

# The A.C.W.S. NEWSLETTER 2025 2nd Edition

ACWS Ltd - PO Box 270 - Washington - Tyne & Wear - NE37 9BX www.acws.co.uk



Photograph Courtesy of William Jennings (2nd South Carolina)
No Man's Land 2025

ACWS is a Member of



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Newsletter Contact Details editor@acws.co.uk

# **Director's Reports**

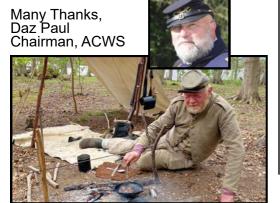
#### **Chairman's Report**

Straight to the point, fantastic start of the season, Bodrhyddan hall. For all those who unfortunately could not make it, look to all the media and pictures regarding the event and it will show you the brilliant site, beautiful scenery and how well organised the event was, not to mention the attendance of only the best of the best of re-enactment groups.

We had the traditional "colours" as we used to call it, but rather a small society meeting where we were able to take part in the presentation of the Roger Zwarycz trophy awarded to Dave McDade, well done. Also a huge well done to Stewart Hayllar for being awarded the John Rushworth trophy, what can I say, It's a picture of me, so please, please help by saving your pictures and adding them into the photo competition for this year so we have a lot more to choose from.

Joe... What have you done!, All I am hearing on the camps is "Who was the Easter Bunny?" Yes, our Joe has put together a fantastic bit of fun for all of us to be doing throughout the season. Do the challenges, provide the evidence of that challenge completed (Photo or Video) then gain the points for your Regiment.

Contact or ask Joe regarding the details but if I know Joe, it will all be in the newsletter and on the members page very soon.



#### **Event's Director's Report**

Hi Everyone,

Here we are in our 2025 season, with plenty of events to keep us busy enjoying ourselves, and funding our new van.

It was a great start at No Man's Land, it blew away our cobwebs and we did a wonderfully interactive arena display on the Sunday. We have already been confirmed to attend next year – April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2026, so please save the date in your diaries.

The highlight of this year will be our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event at Moira on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> August. Entertainment and refreshments are being planned and I hope to see everyone there to celebrate a great milestone.

Thank you to those who have sent me ideas and venues for future events – I am now looking ahead to 2026. Please keep those ideas coming in!

Best Wishes
Catherine Conyard
Events Director, ACWS



Hi everyone and welcome to the start of a new season. As many of you will be aware of by now that I have been appointed the new health and safety officer for the Society. I would like to thank you for all for your support.

I would especially like to thank all of the Confederates at the No Man's Land event for helping me to conduct my first FSPC meeting as the Health and Safety officer.

Please remember, health and safety is everyone's responsibility, not just mine.

Kind Regards

Dave McDade

Health and Safety



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# Knuckle Dusters in the American Civil War

Having been offered some allegedly authentic and relatively expensive original American Civil War knuckledusters (under the counter!) from a Detling Arms dealer and despite being an avid Civil War historian, I really knew very little about such weapons and even if they were actually made, existed or actively used during Civil War battles. If I had done some more basic research beforehand, I could possibly have been tempted as below is a picture of an original Union knuckle duster found after the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1863.



Throughout history, knuckle dusters have been used for various purposes, ranging from self-defence to offensive combat. They can cause severe damage and harm. The actual origins of knuckle dusters can be traced back to ancient civilisations. In ancient Rome, a similar weapon called the "cestus" was used in gladiatorial combat. It consisted of leather straps adorned with metal plates that covered the knuckles, making punches more deadly and devastating. It was based on an original Greek knuckleduster which employed straps called himantes and sphirae which were hard leather strips that enclosed and protected the fist and lower arm. In India. there was a metal ring and knuckle styled weapon called the vajramushti. The vajramushti was usually made of ivory or buffalo horn. Its appearance is similar to that of a knuckle duster, slightly pointed at the sides, with small spikes at the knuckles. The variety used for warfare had long blades protruding from each end and an elaborate bladed knuckle. It's use was recorded as far back as the 12th century.

