



Annual General Meeting

Friday 29 January 2021

Chairman's Report

This year in context

The year 2020 and our lives have been dominated by the coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic. There have been more than 94 million officially recorded cases of COVID-19 worldwide (as at 17 January) following the first recorded cases in November 2019 in Wuhan, China. Globally, COVID-19 related deaths reached one million on 30 September and passed two million on 15 January 2021, just three and a half months later, and only four days after the anniversary of the first recorded death (on 11 January 2020 in China). The global case rate and death toll are escalating alarmingly and will be much higher by the AGM.¹

In the UK, where the first recorded death was on 8 March, the first wave of the pandemic peaked over Easter weekend (10-12 April), and the death toll reached 40,000 on 5 June. A second wave is currently surging through the UK, a more transmissible variant of the virus is at large, and the country is under another national lockdown. There have been well over 1,000 deaths daily for each of the last ten days [early January], reaching a peak of 1,564 on 13 January, and the death toll passed both the 80,000 and 81,000 milestones on 9 January. Current estimates predict around 120,000 deaths in the UK by Easter Sunday, 4 April.

However, there are hopeful signs that the pandemic will be brought under control this year, even if it becomes endemic. The UK commenced a massive vaccination programme with the newly developed Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on 9 December 2020, and started rolling out the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine on 4 January, with the Army heavily involved with the logistics.² Over three million people in the UK had received their first dose of vaccine by 15 January, and over six million by 23 January, one week later.

Friends of Millbank in 2020

Our last AGM was held at Chelsea College of Arts (the former Royal Army Medical College, Millbank) on 17 January 2020. A new committee was elected, with Col (retd) David Vassallo L/RAMC succeeding Col (retd) Frank Davis as Chairman. Minutes attached for approval.

¹ Addendum 25 January: Global cases have now surpassed 99 million. UK deaths reached 98,000.

² See [Coronavirus: What The Military's Doing To Fight COVID-19](https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/covid-19) (also accessible from the COVID-19 section on our website at <https://www.friendsofmillbank.org/covid-19>)

We held one actual lecture at Millbank, by Col (retd) Heidi Doughty on 27 February, before the pandemic intervened and national lockdown commenced on 23 March. All scheduled talks at Millbank and social events were cancelled, and our planned Oral History and Millbank plaque projects have had to be put on hold. As Chairman, I therefore concentrated on communication with members, individually and collectively, and especially on enhancing our online presence and bringing military medical and historical resources to the attention of our members through major developments to our website. These enhancements included a frequently updated new COVID-19 section with links to the most authoritative and useful sites, as well as extensive new History and Archive sections, itemised below, and illustrated throughout by iconic works from military medical artists who generously supported this initiative. In addition, there were frequent newsletters and mailings. Finally, a Zoom Pro subscription was taken out to enable a programme of online lectures, commencing with the prestigious George Blair Memorial Lecture by Richard Villar on 30 October. Three very well attended talks were held by Christmas, see details below.

For the record I have itemised below our main achievements during 2020.

Membership recruitment (see attached Report)

	2020	2019
Life members	17	12
Annual (paid-up) members	48	32
Mailing list	512	329
Mean Millbank lecture attendance (one lecture in 2020; six in 2019)	30	28
Mean Zoom lecture attendance (three in 2020)	62	NA

Affiliation with the British Society for the History of Medicine

- We became affiliated to the BSHM in April. Friends of Millbank can now enrol free with the BSHM as members of an affiliated society, as a benefit of their FOM subscription, thereby saving the £15 normal BSHM enrolment fee.

