Sandes.

2 marriages and family life of soldiers which come under great strain.

3 God's favour and blessing on all Christian ministries to the military.

4 the health and well being of those within the Sandes family.

5 wisdom on the selection of a new Mission Director for Sandes.

6 opportunities for working with families coming into all our Centres

7 the Lord's financial provision for the work in the year ahead.

8 a secure spiritual climate on camps and especially in our Centres

9 Woman's pray time in Sandes centre in Lisburn this morning.

10 for the Bibles, literature and dog tags being distributed through the Centres to be effective.

11 the future shape and format of the leadership within Sandes.

12 new Support Workers preparing to travel from Mauritius to start in Pirbright.

13 breakthrough as we see people being saved within the military community.

14 good and supportive relationships with Padres and other Christian agencies.

15 work in Pirbright would start to feel a positive change in the spiritual climate on camp and a new anointing on the work.

16 opportunities through the Bible Quiz in Harrogate.

17 renewed sense of vision and a fresh anointing on Sandes as they reshape the leadership team.

18 that new CVWW charter would still confirm Army housing without charge for Sandes.

19 Good working relationships with Unit Welfare Officers and an appreciation of the value of Sandes.

20 new opportunities for outreach in each of our centres.

21 the families and soldiers of 1 Scots battalion based in Holywood as they are deployed in various duties.

22 the Lord to raise up Godly men both in Government and in Command positions in the Military.

23 good centre assistants and volunteers to help in the work especially in Pirbright.

24 the funding, production and distribution of new Sandes Dog Tags

25 good rapport with recruits coming to Sandes in Harrogate on induction nights.

26 a time of refreshment at the 'Still Time' prayer meeting in Sandes in Lisburn today.

27 courage and confidence for Christians serving in the Armed Forces.

28 Sandes workers running Centre for Cadets Camp in Ballykinlar over next 2 weeks.

29 sense of freshness and newness for those who encounter the message of hope in Sandes.

30 the well being of the family members of those working in Sandes

31 encouragement for our Superintendents in the midst all the busyness of running the

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

Please pray for: August 2018

- 1 rest and recuperation for those of our teams on holiday during summer months.
- 2 opportunities to reach out and help such as Airport lifts from Lisburn
- 3 the safety of our soldiers who are deployed in various places throughout the world.
- 4 sustainable footfall with more outreach opportunities in all of the Sandes Centres
- 5 those soldiers and recruits who have come to Sandes with life issues.
- 6 people who may be suffering physically or emotionally as a result of military service.
- 7 the reorganisation of Head Office and Committee as we continue search for a new Mission Director.
- 8 wisdom on any new initiatives or opportunities currently being discussed within Sandes.
- 9 breakthroughs as we see people being saved within the military community.
- 10 people to consider supporting Sandes Mission in their legacy planning.
- 11 recruits in Pirbright to once more engage in a Saturday night fellowship group.
- 12 Padres would know the Lord's leading in services within Garrison churches.
- 13 our new Support Couple Michelle and James as they start in Pirbright today.
- 14 Sandes to be part of induction process for new recruits in Pirbright as per Harrogate.
- 15 Bibles, literature and Dog Tags being distributed through our Centres
- 16 encouragement and blessing on all those who faithfully support the work of Sandes.
- 17 our vice presidents, committee and others who work behind the scenes for Sandes.
- 18 more volunteer help for Trevor and Jan as they run 2 centres with cadets in Ballykinlar over next few weeks.
- 19 good relationships and partnership with the Padres on camp.
- 20 good opportunities to hold the Bible Quiz in Harrogate.
- 21 the marriages and family life of soldiers which come under great strain.
- 22 growth in the Sandes prayer and financial support base to sustain the work.
- 23 the ongoing discussions behind the scenes on the CVWW charter would result in supportive outcome for Sandes.
- 24 sense of peace and Godly purpose for those workers facing challenges in Sandes.
- 25 for the evening opportunities with the cadets attending camp in Ballykinlar.
- 26 the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to awaken people within military from spiritual apathy and unbelief.
- 27 Sandes profile at Bangor Missionary Convention over during this week.
- 28 value of Sandes to be recognised and supported by all of those within the welfare elements of the Army.
- 29 breakthroughs and opportunities with the 1 Scots and other units in Holywood.
- 30 opportunities with wives and children on all the camps.
- 31 work in Pirbright would start to feel a positive change in the spiritual climate on the camp and a new anointing on the work.