Significantly and with regards to this article, knuckle dusters gained popularity during the 19th century. They were initially used as self-defence weapons by both civilians and soldiers alike. During this 19<sup>th</sup> century period, knuckle dusters evolved into their modern form and were often crafted from brass, iron or other metals, with finger holes that allowed the weapon to be securely held. By the American Civil War, knuckle dusters were therefore well known and therefore commonly used by both sides during the Civil War although never formally militarily issued by either side. As such, both Confederate and Union soldiers would often buy cast iron or brass knuckles. They would also carve their own personal weapons from wood or cast them. During the American Civil War, trench knives featuring integrated knuckle guards also gained popularity among soldiers for their efficiency in close hand-to-hand combat. These tools combined the stabbing capability of a blade with the punching force of knuckle dusters, making them versatile and lethal. Civil War soldiers would often buy different cast iron, lead or brass knuckles so there were many variations. If they could not buy them from blacksmiths, they would also carve their own from wood or cast them at camp by melting their lead bullets and using a mold in the sand or dirt. Some brass knuckles have rounded rings, which increase the impact of blows from moderate to severe damage. Other instruments, not generally considered to be "brass knuckles" or "metal knuckles", may have spikes, sharp points and cutting edges and were called knuckle knives. These lead ones were also made by melting bullets at camp and pouring the lead into crude sand or dirt molds. Overall, knuckle dusters were very popular during the American Civil War as there was lots of hand to hand close quarter combat and then afterwards. A significant amount of knuckle dusters have therefore been dug up at historic Civil War sites and battlefields around the United States.

So what to look for when you or I want to buy one? In essence, my now increased knowledge has led me to believe that there are obviously fakes out there but it is not too hard to buy authentic Civil War knuckle dusters if you know what to look for.

Good patina and ageing is probably the most important thing because it is very hard to fake (especially ones that are dug up). In addition, most handmade examples will be smaller than today's knuckles because the average American Civil War soldier was only about 5'3". Cast iron and brass examples are usually full size and so should show heavy ageing consistent with what you would see on other authentic brass and iron Civil War artefacts. In addition, many of those dug up should be broken, cracked or damaged probably from use.

Following the Civil War, knuckle dusters became associated with street brawls and gang violence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Criminals and gang members often used these weapons to deliver powerful and harmful blows to their opponents. As a result, the possession and use of knuckle dusters were regulated or outright banned in many places. They were used by criminals in France in the late 1900's and early 20th centuries. During World War I and World War II, knuckle dusters also saw limited use by some soldiers and commandos. They were sometimes issued to troops for hand-to-hand combat, where closequarters combat required a compact and efficient striking weapon. The US Army issued two different knuckle knives, the US model 1917 and US model 1918 Mark I trench knives. Knuckles and knuckle knives were popular with both American and British soldiers. However, knuckle dusters are very harmful and regarded as both offensive and illegal weapons by many. They are banned outright by many countries.

Article by Stewart "Goober" Douglas, 43<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina, ACWS







# **ACWS at Bodrhyddan Hall**

On 12/13 April 2025, the ACWS travelled to Bodrhyddan Hall, Rhyl, North Wales which is the 17th Century home of Lord Langford and his family for the No Man's Land Multi period event.

The No Man's Land multi period event is a unique living history and reenactment event, showcasing vehicles, uniforms, weapons and curios from Ancient Greece to the modern day. As well as vehicle and firing displays, there was a chance to walk among, mix and talk to over 600 re-enactors.

There were over 30 traders selling a variety of products including antiques, toys, vintage clothes, Viking mead and much more as well as food traders which sadly ran out early due to the massive amount of public that attended. My personal favourite for all 3 nights was the large refreshment beer tent called The Stagger Inn that hosted live music from The Goodnight Sweethearts, The Whipperginnies as well as puppet shows and comedy from Professor Llusern.

It also made a special brew for the event itself called No Mans Lager! Meeting and mixing all the other reenactors was a joy in itself and the ACWS made many new friends. The site itself was huge although quite undulating with the ACWS having both ample space for our 2 A frame streets as well as an opportunity to use the nearby woods for a more immersive campaign impression.

There was ample parking, security and water points and above all many and regularly cleaned portaloos.

Due to the lovely sunny weather forecast (although very cold nights!) compared to last years event which was cancelled early due to severe wind and rain, there was a huge number of really interested public who attended particularly on the Saturday.