Articles promoting FOM

- **BSHM Newsletter Issue 18, June 2020**, p.4: Vassallo, David. *Friends of Millbank - Celebrating the heritage, achievements and ongoing relevance of military medicine*
- **BSHM Newsletter Issue 20, December 2020**, p.14: Vassallo, David. *Friends of Millbank - Celebrating the heritage, achievements and ongoing relevance of military medicine*
- **BMJ Military Health, December 2020**; 166(6):440. Vassallo, D. *COVID-19 resources through Friends of Millbank website* (hyperlink available in COVID-19 section of our website)

Lectures (2020)

- Heidi Doughty 'Taking blood transfusion forward' 27 February 2020 (*held at Millbank; presentation now available on website*)
- Richard Villar 'Winged Scalpel' 30 October 2020 (*virtual; book review on website*)
- Alistair Macmillan 'A history of the AMS TA and its pre- and post- guises' 27 November 2020 (*virtual; presentation now available on website*)
- Jessica Meyer 'It worked: Innovation and Improvisation in the work of the RAMC during the First World War' 18 December 2020 (*virtual; pdf to be uploaded*)

Newsletters (uploaded to our website Archive)

- Chairman's First Newsletter 31 January 2020
- VE-75 Newsletter – 8 May 2020
- VJ-75 Newsletter – 16 August
- Autumn Newsletter – 4 October 2020
- Autumn Newsletter – COVID-19 Update – 4 October 2020
- Remembrance Sunday Commemoration – 7 November 2020
- November Newsletter – 9 November 2020
- Armistice Day 2020 - Medical VCs – 11 November 2020
- New Year Newsletter – 3 January 2021 (*to be uploaded*)

Other Newsletters (not uploaded)

- Laughter – still the best medicine (26 April 2020)
- Supporting Captain Tom Moore's 100th birthday walk for the NHS (29 April 2020)
- Armed Forces Day (27 June 2020)

Supporting Captain Tom Moore

In the early days of the pandemic, the whole nation was galvanised to raise funds for NHS Charities by 99-year old Captain Tom Moore walking 100 laps of his garden for his 100th birthday. We strongly publicised Captain Tom's fundraising effort, which was our chosen charity for the year, and continue to do so by having the link to his site at the top of our COVID-19 section; many Friends of Millbank played their part by contributing generously towards the £32 million plus raised by Captain Tom.

Website developments, www.friendsofmillbank.org Please explore our website to see the detail in each section, including images of iconic paintings generously contributed by military artists

- **Homepage** (*includes newly simplified registration link and details of forthcoming lecture, updated after each talk; Talks also advertised by newly designed email Announcement*)
- **COVID-19** (*completely new*)
- **History** (*completely new*)
 - College History
 - College Personalities, ten produced to date with the aid of our members
 - Brigadier Ian Haywood

- Colonel EE Vella
- Colonel Jim Ryan
- Sir Alfred Keogh
- Sir David Bruce
- Sir William Boog Leishman
- Colonel Peter Roberts
- Mary Kerslake
- Cpl Matthew Dooley
- Colonel Thomas Bouchier-Hayes
- Unit Histories
 - Medical Regiments (under development)
 - Field Hospitals (under development)
 - Camp Bastion Hospital
 - The Princess Mary's Hospital (TPMH)
- Military Medical History
 - The Defence Medical Services in War
 - Military Medical Revolution
 - The Fight against Disease
 - Telemedicine kept simple
 - RAMC Muniments Collection
 - Fit to Fight
- Army Medical School (Fort Pitt/Netley)
- **Archive** (*completely new*)
 - Lectures
 - George Blair Memorial Lecture
 - Newsletters (*listed above*)
 - Book Reviews
 - Personal Tributes
- **Gallery** (*updated*)
- **Links** (*completely overhauled, new links added*)
- **Visits to website** (as at 17 January 2021): 3255 since counter installed in February 2020

A comment on expenses (See Treasurer's Report)

Our main expense in 2020 has been paying for the major upgrading and enhancements to our website, with many completely new sections and resources steadily being added, as listed above. Our webmaster, who set up our website twelve years ago and has since charged us an annual fee for basic upgrades, has had very much more work to do this year, including a trial of registration for online talks (the registration process is now greatly simplified). She has therefore charged us hourly rates for new upgrades and enhancements on top of the annual fee. This has cost us an extra £2000 compared to the previous year's website expenses. Our outgoings have thereby slightly exceeded our income for the year, though the overall balance remains healthy. None of the FOM Committee has the IT skills which would have enabled us to carry out this work ourselves.

