

Book Review

‘The Story of Brigadier David Weeks’ and ‘Supplementary Tales’ (two book set)



Sole author: David Weeks (editor, Kiya McFarlane)

Paperback, two book set, limited edition; 50pp, 34pp; self-published, March 2025
Available via Richard Weeks, rich@2glassy.com at £20 for both books, including p&p

I had the delight recently of meeting 91 year old Brigadier (ret'd) David Weeks L/RAMC (born 1934) at his residence in Templeton Place Care Home, Southampton,¹ together with his son Richard and the Templeton Place Wellbeing coach Kiya McFarlane, to discuss his newly published autobiography – a joy to read – and enjoy the warmth of their hospitality.

David, whose memories are as sharp as ever, grew up in and around Bristol, experiencing war as a child, going on to earn a scholarship to Queen Elizabeth's Hospital boarding school, before studying

¹ Templeton Place Care Home, <https://www.hamberleycarehomes.co.uk/care-homes/templeton-place-care-home/>

medicine and qualifying from Bristol University in 1957. En route, he had fallen in love with Margaret, a staff nurse working the same night shifts as himself, and they married in February 1958, eventually having three children and a long and happy married life together (before Margaret sadly died in 2022). David was soon called up for National Service, but on discovering a more palatable alternative he opted for the Regular Army, being accepted onto a five year Short Service Commission with the Royal Army Medical Corps – and a first posting to Singapore. Margaret initially had to stay behind in Bristol until she had delivered her second child, but they loved Singapore and soon found that the military lifestyle suited them perfectly so David converted to a regular commission. He initially opted for training in anaesthesia before discovering he enjoyed soldiering equally with medicine. He decided to embrace a different pathway, being instantly rewarded with a posting to a battalion about to embark on an overseas tour – to Singapore, for the adventures of which and thereafter you'll have to read his autobiography!

David became the first resident at the newly-opened Templeton Place Care Home in August 2024. On recounting some of his recollections and tales from an exotic military service and family life, including his exciting years in Singapore and Borneo (the highlight being Regimental Medical Officer to 1st Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, 1963-1967, and undertaking peace-keeping duties in Borneo, during which he was Mentioned in Despatches), Assistant Commandant at the Royal Army Medical College in Millbank (1971-1973), command of 19 (Airportable) Field Ambulance in Colchester (1973-1975),² various courses and staff appointments, and finally promotion to Brigadier and command of the prestigious Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital in Woolwich (1985-1987), he was encouraged by Kiya to type out and relate his experiences. His oral history was supported by his rich collection of contemporaneous documents and photographs, then edited and arranged by Kiya, illustrated with many of David's own photos, and printed locally in Southampton. 'Supplementary Tales' followed within weeks, at the earnest behest of his original audience who encouraged David to squeeze a few more tales out of his memories, with chapters bearing such intriguing titles as Culinary Capers, Penan Purgatory, A Borneo Goodbye and From Bronze to Silver, amongst others.