The ACWS were contracted to take part on the Saturday in the Firepower through the Ages event which involved a small amount of both Union and Confederate re-enactors led by Dave McDade firing or loosing their weapons alongside all the other re-enactors ranging from the Greeks, Napoleonic, American War of Independence, WW1 and WW2 starting from bow and slings to the machine gun!

This occurred on both days and really well done to ACWS Christian Sprakes who commented superbly throughout with his deep and varied knowledge of all the weapons involved and their progression and development through history. This was followed by a cracking artillery display with 5 separate pieces involved.

On the Sunday, the ACWS was involved in more activities. In addition to living history, both the Union and Confederate armies did both drill and firing displays which went down really well with the public followed by a massive Kids drill.

This was so popular and the public absolutely love it. Well done to both the Union and Confederate reenactors helping out. Again, the ACWS performed in the Firepower through the Ages display.

For all the ACWS re-enactors, the living history days were manic and hectic on both days. As usual, there were superb and interactive displays on both camps with the Union Medical display, the US Christian/Sanitary Commission, the US Sharp Shooters display, the Union civil war artefact display and the always excellent ACWS Union music band and individual music displays.

On the Confederate camp, there was a new immersive campaign in the nearby woods which involved an authentic camp, pup tent and cooking display, the Ask a Soldier (over 100 given out!), both the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina superb and popular Chuck a Luck dice gambling game with Jason and individual Confederate soldiers kit display with William and Trevor's artillery/shot display with his superb chevaux de frise.

We also had our respective Flag raising displays which the public were fascinated with. There were also many other various individual drill and living history sessions including small impromptu music and dancing impressions.

Personally, I was fortunate to hear Callum Fox (American Eagles) and Callum Potts playing original fife and drum songs and tunes which I really enjoy. I do apologise if I have missed anything or anyone out but there was so much going on in both our superb camps.

Despite all these, there are always personal highlights and memories for me. As such, I have to mention all the help, assistance and camaraderie in collecting, transporting and selling all the superb gear belonging to my very close friends and regimental comrades John and Denis. We got rid of all the

equipment and made a significant amount of money for the ACWS Society. This is what the families formally wanted with all the equipment being reused with pride by their friends.

Personal thanks to Major Glenn Gibson who really helped, organised and transported everything. There was the excellent and customary Easter Bunny! Really funny and enjoyable.

We had our lovely sociable campfires every night with a copious amount of very dry wood which was needed! The beer tent was buzzing all 3 nights and well done to Christian and Catherine for playing some music for a singalong.

The ACWS is really gifted with our musicians. We had an ACWS Colours Meeting to meet our new Board members as well as award all the 100% attendees from last year. Well done to those committed individuals.

Finally, we all completed our FSPC certificates and thanks to both Linda and Dave McDade for organising and running the sessions. I cannot emphasise how important these are to us as both individuals and as a Society.

Despite the fact that this was our first event of the season, our ACWS friendship, professionalism and enthusiasm shone through to everyone who took part in this event. We made many new friends.

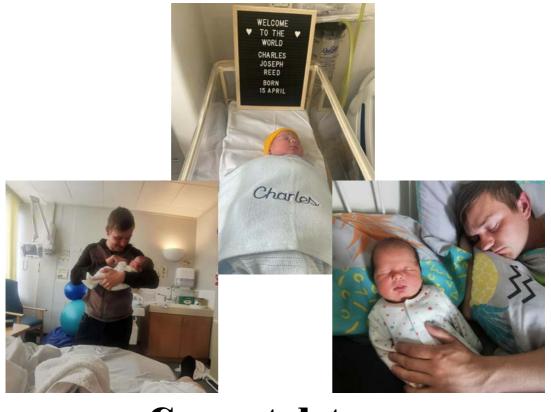
There is no question whatsoever that our living history and interaction with the public has become something very special and is still getting better. Obviously, a really special thank you to Catherine for all her hard work in getting this event but also many thanks to everyone else in the ACWS who helped out in many other different ways as well as turned up. Overall, the organiser Peter Wood was absolutely delighted with our numerous living history, drill and firing displays as well as our help and active involvement over the whole weekend and hopefully we can go back again to such a lovely and well organised multi period popular event in such a lovely and magnificent setting.