Our website initiatives have received many accolades from members and others, and I have plans to further enhance the website this year, aiming to develop it into a major resource for military medical history. However, I am well aware that this sort of expense, although necessary in 2020, is unsustainable, so the costs for enhancements shall be kept under careful review.

Our main focus remains our programme of talks by superb speakers, commencing with Michael Crumplin's talk '*Losing sight of the glory – six centuries of combat surgery*' immediately after this AGM.

Fund-raising: Our main income is from membership subscriptions and donations by non-members to attend individual talks. Five members enrolled for life this year, and we have 50% more annual subscribing members, which is very encouraging. We had no income from our cancelled talks. Our three virtual talks were free to attend as a special COVID-19 concession, and these attracted a very respectable number of new members and return visitors. We are reverting to normal practice in 2021, asking non-members to donate £5 to attend each talk, virtual or otherwise, or to consider enrolling as members. Our subscription of £20 pa, still the same, enables free attendance at all talks, besides free membership of the BSHM.

We would be grateful if all our annual members could kindly renew their subscriptions promptly for 2021, if possible by BACS or preferably by standing order, and if those on our mailing list could support us by enrolling as members.

Forthcoming Lectures (2021) – twelve booked in all (*full programme uploaded to our website*)

- Michael Crumplin '*Losing sight of the glory – six centuries of combat surgery*' 29 January
- Peter Sharpe '*The Gulf War: Logistics and Medical Challenges*' 25 February
- Sarah Phillips, Inaugural Haywood Lecture: '*Rebuilding limbs, rebuilding lives*' 26 March
- S Jagdish '*Farthest Fields – The Medical Services in Indo-Burma*' 8 April
- Alastair Reid (Surgeon General) '*A view from on high – the Defence Medical Services today, and a glimpse over the horizon*' 23 April
- Frances Houghton '*Shipwreck, Sharks and Seasickness: Memories of the Royal Naval Medical Services in the Second World War*' 21 May
- John Broom '*Faithful in Adversity – the RAMC in the Second World War*' 18 June
- Ben Barry '*Blood, Metal and Dust – lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan*' 23 July
- Martin Bricknell '*Civilian-military co-operation in time of crisis*' 24 September
- Paul Watkins, George Blair Memorial Lecture: '*On the shoulders of Giants: Medical Officers in the Far East Conflict, 1941-45*' 29 October
- John Reynard '*Great losses of the Great War*' 26 November
- David Jackson '*Golf, gunshots and surgical ramblings*' 17 December