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

Please pray for: September 2018

- 1 Chris and Marlene in Holywood. For Marlene's health and for them to see breakthroughs in the work.
- 2 encouragement for Christians in the Armed Forces to live and share their faith
- 3 Sandes would know a fresh anointing as we face the new challenges of this age.
- 4 Sandes deputation this evening at Grace Baptist Church
- 5 the new team in Pirbright would work well together and quickly come to terms with the challenges of running that Centre.
- 6 protection and promotion of Christian values within military and the Government.
- 7 wisdom for the Committee on the way forward for the Sandes Mission
- 8 thanks for our volunteers and for more Godly volunteers to help us in all Centres.
- 9 all the Bibles, literature and Dog Tags being distributed through our Centres
- 10 Monday morning women's prayer meeting Sandes Lisburn
- 11 the funding, production and safe delivery of the new Sandes Dog tags.
- 12 all our troops serving and training in various locations throughout the world and for their families at home.
- 13 God's continued favour to be reflected through those in command and decision making positions within the MoD.
- 14 wisdom for those serving on Sandes committee as they consider options and plan the way forward for the Mission.
- 15 new opportunities for our team with the 2 Rifles community in Lisburn
- 16 soldiers and their families to come to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 17 opportunities with the Welsh Guards and their families in Pirbright.
- 18 new opportunities to help and care through the friendship ministry in all of Centres.
- 19 those suffering either physically or emotionally as a result of military service.
- 20 preparations for the new season of the children's Good News Club in Holywood.
- 21 Sandes Committee as they formally meet to day to plan way forward for Mission.
- 22 Sandes to remain both financially solvent and spiritually effective.
- 23 Divine inspiration for Padres as they lead Church services today.
- 24 wisdom and grace for our workers in how to deal with all the various agencies and ranks within the military.
- 25 the Lord's continuing provision of finances and opportunities for Sandes.
- 26 complete, committed and settled teams in all the Centres.
- 27 for all the little seeds of faith planted though Sandes in the past would grow and bear fruit.
- 28 opportunities for Jim and Maryjane in Harrogate with both Junior Soldiers and staff
- 29 our vice presidents as they continue to represent Sandes within the wider military community.
- 30 all Christian agencies working together to bring the hope of the Gospel to our Armed Forces.

Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice Psalm 141 :2

Using every moment of opportunity



Members of the Ulster Defence Regiment Association at their remembrance day in Holywood

Just for a moment, imagine yourself on your computer. In the middle of typing up something very important, suddenly, the power goes off! You were so engrossed in what you were typing you didn't take time to save your document so when the electricity failed your document vanished. It has gone forever because it was not saved. What is true of computer documents is also true of people, every person who rejects Christ will realise, when death comes, sometimes as suddenly and unexpected as a power cut, it is too late to hit the save key.

According to the Bible, our eternal destiny is sealed when we die. That's why we are urged to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today. Imagine the horror of realising it is too late and you've lost everything forever. Don't assume you'll have tomorrow to press the save key. Do not put off receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour any longer or you may end up like the rich man in Luke 16. Trust Christ today! It is never

too early to receive Him but at any moment it could be too late. Pray with us as we seek ways to help everyone who comes into the Centre to hit the 'save' button.

Spreading the Gospel through special events. Recently we have been able to reach out in a number of practical ways. One such event was hosting a families' breakfast/brunch. The Centre was packed out and we cooked forty Ulster fries and thirty five breakfast baps. The families' officer was very surprised with the response as he didn't expect such a big turnout. Everyone had a good day and no-one went away hungry. I believe we gained some new friends from those new families who have just moved onto camp. It was a thrill to see some sought after more than just food for the body as food for the soul was also taken in the form of UCB books and other literature.

UDR Day was another special event I was privileged to be involved with, having been

*Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold,
now is the day of Salvation 2 Corinthians 6:2*

asked to officiate at the service of remembrance. It was a great privilege to be asked and a good opportunity to hand out some UDR Bibles and dog tags as well as to renew old friendships.

Another year of Good News Club also came to an end just before Easter. We were so encouraged to see many boys and girls attending each Wednesday evening and we are looking forward to seeing them at the annual 5 Day Club at the end of June. Please pray for this event, especially Joyce and Stephanie and myself as we run the club. Pray too that children will come and for new people to attend. Praise God for continuing to give us such opportunities.

Spreading the gospel through our literature and prayer. We thank God for opportunities to draw alongside the soldiers as well as some of the civilians who continue to ask for UCB daily reading booklets and avail themselves of other Christian information. This has led to numerous conversations, which on occasion have been on very challenging topics. Please pray for wisdom and sensitivity in dealing with some of these issues. Over the last few months both the soldiers and some of the contractors working on camp have asked for prayer for

health and family issues. Again, it is such a privilege to be taken into their confidence in such delicate and personal matters.