Personal Reflections by Stewart "Goober" Douglas, 43<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina Volunteers, ACWS.









Congratulatons
Joe Reed
& his girlfriend
Mairead Mclaughlin
on the birth of their
baby boy
Charles Joseph Reed
15th April 2025

For our 50th year of Re-enacting, we have come up with a little idea:

# The ACWS 50th Regimental Challenge

Complete the challenges, win points for your regiment and at the 50th event at Moira the Regiment that has accumulated the most points will win a cash prize.

## **Rules**

- All challenge attempts must be completed within the 2025 season between No Man's Land and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event at Moira.
- You may not enter someone else's tent to complete a challenge.
- All challenges must be proved to have been completed either with Photo/video evidence or with having a Board member or Army Commander witness it.
- Only one attempt of each challenge can be completed by each member (unless otherwise stated)

	CHALLENGE	POINTS
• (Or	Correctly guess the identity of the Easter bunny 2025 ne Guess per member)	200
•	Have an in date or renew your FSPC	30
•	Attend Artillery training	20
•	Be the first to "die" in a battle	15
•	Be the last to "die in a battle	15
•	Most extravagant "death" at an event	25
•	Cook on an open fire (Once a day)	5
• reg	Guest and partake in at least one battle as a guest of an opposing iment	50
•	Steal the boots of an enemy soldier without being caught	150
•	Drink with the opposing army	15
•	Donate a raffle prize (Repeatable)	15
•	Recruit a new or old member into the ACWS	25
•	Make a piece of kit by hand	20
•	Be a flag bearer for a battle	50
•	(As above) for opposing army	100
•	Submit an article to the newsletter	15
•	Host a regimental social on camp (Whole society to be invited)	30
•	Take a regimental photo in kit	100
•	Take a regimental photo out of kit	100
•	Act as major's orderly for the day	50
•	Perform a 1 hour guard sentry on camp (Once per event)	30
•	Regimental copper hoard (Donation to ACWS new van)	150
• (10	Submit a photo to the John Rushworth Memorial Trophy competition per event)	10
•	Have the best regimental attendance percentage for an event	50
•	Universal Soldier (Saturday Morning at 50th)	50

#### The Oldest Confederate Veteran

I cannot claim to be the oldest reenactor in the UK; I possibly have a claim to being the oldest ACWS member; definitely am very close to the oldest of the elder few of the Confederate re-enactors; but as for the oldest verifiable Confederate Veteran, it's not me, but certainly does go to a Crump.

Pleasant Riggs Crump was born on 23rd December, 1847 at Crawford's Cove, St. Clair County, Alabama, son of Robert White Crump and Martha Elizabeth. It is known that returning neighbours who had joined the 10th Alabama Infantry, so impressed Pleasant, that he and another local lad returned with them to enlist in the same regiment in November of 1864.

He was involved at Hatcher's Run on 5th February, where General Meade pushed the Union V and II Corps westwards towards the Boydton Plank Road, with Warren expected to flank the defending Confederate breastworks. Heth's Division attempted to break through the Union line between Smyth and McAllister's Divisions during a sleet storm, but despite their furious attacks, were repelled. This led to Meade able to force the Petersburg defences to be moved and extended further westwards. thus stretching out an already desperately thin Confederate line.

Service continued into Spring 1865, with 10th Alabama defending that perilously thin line at Petersburg, until inevitably Lee attempted to join up with Joe Johnston's Page 11

remnants. At Appomattox Court House, he is one of 8 Crump's\* who were on the muster rolls submitted as parolees by the surrendering Confederate Army.

"P.R." as was entered on the list, returned home and married Mary Elizabeth Hall of Lincoln County (ironic!) and farmed land there just over the border from St.Clair County, raising one son and 4 daughters. He served as Deacon of the Refuge Baptist Church for 71 years, Mary dying 30th December, 1901. At the age of 104, on 31st December, 1951, he finally surrendered his life.

#### **Appomattox Crumps**

\*George T. 3rd Virginia Cavalry, Co.G

John A. 3rd Co., Richmond Howitzers, Hardaway's Artillery Battn.