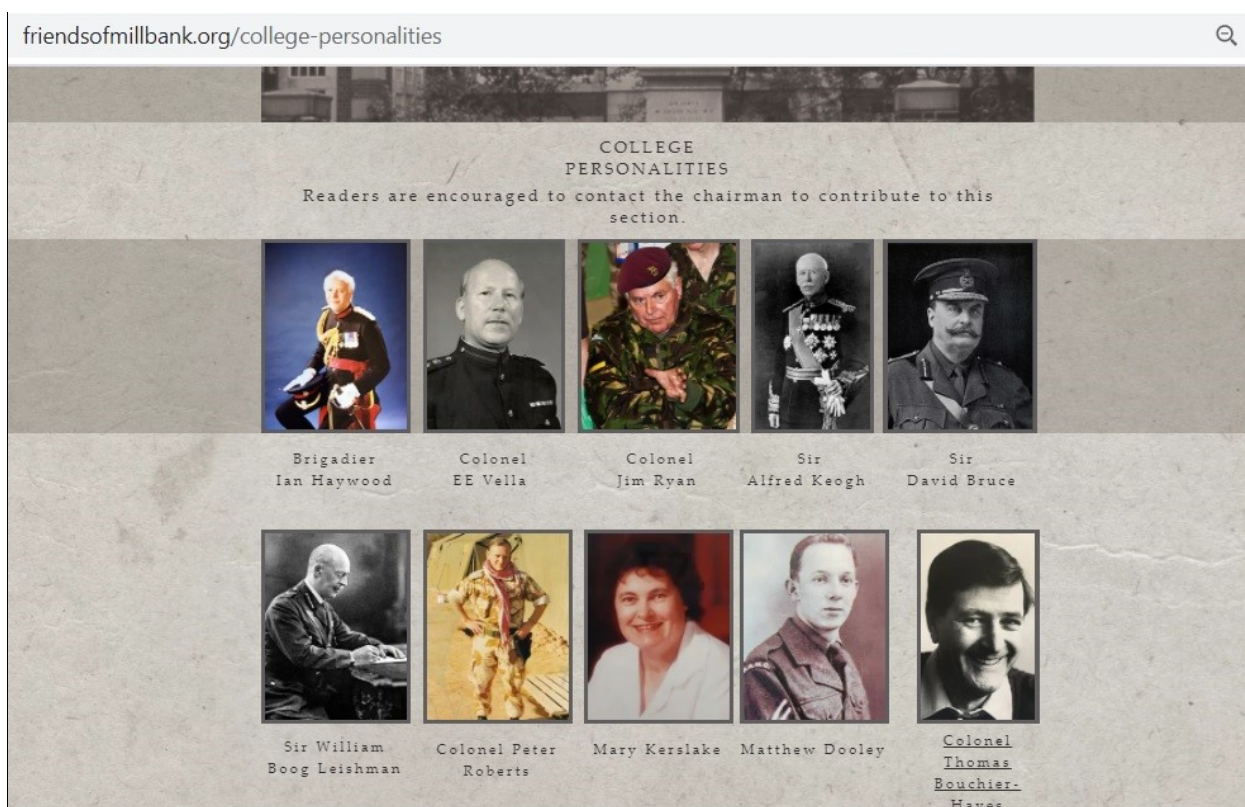
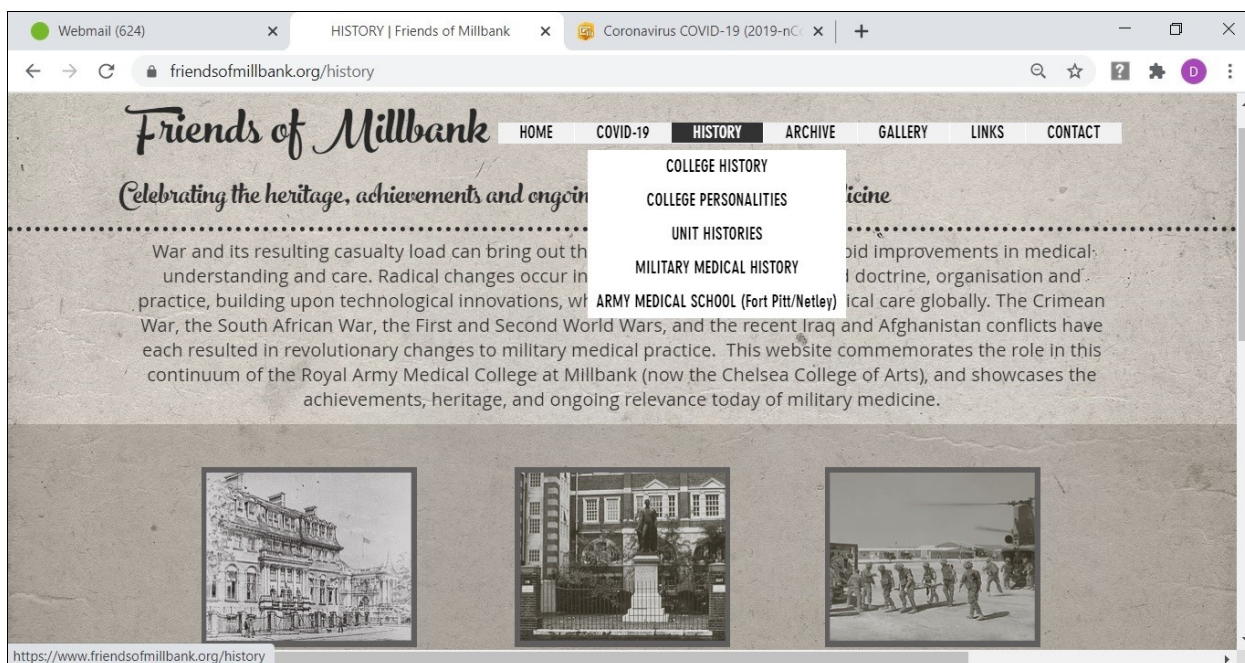
In Arduis Fidelis