Pray with us for the future as 'Pay As You Dine' has now been implemented on camp, including a new coffee shop. It is my understanding that both these businesses are run by the same company. In human terms, with their costs lower than ours, it is of concern that our footfall will be adversely affected however, with God on our side who can stand against us? At the moment we seem to be holding our own as footfall remains steady and our regulars have remained faithful. Please pray that this will continue to be the case.

Spreading the Gospel through friendships. Over the year, we have been continuing to say many goodbyes. Ramie and his wife Cheryl are the latest to have come into the centre to say their farewells. We will miss them greatly, Ramie is such a character, he loves the banter and brightens up the Centre by his presence. He has always been a great support to us and made sure any new recruits knew about Sandes and where to find us. Thank you for standing with us in prayer.

Chris and Marlene Wilkinson



A soldier coming to say goodbye on his last day in the Army

Endorsement from the past to inspire the future

As we consider the future role of Ballykinlar, I was intrigued when reading an article of its origins and the appreciation and admiration there was for Sandes from the highest in the land. It was also humbling to read that Miss Sandes love for soldiers was such that even her very poor health would not stop her work. I trust that Sandes will continue to be inspired by her example.

On 10 September, 1902, His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught and General Leach VC were escorted by a force of mounted constabulary and drove along Royal Avenue to the County Down Railway Station where a special train was waiting to take them to Tullymurry from where they drove to Ballykinlar Camp.

His Royal Highness proceeded to open the Sandes Soldiers' Home which had recently been erected at Ballykinlar. The building was constructed in the spring of last year, 1901, and was so successful that during the winter months it was extended to almost double the size. The building faces south and commands a fine view of the Mourne and Ballykinlar Camp. A veranda runs the length of the building. There is a coffee room where provisions of all sorts can be obtained at the lowest prices. Adjoining it is the reading room which is well supplied with literature and facilities for writing. Double doors lead into an apartment used as a meeting room and special social gatherings. The private portion has a large sitting room for the ladies who manage the Home and which is also used for a Bible Class every night. The kitchen department is on a large scale as the coffee bar is crowded to excess in the evenings.

General Leach said that Miss Sandes was not able to be present at the last moment owing to a severe heart attack, but she was represented by Miss Potter. He told of the origins of this new home. Only last year Miss Sandes had done him the honour of asking him to preside at a meeting for a

Soldiers' Home which she intended to build in Holywood. He told her about a new camp at Ballykinlar, where a Home would also be greatly appreciated. Within three months of that meeting this Soldiers' Home was built and ready for use. The total sum expended by Miss Sandes in erecting the Home was over £1,200. He need hardly say on behalf of all the men that they most fully appreciated the efforts of Miss Sandes and thanked her most heartily for her kind efforts on behalf of soldiers.

The Duke of Connaught then spoke and said it was with great satisfaction he was opening this Home. 'This is the third I have opened this year and all of them owe their inception to Miss Sandes. We all appreciate the kindness which has moved Miss Sandes to undertake what has long been looked upon as a great need in the Army.' He spoke about a new Home at Glen Imaal and how it was also appreciated. He thanked those who supported this venture of which he said 'The Homes were of enormous benefit in fostering kindly feelings and cultivating respectability among our soldiers. I have now spent thirty three years in the army in all parts of the world and you will believe me when I say that as the years go by, I more and more appreciate the improved tone, the good fellowship and kindly feeling that exists throughout all ranks of His Majesty's Armies, and which has, to a large extent been produced by the agency of these Homes'

The Duke of Connaught having inspected the Home and expressed himself well satisfied with the various arrangements proceeded to Tullymurry station and was conveyed by special train to Belfast. The following telegraph was despatched by General Leach to Miss Sandes by order of His Royal Highness: - 'Soldiers' Home just opened. HRH sincerely regrets cause of your absence and renews his thanks for your consideration of the wants of the soldier.'

New Support Workers - Meet the Loubers



James and Michelle Loubers who are the new Support Workers in Pirbright

A British born Michelle met a South African born James just over 37 years ago, not realising that God had an incredible journey in store for us as a family with our two sons, James and David, who are now living in the UK.

After starting out our early days of marriage on the family farm in the Cape Province of South Africa, we strongly felt God calling us into a similar relationship with Him as the one that Abraham was called into – leave all that was known to us and just follow where God would lead. And that is what we did! Twenty years ago, we left the family farm and began equipping ourselves for Missions and Ministry. Our journey after Bible school took us first to Israel for six years, where we served families through education and voluntary work in the homes of poor and needy Jewish people. We then spent the next three years in England, where again God opened up doors for Michelle to serve children and families through ministry in an International Church and James worked at a Polo Club as grounds manager simply living out his relationship with Jesus. It was through the Church, that we realised

our next part of the journey would take us back to Africa to work for five and a half years in Swaziland with orphaned and vulnerable children. Michelle served in the school and Church and James literally helped rebuild an abandoned mining town, Bulembu, for these children. Our latest part of the journey had us move to Mauritius, where we have been shining His light in a school called Lighthouse where most of the children and families do not know Jesus, coming mainly from a Hindu background.