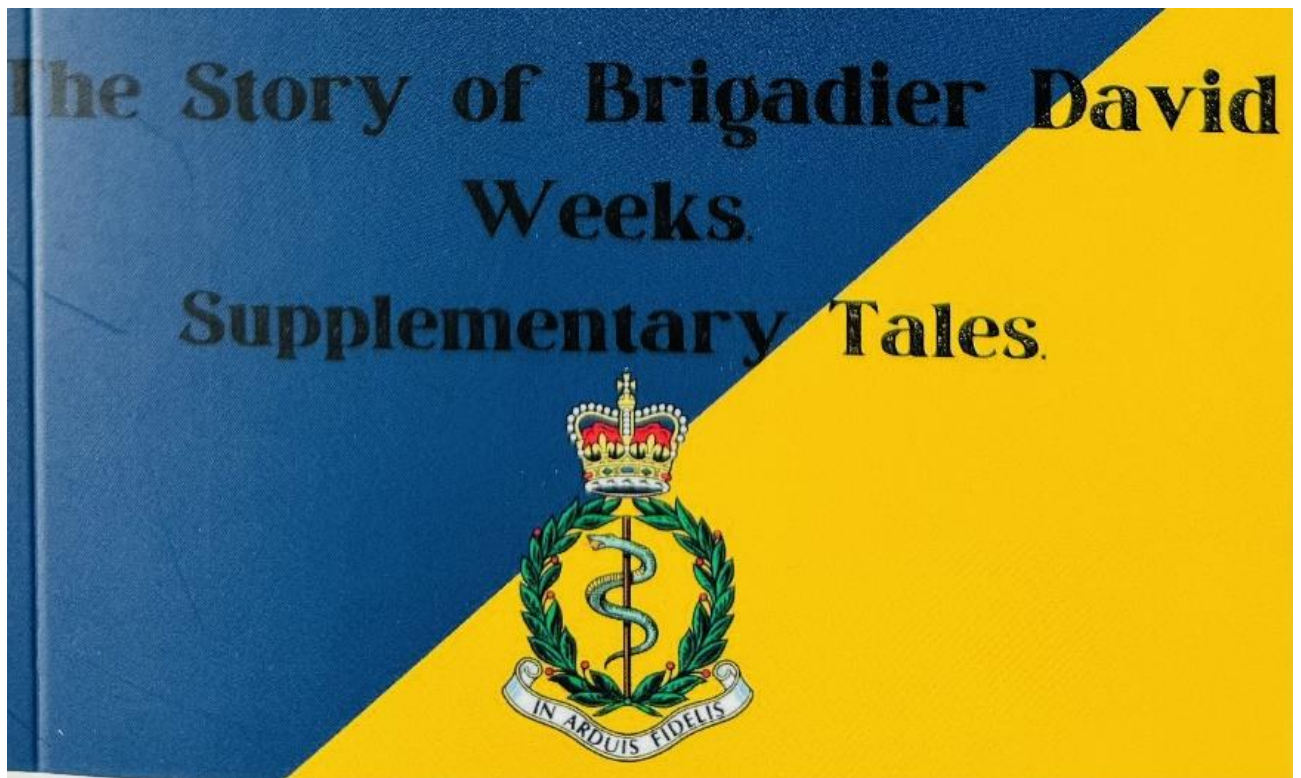
My particular favourite is From Bronze to Silver, relating to the choice of gift to be presented to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on her graciously accepting to lay the foundation stone of the new Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital in 1972. David was then Assistant Commandant at Millbank, assisting the Director General and Commandant with the choice. This triumvirate realised that the two-foot high bronze statue of a stretcher bearer carrying a wounded soldier, in the entrance hall of the College, would be ideal as a model for a smaller silver presentation piece.³ When Mr Angeloni, the Italian silversmith chosen for this project, was invited to view the bronze statue, he was unexpectedly and totally overcome with emotion. It turned out he had personally cast the original bronze statue as his examination test piece to qualify as a silversmith. He was delighted to be asked to cast it in silver for Her Majesty the Queen Mother. Truly a case of from Bronze to Silver.

David celebrated his 91st birthday whilst writing these memoirs, which are narrated in a particularly engaging and very readable third person style. They are a wonderful inspiration to all of us who have travelled widely, enjoyed the journey and given much in return while serving with HM Forces and

² 19 (Airportable) Field Ambulance was formed in Colchester on 1 November 1960. It subsequently went through several re-designations and role changes before being re-designated on 1 October 1993 as 19 Air Mobile Field Ambulance. On 31 August 1999 both 19 Air Mobile Field Ambulance and 23 Parachute Field Ambulance were disbanded to form 16 Close Support Medical Regiment on 1 September. It is an antecedent unit of the current 16 Medical Regiment. See <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/current-units/>.

³ This bronze statue now embellishes the AMS HQ at Robertson House, Camberley alongside its companion piece of a camel fitted with a cacolet for carrying a stretcher.

the Defence Medical Services in recent decades, encouraging us to record our own experiences of military medicine and this passing world for posterity and to inspire those who come after us.



David Vassallo, reviewer
March 2025

David Cecil Weeks – a brief service resume

Qualifications: MB ChB 1957, DTM&H 1967, MFCM 1973.

Postings: UK 1958 - 59, FARELF (Far East Land Forces) 1959 - 62, UK 1962 - 63,

RMO 1 A & SH (UK/FARELF/Borneo) 1963 - 67, Senior Post Graduate Course 1967,

NBC School Winterbourne Gunner MO/Instructor 1967 - 70, DADMS HQ 2 Div 1970 - 71,

RAM College Assistant Commandant 1971 - 73,

OC 19 Field Ambulance 1973 - 75. OIC TDT AMS RAMC Training Centre 1975,

National Defence College Course 1975 - 76, MOD ADG AMD2 1976 - 79,

ADMS 1 Armd Div HQ & Sig Regt 1979 - 83, MOD Col AMD1 1983 - 85,

CO QE Mil Hosp Woolwich 1985 – 88.

GSM 1962, Clasp Borneo, MID, GSM Clasp Malaya, OSTJ.