David Vassallo (Signed on original)

Col (retd) FRCS Ed, MA, L/RAMC

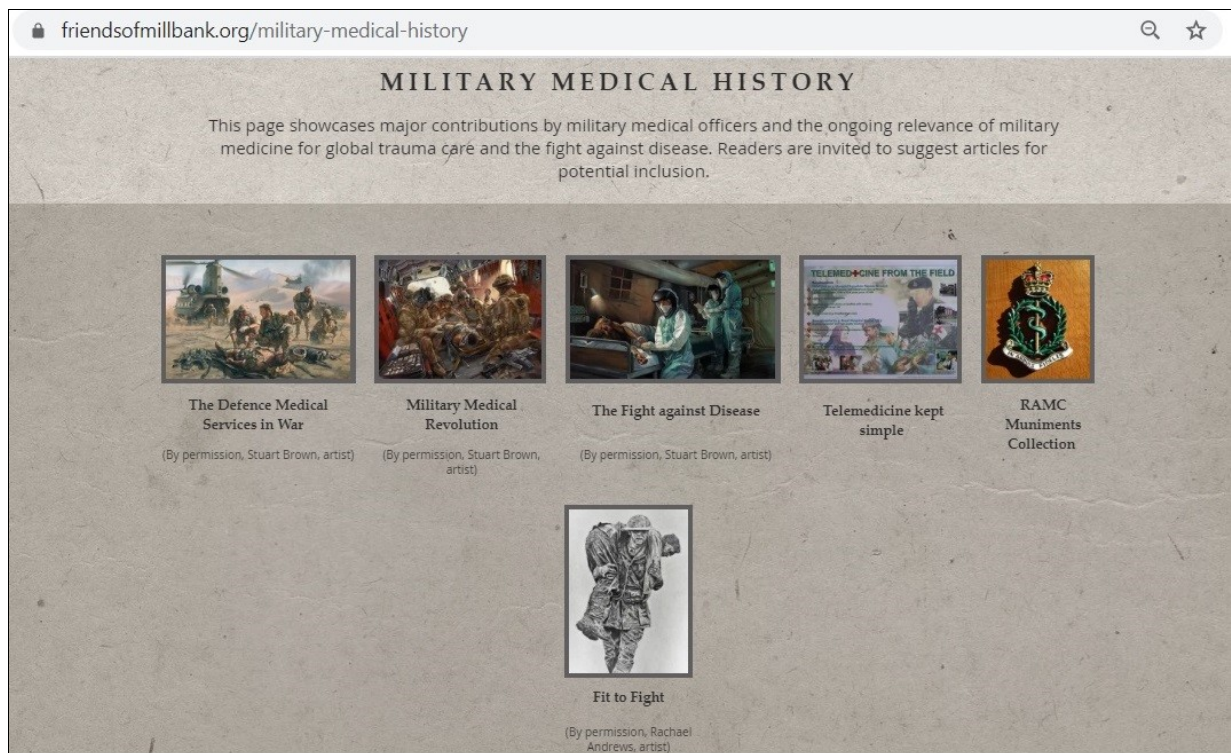
Chairman, Friends of Millbank, 17 January 2021