John C. 21st Mississippi Infantry, Co.E

John J. Capt., 44th North Carolina Infantry, Co.E

Samuel H. Capt., 12th Georgia, Heavy Artillery Battn., Co.B

Thomas L. 11th Georgia Infantry, Co.F

William F. 48th North Carolina Infantry, Co.I

There are no direct links to any of the above veterans or the U.S. A., nor to the family of Pleasant Rice Crump, but the search continues.

Article submitted by Michael Crump, 1st Tennessee, Co. E, ACWS

# Alligators and Turtles shot during the American Civil War

Here is a previous article I wrote about alligators and the Civil War. On 4<sup>th</sup> September 2016, a group of Mississippi hunters finally shot and killed an alligator weighing a monstrous 910 pounds (413 kilograms).

However, on inspecting the animal, they discovered it had numerous injuries caused by musket balls dating back from the American Civil War. A total of 9 spherical Enfield musket balls were later found in both his tail and hind legs.

On further specialist forensic examination, tests and analysis, the musket balls were confirmed to have been fired at the alligator in the early 1860's and were also confirmed to have been fired by Enfield Pattern 1853 rifle-muskets supplied to the Confederacy by the United Kingdom.

As such, it has been widely suggested that the alligator was used as a "Yankee" target for shooting practice by Confederate troops during the early part of the American Civil War.

The huge animal also bore 5 other bullet wounds from 3 different calibre hunting weapons as well as many dents and scars.

However, it did not survive the 6 .50-calibre bullets fired at him by the group of amateur hunters from Jackson, Mississippi who finally managed to take him down. This incredible animal brings a whole new perspective to the alligators endemic to the south eastern United States

These alligators have been well known to survive over 50 years and were thought capable of living up to 80 years. However, this unique specimen was estimated to have been as old as 185 years at the time of his death. Other reptiles such as turtles are known to have life spans of over 150 years but this is the first alligator of such an age that has ever been discovered. It is also one of the largest ever recorded in the United States.

Recently more evidence has revealed that there's another reptile that has been reported to actually contain Indian artefacts and bullets from the American Civil War.

This equally intimidating creature is the Alligator Snapping Turtle. Al Redmond, a giant turtle trapper, used to catch such giant turtles for the soup making companies he was working for.

On occasions, he would catch particularly larger and much older turtles off the nearby Flint River where he worked Whilst slaughtering and processing such animals, he frequently found Indian artefacts stuck deep and embedded in the hide including arrow heads and spear points.

These were usually found in the tenderloin in the back where there would be a large growth over the impact site. Sometimes they were totally covered up and sometimes just sticking out.

However, what astonished him most, was that he occasionally found American Civil War bullets including both minie balls but more surprisingly .50 calibre Sharps bullets.

As a result, he suddenly began realising how old some of the turtles were and decided to stop killing them. He has now dedicated his life and career to their survival.

Article submitted by Sgt Stewart "Goober Douglas 43<sup>rd</sup> North Carolina, ACWS











# John Rushworth Memorial Trophy Photography Competition 2025

## The rules are as follows

- 1. The photograph must be taken at an event this season, by a member of the Society.
- 2. Any member wishing to enter the competition can enter any number of separate entries.
- 3. "Amusing" photographs can also be entered for consideration.
- 4. Non members or members of the public cannot be included in the photograph.
- 5. If you think someone else has taken a great photograph, feel free to send it in on their behalf.
- 6. All submissions must clearly state what event they were taken at.

Entries for the competition must be sent to the Communications director Editor@acws.co.uk



**2nd** 

Avoncroft 2024 Abigail Hooper

Page 15 (118<sup>th</sup> PA)



**Ist**Avoncroft 2024

Stewart Hayllar

(69th NY)

Good Luck and Have Fun We look forward to seeing your fabulous pictures.



<u>3rd</u>

Avoncroft 2024 Matthew Jennings

(2<sup>nd</sup> SC)

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# **Notices from the Board**

Two Safeguarding Officers have been appointed by the board, Joseph Reed and Melissa Huntley. These appointees will remain approachable by any and all members for any issues regarding Safeguarding with Children, Adults or vulnerable individuals within the Society.

On the Board of Directors there are Directors that are Representatives of both the Union and Confederate armies, these are always available to listen to any issues that members of either side have and to assist however they can and if required will raise the issue with the rest of the Board of Directors.

Regiments are able to host their own fundraisers to raise money for various items to aid in the Regiment's authenticity, impression or general well being.