In every country we have lived and worked, God has allowed us to open our home with the gift of hospitality, leading people closer to the Lord Jesus. We have seen many lives transformed through love and care.

We look forward to a new chapter in our lives in the ministry of Sandes. Attending the conference in April excited us as we have never met so many special people in a ministry as we did that weekend. The presence of God in the lives of the folk attending was evident. We feel humbled that God has opened this door, to be part of this ministry, praying that He will use us to serve, encourage, love and care for all who will come into the Pirbright Centre.

Sowing for the harvest in Pirbright



Soldiers of Queen's Royal Hussars with the Sandes team in Pirbright

I think that we should constantly remind ourselves of our purpose here at Sandes, we are ambassadors for Christ, spreading love and The Gospel truths. I say this because I am able to lose my focus quite easily. Deise on the other hand is much less vulnerable to distraction and can maintain her focus better. We need to celebrate small wins as well as big wins because we know that God can water a seed. I'm reminded of 2 Corinthians 9:6 "Whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully". So spread the good news at every opportunity via any medium possible. Our words, our actions, our love, our friendship, our knowledge of The Truth, our servant spirit, our Bibles, our music, our signage, our integrity and the list goes on. This is our mission.

I have spoken about a young recruit called Ryan in several of our weekly newsletters and he wrote the following in our comments

book before he passed phase one training. *"Since I started basic training I have had help from the team at Sandes whenever I needed it, whether that was in helping find my faith to having someone to talk to. Many thanks to the team at Sandes for an exceptional effort at every moment"* He went through a lot of personal challenges to get to this point and I feel assured God will continue what He has started.

Another quote from our comments book inspires me to continue to do this work whenever I read it. *"Yet another enjoyable experience in the 'de facto' haven of Pirbright, the managers amazingly remember each individual recruit who passes through here and the facility itself is a great source of comfort to many of us on this road."* These are seeds sown in the name of the Lord Jesus awaiting their moments to flourish, let's continue to sow them bountifully!

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20

I cannot write this message without making reference to the Royal Wedding and the earlier visit of Princess Anne to Alexander Barracks. When the Royal family are involved locally, this place 'rocks and rolls'. I can honestly say that I have never seen so much activity on site than there was on these two occasions. We had a lot who were taking part in the festivities come in every night. Ian, Chris and Steven were selected to represent their regiment The Queens Royal Hussars. We had time to chat with them and even an opportunity to pray for them. Another seed sown.

Summer is on its way. Deise mowed the grass and some of the recruits have been enjoying the outdoor environment at Sandes. One of the recruits said "being here it seems like we aren't in the barracks". The 14 weeks in Pirbright are arduous and having a place to go, a haven, is important. Some of the guys use our Skype and WIFI to talk to their mums.

Our area to minister to people has recently increased to include the medical centre on site. Marjorie and Beatrice were injured and we were able to visit them. They are both well now and are back in phase two training and still message us. These are seeds which have rooted as new life.

I am sure by now we will be able to confirm the appointment of the new Support Couple for Pirbright, James and Michelle. We are very excited and are very much looking forward to working with them. They will bring a new perspective with lots of experience and enthusiasm with them. Deise and I feel like we know them already even though we have only met them briefly, and they won't be starting until August. Although we have been through a lot in the past 18 months, Romans 5 says that this will produce perseverance then character and finally hope. We are very hopeful!

One of the most important things that goes on at Sandes, is the distribution of Bibles. The Holy Spirit breathed Word of God is the most important thing. Anything we have to say pales in the shadow of His Word. I am pleased to inform everyone reading this that Deise reported to me this week that she had to replace 12 Bibles on the display table. This has been as high 50 in the past but I'm still amazed at 12 per week which would be still about 600 per year. This is a life changer and cannot be ignored.

Your ongoing prayerful support, giving, volunteering and encouragement is greatly appreciated and we thank you sincerely.

Martin & Deise Lewis



Martin sharing time with a recruit in Pirbright



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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I would like to receive copies of Focus at the above address.

I would like to arrange for a speaker from Sandes for my Church group.



The Soldiers' Friend
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SANDES

Soldiers' & Airmen's Centres



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