Some screenshots of our website www.friendsofmillbank.org

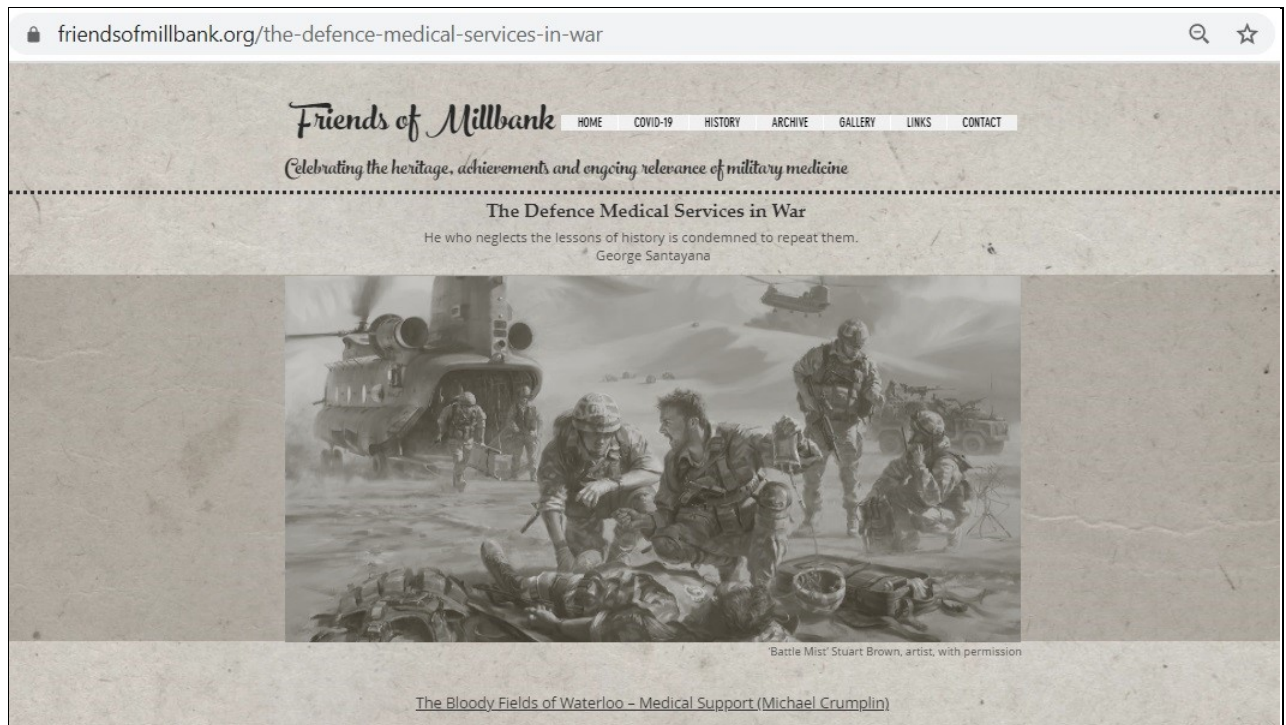


Members are encouraged to contact the chairman to contribute to this section.

Some further screenshots



There can be little doubt that it is in the investigation of disease with a view to its prevention that our foremost duty lies.



He who neglects the lessons of history is condemned to repeat them.

Attachments:

1. Agenda
2. AGM 2020 Minutes
3. Treasurer's Report 2020
4. Treasurer's Statement 01 Jan 2020 – 31 Dec 2020 (audited account)
5. President's Report 2020
6. Membership Report 2020