These fundraisers can include but are not limited to, general donations, raffles, "golden tickets" and football cards. All requests to host a fundraiser at any event <a href="MUST">MUST</a> be passed through the Secretary.

Any questions regarding Regimental Fundraisers can be directed to either Army Commander or the Secretary for clarification.

# From the Medical Team

Members please remember to bring personal first aid kits with you to events, just as you would take on holiday. Along with any medication you may need for any existing condition you may have.

You must let the medical team know of any existing conditions or allergies that you think may affect you. However, the medics are not allowed to give out any medication under any circumstances this includes but is not limited to pain killers and anti-allergen medications.

Please also remember to stay hydrated at all times and notify any medic if you're suffering with any symptoms of dehydration.

Also anyone in the Society that has any medical qualifications, please feel free to contact our Chief Medical Officer (Mr Ian Morris) or Mr Stewart Hayllar and let either of them know, help is always appreciated.

If an ambulance is needed or has already been called for an injury or emergency please let one of the medical team know, as this will allow us to take observations and do a full handover with the NHS paramedics.

Don't forget, the medical tent is always occupied by a society medic and is easily identified by a yellow flag with a green "H" (Hospital).

If you wish to know who your army medics are at any event, feel free to ask your army commanders.

So let's all be careful out there and look after each other.

# ACWS 50th Celebration

CALLING ALL PAST AND PRESENT MEMBERS
OF ACWS

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE CELEBRATION OF OUR 50th YEAR OF REENACTING

TO BE HELD AT

MOIRA FURNACE MUSEUM

ON THE
9th & 10th of AUGUST 2025

£10 Registration

Moira Furnace Museum, Furnace Lane, Moira, Leics, DE12 6AT.



# EVENTS CALENDAR 2025 Page One

# JUNE 07 - 08 FORT PAULL BATTERY, HULL

Full Society Event

Living History, Infantry Drill/ Firing Displays on SATURDAY and SUNDAY.

Fort Paull Battery Heritage Site, Battery Road, Hull, HU12 8FP.

Further Details to Follow.

# June 20 - 21 WORCESTER BALLOON FESTIVAL

Full Society Event Worcester Racecourse

Infantry, Artillery & Pyrotechnics Skirmish/displays on FRIDAY and SATURDAY. Worcester Racecourse, Grand Stand Road, Worcester WR1 3EJ.

Further Details to Follow.

## June 28 - 29 CHESTER-LE-STREET, CO. DURHAM

43<sup>rd</sup> N.Carolina Regimental Event at Chester-le-Street Steam and Vintage fair.

ACWS Members **MUST** contact Goober if you wish to attend. Living History displays on SATURDAY and SUNDAY. Lambton Estate, Chester-Le-Street, **DH3 4XP.** 

Further Details to Follow.

# June 29 CARLTON TOWERS, YORKSHIRE

Full Society One Day Event. Camping from SATURDAY NOON

Living History, Drill & Firing display on SUNDAY. Carlton Towers, Carlton, Yorkshire, **DN14 9LZ.** 

Further Details to Follow.



#### EVENTS CALENDAR 2025 Page Two

## July 4 - 5 SWINDON BALLOON FESTIVAL

Full Society Event in Swindon, Wiltshire.

Infantry and Living History only. Skirmish/displays on FRIDAY & SATURDAY.

Lydiard Park, Lydiard Tregoze, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN5 3PA.

Further Details to Follow.

# July 18 - 19 DONCASTER BALLOON FESTIVAL

Full Society Event, Doncaster, South Yorkshire

Pyrotechnics, Artillery, Infantry and Living History. Skirmish/displays on FRIDAY and SATURDAY. Town Field, Thorne Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, **DN1 2JS**.

Further details to follow

# **August 15 - 17 NORTHAMPTON BALLOON**

Full Society Event at Northampton Balloon Festival, Northampton Racecourse, Kettering Road, Northampton, NN1 4LG.

Pyrotechnics, Artillery, Infantry and Living History. Skirmish/displays on FRIDAY, SATURDAY and SUNDAY.

ACWS Members entrance opposite Trinity Avenue on St. Georges Avenue (in between NN2 6JA & NN2 6JF)

Further details to follow.